

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

----- X

April 4, 2024

Start: 1:08 p.m.

Recess: 3:14 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Crystal Hudson, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Chris Banks

Linda Lee

Darlene Mealy

Yusef Salaam

Susan Zhuang

A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner, Department
for the Aging

Kevin Jones, Deputy Director of Advocacy for AARP
New York

Kevin Kiprovski, Director of Public Policy for
LiveOn-NY

Jeannine Cahill-Jackson, Director of Elder Law
with the Legal Aid Society

John Holt, Senior Staff Attorney for the Harry
and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice at
the Hebrew Home at Riverdale

Valerie Reyes-Jimenez, New York City Community
Organizer for Housing Works

Jeanette Estima, Director of Policy and Advocacy
at City Meals on Wheels

Coleton Whitaker, Director of In-Person
Experiences with Older Adults Technology Services
from AARP

Ruth Stein, attorney at the Metropolitan Council
on Jewish Poverty

Dr. Cynthia Maurer, Visiting Neighbors

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Soundcheck for the
3 Committee on Aging. Today's date is April 4, 2024,
4 being recorded by Danny Huang in the Committee Room.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome
6 to the hearing on the Committee on Aging.

7 Please silence all electronics.

8 Please do not approach the dais at any
9 time. If you need any assistance or any concerns,
10 please contact the Sergeant-at-Arms.

11 If you'd like to submit a testimony
12 online, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov.
13 That is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

14 Chair, you may begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.
16 [GAVEL] Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Council
17 Member Crystal Hudson. I'm Chair of the Committee on
18 Aging. My pronouns are she/her, and I'd like to
19 welcome you all to today's Oversight Hearing on
20 Interagency Coordination on Older Adults.

21 We will also hear Introduction number
22 689, sponsored by myself, to codify the Cabinet for
23 Older New Yorkers. Most of the population growth in
24 New York State is being driven by older New Yorkers.
25 Over the past decade, the population of New York City

2 residents aged 65 and older increased by 36 percent.

3 Today, New York City is home to about 1.8 million

4 older New Yorkers making up 16.2 percent of the

5 city's population. The New York City Department for

6 the Aging, or NYC Aging projects that the population

7 of older adults will reach 1.86 million or 20.6

8 percent of the city's population by 2040. NYC Aging's

9 overarching mission is to eliminate ageism and ensure

10 the dignity and quality of life of older New Yorkers,

11 and the agency is deeply committed to helping older

12 adults age in their homes and creating a community

13 care approach that reflects a model age-inclusive

14 city. However, NYC Aging, which has the largest

15 constituency among all city agencies, also has the

16 smallest budget, less than half of a percent of the

17 City's total budget. As a result, NYC Aging faces

18 challenges in its responsibility to address public

19 policy and service issues for older New Yorkers.

20 While older New Yorkers have many of the same

21 concerns and needs as any other New Yorkers, such as

22 affordable housing and accessible healthcare, they

23 may also require extra supports. This means the City

24 must raise awareness among service and programming

25 providers through an intersectional lens. For

2 example, older adults can better avoid debilitating
3 falls and age in place with grab bars in the
4 bathroom, and healthcare providers may need more
5 education on how to best serve older adults with HIV,
6 who typically have different health outcomes than
7 their younger counterparts. In September 2022, given
8 the unique and growing needs of the city's rapidly
9 growing older adult population, the mayor announced
10 the NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers. The Cabinet,
11 chaired by NYC Aging Commissioner Lorraine Cortes-
12 Vazquez, includes members from 23 agencies
13 representing a cross-section of city agencies that
14 provide services to older New Yorkers. As an
15 interagency collaborative established to realize and
16 institutionalize an age-inclusive New York City
17 through structural, legislative, and systemic
18 solutions, I'm hopeful that it will help to
19 streamline and improve the ways in which the City
20 serves older New Yorkers. With that in mind, I've
21 introduced Introduction number 689 to codify the
22 Cabinet with the goal of ensuring the City's
23 collaborative efforts to improve services for older
24 New Yorkers continue beyond this Administration. I
25 look forward to discussing any recommendations that

2 NYC Aging and advocates may have to improve this
3 legislation.

4 Thank you to the advocates, members of
5 the public, and representatives from the
6 Administration who are joining us today. I would also
7 like to thank my Staff, Casie Addison and Andrew
8 Wright, and Aging Committee Staff, Christopher Pepe,
9 Chloe Rivera, and Saiyemul Hamid.

10 Before I close, here are a few short
11 stories from service providers highlighting the
12 ongoing difficulties and bureaucratic red tape they
13 face when seeking repairs, renovations, and new
14 equipment. Some of these stories implicate multiple
15 agencies and reflect an attitude of deflection rather
16 than a spirit of collaboration. As we discuss the
17 ways in which the City can and should operate with a
18 holistic vision for addressing older adult issues,
19 these real-world stories should inform the City's
20 approach.

21 A provider in the Bronx with multiple
22 centers shared, "Our biggest older adult center needs
23 an electric stove. It is located in a NYCHA building,
24 which is constricted with strict requirements before
25 bringing in a stove. Further, NYC Aging is requesting

2 us to find savings in our budget to fund the stove
3 instead of providing the funding from the allowance
4 balance. The process of looking for savings in the
5 base budget is not always effective and hence delays
6 the process of getting a stove in time. With this
7 center not equipped to cook, we're facing the issue
8 of not being able to find a cost-effective way to
9 deliver the meals to the other centers. A delivery
10 person was subcontracted to provide food delivery
11 services, but NYC Aging is complaining that the cost
12 is too high. Finding a delivery person for cheaper
13 has been unsuccessful so far. Further, registration
14 documentation for the delivery trucks is not properly
15 communicated clearly within NYC Aging departments
16 when received, which delays budget approval and the
17 invoicing process. We also need a computer lab for
18 two of our centers."

19 And a provider from Flushing, Queens has
20 shared, hold on one second, "There's an older adult
21 center that shares a space with a DYCD youth program
22 in the afternoons. As of March 2018, there's been a
23 leak in the shared gym space. Over the past few
24 years, the OAC director submitted multiple tickets to
25 NYCHA about the leak, which resulted in NYCHA sending

2 roofers to investigate the issue. NYCHA determined
3 that the roof leak is in an area that the roofers
4 cannot access so they determined that an outside
5 vendor needed to be hired. To our knowledge, no
6 vendor was ever hired. Much of the time, our NYCHA
7 work tickets are closed shortly after the worker
8 comes to inspect the leak. On January 19, 2024, the
9 OAC director received an email chain by the NYCHA
10 property manager that there were two options to fix
11 the roof. One was to repair the old stone roof, or
12 two, to install a new metal roof. On this email
13 chain, it was suggested that DYCD should pay for the
14 repairs. There has been no followup on this email
15 chain as far as the provider is aware. On January 25,
16 2024, the OAC director attended an NYC Aging meeting
17 where the Commissioner and Mayor Adams were in
18 attendance. The Mayor's Office had staff work with
19 each group to discuss important points to present to
20 the Mayor. There was a local facilitator and he
21 recommended that our OAC director bring up the leak
22 in the gym. The Commissioner responded that it was an
23 issue that she was aware of and it's a pending issue
24 because they cannot agree with NYCHA whether the leak
25 was an outside or inside issue since NYCHA only takes

2 care of the inside. We later learned that the Mayor's
3 Office called NYC Aging about this issue. NYC Aging
4 followed up with the OAC after the meeting, and we
5 reported to NYC Aging that there was no progress on
6 the leak since the January 25th meeting. Since that
7 meeting, the OAC director has not submitted new NYCHA
8 tickets about the roof since the leak seems to have
9 stopped. In the past, NYCHA workers have told us that
10 the roof needs to be actively leaking for them to do
11 anything. The wooden floors under the leak have
12 started to warp from the constant water damage. It
13 appears that the damage is spreading. For safety, we
14 have blocked off this area. The OAC still needs NYCHA
15 to address the leak and water damage."

16 I want to thank the providers for sharing
17 those experiences, and I look forward to hearing from
18 NYC Aging on how these issues can quickly be
19 addressed in order to better serve our older adults.

20 Before I turn it over to the Counsel to
21 administer the oath, I'd like to note that we've been
22 joined by Council Members, Lee, Zhuang, Banks,
23 Mealey, and Salaam.

24 I'll turn it over to the Counsel to
25 administer the oath. Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING

10

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you, Chair.
3 Good afternoon, Commissioner.

4 In accordance with the rules of the
5 Council, I will administer the affirmation to the
6 witnesses from the Administration. Please raise your
7 right hand.

8 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
9 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
10 testimony before this Committee and to respond
11 honestly to Council Members questions?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely.
13 Yes.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: You may proceed,
15 Commissioner. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.
17 Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and Members of the City
18 Council. It's great to see so many of you here. I am
19 Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner of the New York
20 City Department for the Aging. My pronouns are she,
21 her, and ella.

22 It is a great pleasure to join you today
23 to discuss the New York City Aging's interagency
24 coordination on older adult issues, which we are
25 calling the Cabinet, which was instituted in 2022, as

2 you've said. It is a way to handle the fastest
3 growing demographics because what we've been trying
4 to do with this Cabinet is coordinate services and
5 try to do it in a budget-neutral manner across City
6 agencies, and that means that we're looking at
7 existing programs and gaps in services, and that's
8 how we're addressing it. The Cabinet for Older New
9 Yorkers is a unique model that New York City and this
10 Administration is using to build an age-inclusive
11 city as the Chairperson mentioned, and it's bringing
12 New York City's agencies to harness the vote voices
13 of older adults to inform policy systems operations,
14 combat discrimination, and cultivate lasting change,
15 and lasting change is what we're going for. The
16 current operational issues (INAUDIBLE) a vision to
17 how should we as a City work towards age inclusive.
18 Additionally, NYC does collaborative work with other
19 partner agencies, both within and outside of the
20 Cabinet of New York, and I'll give you more on those
21 later. As you know, NYC Aging administers a wide
22 range of programs that enhance the dependence and
23 quality of life for older adult population. A key
24 component to NYC Aging's mission is to ensure that
25 all older adults have access to city services and

2 programs at our agencies and within our partners in
3 city government and to work towards reducing barriers
4 that hinder an older adult's ability to age in place
5 and with dignity while improving their quality of
6 life. As the Chairwoman mentioned earlier, that is
7 the hallmark of our programs is the community care
8 plan. I am excited to discuss with you the origins of
9 the Cabinet, how it functions, and the recent impacts
10 it has had and we've seen through the Cabinet
11 initiatives. The Cabinet for Older New Yorkers
12 ensures collaboration between member agencies, as I
13 said, by identifying gaps or barriers in existing
14 services. Many of these agencies already serve older
15 adults in some form or fashion, and what we were
16 trying to do is not to do it in silos but to do it in
17 a collaborative manner because in the past it had
18 been they would come to us if there was an issue, and
19 yet they were running older adult services. We work
20 to ensure there are no insidious (INAUDIBLE) and
21 practices. We look at protocols, messages in the
22 operations and outreach and educational messages.
23 Today, we have seen impressive progress in several of
24 the initiatives and projects. You may wonder why and
25 how does ageism impact service delivery? It does. It

2 does so due to the work of the Cabinet, 972 frontline
3 healthcare workers, about 16 percent of the total H
4 and H frontline force has been trained to become
5 experts in aging services so that they can better
6 address the older adult when they come in contact to
7 them beyond what their health needs are. Similarly,
8 SCRIE applications are now being processed as a
9 result of the partnership with PEU, that is the
10 Public Engagement Unit where older adults are
11 evaluated by Adult Protective Services and are now
12 being screened for rental assistance program. For 25
13 years, this program was in existence and we have
14 always had a shortage of SCRIE applications, and now
15 we're able to say it was an aha moment, why don't we
16 do SCRIE applications for every Adult Protective
17 Service applicant because we know, and I'm ad libbing
18 now, we know that the earlier you enroll for SCRIE,
19 the greater economic impact it has for the older
20 adults. Ageism is the last, and you've heard me say
21 this over and over again, is the last critically
22 pervasive social injustice that is pervasive and
23 acceptable of all of the discriminations, and we must
24 marshal all forms of government and every agency and
25 every Member of the Council to stand up against

2 ageism. That is why I am pleased to see the Council's
3 interest and partnership in promoting the work of the
4 Cabinet for Older New Yorkers and also the Chairwoman
5 and the Speaker have made commitments to write op eds
6 against ageism. The Commissioners of NYC Aging will
7 continue to facilitate success for older adults today
8 and tomorrow. I applaud you for looking at codifying
9 this Cabinet for the future. We look forward to
10 discussing the bill further and to ensure full
11 alignment.

12 When the concept of an age-friendly
13 environment was first developed more than 10 years
14 ago, differing levels of government and community
15 organizations explored the issue that aging should
16 not be siloed into desperate organizations or
17 structures because we saw the need for component
18 parts of government to collaborate and innovate to
19 address issues affecting older adults. They tried at
20 the time to identify problems between the agencies as
21 needs were identified. That's one of the times where
22 universal design came up as a practice for the
23 Department of HPD. While this was necessary first
24 step, the gaps which remain, and that need to go
25 further to collaborate on issues grew organically,

2 originally into the Cabinet. We are building off the
3 same successes that collaborative task forces have
4 seen on domestic violence, on children's welfare
5 issues, in addressing the needs of older adults. This
6 age-inclusive approach ensures that we are supporting
7 two pillars of our community, which form the bridge
8 of effective social services, which also stabilizes
9 community and that is children or young adults and
10 older adults. Through Mayor Adams' commitment to the
11 age-inclusive city and the interagency collaboration
12 and promoting government efficiency, we are fortunate
13 to have the Cabinet. It is the first of its kind. It
14 is a multi-agency collaborative that was created to
15 support services project, look at practices that
16 benefit older adults across the city. The Cabinet
17 first met on September 21, 2022, and included at that
18 time were 17 agencies across New York City intent on
19 coordinating and leveraging their shared resources
20 and their services to develop solution-based
21 initiatives and projects to benefit older adults.

22 During the inaugural meeting of the
23 Cabinet, I was stunned to see that the principals,
24 the Commissioners present, the majority of them
25 connected to what we were trying to do because when

2 we asked the question, how many are caregivers, more
3 than 80 percent I am a caregiver as I know Chairwoman
4 Hudson has also been a caregiver. It is a major role
5 and a taxing role, but it immediately was a
6 galvanizing force in the creation of this Cabinet
7 and, in some ways, everyone was either taking care of
8 a parent or having a parent take care of their child.
9 That initial realization of how fundamental aging
10 services is to New York City was the start of several
11 aha moments, and we have seen throughout the last 18
12 months. As I have previously said to the Committee
13 and to the Cabinet members, the Cabinet is not a
14 white paper endeavor. We don't mean to study
15 demography or social societal impacts on the older
16 adults or to do more research and then simply release
17 a report. We are instead using collaborative and
18 collective knowledge across member agency to address
19 real problems that we know about and where we can
20 make a difference and a tangible impact on the life
21 of an older adult. That SCRIE example is one of those
22 aha moments. Just like that we changed a 25-year
23 practice. And just like the needs of older adults,
24 Cabinet members are diverse and wide ranging. They
25 span across the entire Administration and a range of

2 government needs services provided by New York City.
3 Participating agencies were identified because of
4 their overlapping focus areas relevant to older
5 adults and to break down any of the silos between the
6 agencies and to accelerate the process. We wanted to
7 really eliminate any of the hindrances to older adult
8 access to critical services. At present, that number
9 has grown to 24, including the Department of
10 Transportation, Department of Health and Mental
11 Hygiene, NYPD, Department of Parks and Recreation,
12 Department of Veterans Services, and Housing and
13 Preservation and Development, just to name a few.

14 There are four working groups,
15 essentially function as Subcommittees. They're
16 Health, Housing, Intergenerational, and then Outreach
17 and Engagement, and that is where ageism comes in
18 place. We make sure that language is important, how
19 you call me, what you say I am, you need to be
20 accurate and not ageist in it. The working groups are
21 populated by 45 agency staff layers on who attend
22 regular liaison meetings hosted in person by New York
23 City aging in our small quarters. These liaisons work
24 independently with their counterparts on initiatives
25 developed in the working groups, all focused on those

2 four areas I discussed before. On a quarterly basis,
3 the working groups present the initiatives and the
4 outcomes to the larger group. This is very outcome-
5 based, that's the focus, and the working groups then
6 develop and set the ground rules for systemic change
7 and long-term impact while responding to current gaps
8 and needs and, while liaisons regularly attend
9 meetings where they report out on their status of the
10 initiatives, it is incumbent on the liaisons to meet
11 independently and continue working on their pieces
12 ahead of the quarterly meeting to the principals. I
13 also submit a monthly report to each of the
14 Commissioners on the progress that's being made by
15 their working group and the staff on their groups.

16 In the past, these Cabinet initiatives
17 have yielded tangible impacts for older adults by
18 making meaningful changes through agency
19 collaborations. One incredible example is the step
20 we've been taking to ensure that agencies and member
21 agencies are experts on aging services, and we can
22 see that overlap where there's services combined with
23 the other needs of older adults. In the past year,
24 something like, and I've mentioned this before, the
25 Adult Protective Services had never done before, that

2 now has become routinized, and that is to just add
3 SCRIE or DRIE as part of the application process.
4 Notably is through this collaboration with the
5 Mayor's Office of Public Engagement that also is a
6 frontline staff on training program requirements and
7 learning how to complete the application so there's a
8 dual role that we all have. It's the, what's the gap
9 and then how do we fill that gap and then what's the
10 training that's needed. Then think of how many older
11 adults are now better served when they're
12 encountering APS staff, and now the City can ask
13 them, how are they, if they're a SCRIE tenant, and
14 how can we assist them completing that application?

15 Similarly, for the New York City Police
16 Department, Deputy Commissioner Mark Stewart was part
17 of the Cabinet's quarterly principals meeting since
18 its inception. As the Commissioners would organically
19 discuss issues facing older adult, public safety came
20 up repeatedly. Through previous commissions and
21 working groups on domestic violence, NYPD established
22 a domestic violence officer in each precinct who is
23 trained to handle those specific services. When
24 Deputy Stewart heard of such early ideas regarding
25 making NYPD officers experts in aging issues, it was

2 his presence that pulled that idea across the finish
3 line and saw the creation of the new NYPD older adult
4 liaisons. Last year on World Elder Abuse Awareness
5 Day, I was joined by Mayor Adams and the leadership
6 from NYPD to announce the alignment of the older
7 adult liaisons in every police service area, the
8 PSAs, to better enhance public safety for older
9 adults, but it's also so that the officer sees the
10 older adult, not just as a victim, but what are some
11 of the other needs that they may have. This shows how
12 important it is to have the correct people in the
13 room as we discuss and develop Cabinet initiatives to
14 really see the success of these ideas and who can
15 navigate them through their agency.

16 Finally, across many agencies, we have
17 seen the power of intergenerational relationship
18 between young people and older adults in combating
19 ageism. When young people see what older adults
20 experience and they feel too that they're connected
21 to an older adult's experience, that bond is what
22 breaks cycles of ageism. We've seen that in our
23 family. We can see that in our community. Through NYC
24 Public Schools', DOE, work on the Cabinet, we've
25 developed an anti-ageism curriculum, which has so far

2 taught over 1,350 high school students and their
3 families to address ageism discrimination at an early
4 age, which is the most effective way for systematic
5 change. I want you to know that this idea of bringing
6 in ageism into the school was generated by a high
7 school student who interned at New York City Aging. I
8 wish I could take credit for it, but it was from the
9 mouth of them saying, everything that we see about
10 older people, either in Disney or elsewhere, is
11 scary, and it's dumb, and it's negative, and so they
12 gave us the idea to start, how do we do this
13 differently and, as a result of that, we developed
14 the guide, which is now used in New York City public
15 school systems. The initiative helped the students
16 identify ageism, and then they learned what they can
17 do as youth to stop the how to stop perpetuating that
18 and how to stop themselves having aging stereotypes
19 and, if you really ask yourself, we all have them,
20 and we need to constantly be conscious of that. Our
21 next step here, which is still underway, is to expand
22 this program to more than city high schools and to
23 begin teaching younger students in the middle and
24 elementary schools to further bolster anti-ageism
25 education and, as I always say to everyone, these are

2 going to be our future employers, these are going to
3 be our future employees, and we want them and our
4 future members of society, we want them to have anti-
5 ageism (INAUDIBLE) we want them to embrace age
6 inclusive. Start that young. This is a true
7 systematization of the work of the Cabinet. Through
8 our collaborations, we were able to bridge a gap in
9 educational understanding to combat a form of
10 discrimination. We believe that this new information
11 on stereotypes helped our future employees and
12 leaders have productive attitudes and behaviors
13 towards their older workers who will be colleagues
14 and probably fellow employees. That is why we was
15 never pit, and I'm going to say this over and over
16 again, yes, I agree with the facts that you have
17 mentioned in your opening, Chair, but we must never
18 pit the needs of these two vital pillars in our
19 community against each other. Those needs are equally
20 important. Together, younger people and older adults
21 are the foundation of this city that can make and
22 build our communities, and the work of the Cabinet is
23 fundamental to building community at the local level
24 and eventually on a stronger society across this
25 city.

2 The next steps. In 2023, directly because
3 of the work happening with the Cabinet of Older New
4 Yorkers, New York City Aging submitted a resolution
5 to the U.S. Conference of Mayors calling on cities to
6 promote and adopt age-inclusive approaches to local
7 policy practices and programs in a commitment to
8 achieving an elevated standard of being as an age-
9 inclusive city. It was not enough to say that we were
10 just an age-friendly city where we were having
11 benches and parks and accessible buses, but we are
12 also proud to say that we wanted policies and
13 legislative changes. New York City was named the
14 first age-friendly city in the United States so we
15 were pushing further to ensure age-inclusive became a
16 broad spectrum of needs for older adults.

17 Additionally, the Conference of Mayors accepted and
18 ratified our resolution and is working with NYC Aging
19 to convene a national age-inclusive working group. So
20 far, we have shared this information and I believe
21 that we have 13 cities involved in this initiative.

22 Albuquerque, Chicago, Des Moines, Houston, Kansas,
23 Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Seattle are some.

24 We've targeted other cities across the country that
25 have large populations and growing populations, much

2 like New York City. Many of the cities involved in
3 this have over 20 percent of their population. We're
4 meeting regularly with their Area Agencies on Aging,
5 their AAAs, to explore collaborative opportunities in
6 addressing the needs of older adults. It's not just
7 important to change the impact here. When we're
8 talking about ageism, we know that ageism is national
9 and, if we can do it here, we can make sure that we
10 can serve as a model for other cities. Next will be
11 our third meeting with these groups to discuss models
12 and models of engagement, and I've been real clear
13 with these cities. This is not about New York, the
14 finest and the greatest, we know that, but it's also
15 about showcasing some of the advances that they've
16 made because that's just as important.

17 We look forward to what is in store for
18 the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers. As I stated
19 earlier, our number of partner agencies has grown,
20 and we are deep into Phase Two initiatives. As those
21 initiatives wrap up, we'll release another report,
22 which will be posted on the Cabinet's website, which
23 is online and all those goals and outcomes are also
24 listed. Additionally, NYC Aging is working towards
25 the upcoming release of an Older Adult Needs

2 Assessment, a survey of older adults throughout New
3 York City beyond those who just participate in
4 services, and this came to us from one of our Cabinet
5 members Mitch Katz, Dr. Katz from H and H, and he
6 said, no, let's not just ask for needs because people
7 don't even know that some of their needs are being
8 met because they're getting services now. We want to
9 get a whole picture of what needs are being met and
10 which ones are not, and so our needs assessment now
11 includes all services, whether your needs are being
12 met by current services. That was important to us.
13 We've identified key community districts in all five
14 boroughs, and we're reaching out to your offices to
15 further develop opportunities to reach out to older
16 adults, and we are reaching out to communities where
17 we see the diversity and where we also see the
18 growing number of older adults.

19 Beyond the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers,
20 we continue to find opportunities to work with our
21 partner agencies on a range of issues. Some
22 opportunities do not reach Cabinet level initiatives
23 but typically have and do not mean that they're any
24 less important. Our work with DOT in the past and
25 we've worked on an older adult pedestrian survey for

2 years and it's always been informative and, as a
3 result of that earlier work, we were able to place no
4 standing zones in front of older adult centers so
5 that they can have easy access and egress, and we're
6 in the path of doing that for all sites. We have a
7 plan to do that for all sites, but right now has
8 developed other initiatives such as their recurring
9 traveling surveys. They include older adult
10 perspectives and outreach and hearing from older
11 adults directly so they do these tours of the
12 community so that they can in real time show the
13 City's engineers are the lights too long, are the
14 lights too fast, are the curb cuts there, and all of
15 those things.

16 Additionally, we work with our Department
17 of Finance colleagues to create a series of events at
18 older adult clubs in targeting neighborhoods to
19 increase subscriptions to SCRIE. This collaboration
20 is reoccurring and has made an impact on getting more
21 information to older adults about the benefits.

22 In conclusion, I love this work. This
23 Cabinet has really made a difference, and it's made a
24 difference in a lot of ways. It's made a difference
25 because not only is it collegial, but it shows other

2 agencies how we can work together and how we can get
3 past the morass that we each built in some of these
4 agencies and how we can just cut through that. These
5 are proactive upstream solutions for downstream
6 issues. Many of these have been occurring for a long
7 time and we're just going to go past them as fast as
8 we can. While we continue this extensive work to
9 ensure older adults can have access to programs as
10 well as other City services, we recognize there's a
11 lot to be done, but the most important thing is we
12 want older New Yorkers to stay in New York and to
13 live vibrant lives. This Cabinet allows us to
14 continue to break down barriers, to look at what
15 legislation is needed, and to always think what
16 should be the horizon as agencies that we should be
17 doing. I'm going to thank you, Chairwoman Hudson and
18 the Committee Members, and I look forward to some of
19 your questions. I look forward to having all of you
20 write articles about ageism. I will give you drafts,
21 because this has to be a cacophony of sound
22 throughout the city, and also I love your input so,
23 anyway, I look forward to answering your questions.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much,
25 Commissioner.

2 I have a couple of questions I want to
3 start with just from your testimony. The first being,
4 you mentioned that NYC Aging is working toward the
5 upcoming release of an Older New Yorker Needs
6 Assessment, which will be a survey of older adults
7 throughout New York City beyond those who participate
8 in NYC Aging services and attend OACs. I think this
9 is an amazing idea and would definitely love to
10 collaborate. I know you mentioned that and make sure
11 that the Council is collaborating with you. Do you
12 have the timing on when that might be released and
13 what you plan to do with the findings?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: April 15th
15 is the soft launch.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. That's
17 very soon.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, and we
19 went back and got some more questions and input from
20 other agencies and from some community members, and
21 so, therefore, we pulled the date back, but it's our
22 first soft launch is going to be April 15, see what
23 we get, but any of you, some of it is going to be in
24 some of your Districts, I know three of you have

2 Districts that we're targeting so we'll make sure
3 that we reach out to your offices.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: What are you planning
5 to do with the findings? What type of data are you
6 going to be collecting?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: A lot of it
8 will inform how we should move forward with the
9 Cabinet, some of the work. It's going to identify
10 some of those needs that we've not even been able to
11 identify or how much further we would go. I can't
12 even, I'm looking forward to looking at what else is
13 missing in a community care plan. How do we expand
14 home care? Those are the things that I'm hoping we
15 can get out of it. Older adults will tell us what
16 they really need and also how are the services
17 benefiting them? Is 20 hours of ISEP services in home
18 care sufficient? And if not, why not? And how do we
19 mirror that with what managed long-term care can give
20 you? I'm looking forward to it informing us of what
21 we need to do and where should we be going, and I
22 know that we'll never going to get there fast enough,
23 but we will never get there if we don't start looking
24 at where the gaps are...

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And what the
3 vision should be.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, no, like I
5 said, I think it's a wonderful idea. This is the type
6 of stuff that I think the agency should be doing,
7 especially given the growing population of older
8 adults over the next several years.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The other
10 thing is, to be honest, I didn't mean to cut you off,
11 sorry, is that one of the things that you and some of
12 the Members of this Committee have always told us is
13 what's the input from the older adult themselves.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right. And those,
15 like you said, beyond just those who are engaging or
16 showing up to the older adult centers, but older
17 adults in New York City more broadly.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: All over the
19 city. Because that's a question. We have 1.8 million.
20 Department for the Aging serves maybe about 200,000,
21 250 depending. There is another 1.6 million or 5
22 million that we're not. It's not all income driven so
23 what are those differences? How can we serve them
24 better.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely, and maybe
3 if we can send more people to NYC Aging, we'll get
4 you more money. Just putting it out there.

5 Another question I had from your
6 testimony is you mentioned some specific examples of
7 work with Department of Transportation, Department of
8 Finance. I'm wondering if you do any collaborations
9 with HPD, specifically around housing.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, we do.
11 One of the things that we've done with HPD is
12 Universal Design. There are several initiatives that
13 we're working with them on some of their, the vision
14 is not only older adult housing but also housing
15 where older adults can live in community because
16 everyone doesn't want to just live in an older adult
17 building so we're looking at some of those designs.
18 We're looking at the number of housing units. There's
19 been a real commitment for more housing units for
20 older adults, and it's those kinds of initiatives
21 that we do. One thing we work with them on is when a
22 plan is coming up, as they're making the development,
23 what are going to be the needs of older adults in
24 those communities, and so those are the kind of

2 things that we work on together. And that was
3 informal before the Cabinet.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.
5 Okay, I'm going to jump into some general questions
6 and then I'll take a break and hand it over to my
7 Colleagues for a few of their questions before I
8 continue on.

9 Can you please provide an update on the
10 implementation of Local Law 20 of 2023? This Local
11 Law entitles any person 60 years of age or older
12 facing eviction or termination of tenancy and housing
13 court to full legal representation at no cost. It
14 requires the Department for the Aging to establish a
15 housing support program for the purpose of providing
16 tailored advice and support through case management
17 services to persons 60 years of age or older who are
18 at risk of eviction or foreclosure and directs the
19 Coordinator of the Office of Civil Justice to work
20 with persons 60 years of age or older to educate and
21 inform them about their rights in housing court. Is
22 the Administration fully in compliance with the
23 requirements of this Local Law?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, we do
25 have a fully signed and executed memorandum of

2 understanding with HRA. I just want to be real clear
3 that HRA provides the lawyers and the legal aspects
4 of this. The role that New York City Aging works in
5 is we work with the aging Tenancy and Eviction
6 Support Services, what we call TESS. Those are
7 individuals that are identified by the court, given
8 to us so that we can help them through that eviction
9 process and re-entry, that's not the correct word,
10 but anyway, stemming the eviction process and staying
11 in their home and what are the needs that they have
12 for that. That was a program that we had only in two
13 boroughs last year. Thanks to the support of many
14 people in this room, we were able to get funding so
15 that we could expand that to the five boroughs so
16 we're in that process now so we do have an agreement
17 with HRA and then we also have the TESS unit that now
18 is across five boroughs.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Can you
20 please provide an update on the implementation of
21 Local Law 170 of 2023 requiring New York City aging
22 to establish a Commission for LGBTQIA+ older adults
23 within the Department? All members of this Commission
24 are required by Local Law to be appointed no later
25

2 than May 4, 2024, one month from today. Have all
3 Commission members been appointed?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No. As I
5 mentioned to you, we have vacancies and I would love
6 to first address the vacancies in the advisory
7 council that we have so that we can look at the
8 vacancies in this commission.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We have, of
11 the City Council's 10 vacancies, there are eight
12 vacancies across the boroughs. There's two per
13 borough. We would love to fill those vacancies with
14 individuals from the boroughs and that also can then
15 represent this targeted community so that we can
16 start the work there.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry, I just want to
18 confirm, there are eight vacancies across the
19 boroughs or ten?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: There are
21 eight vacancies. The City Council has 10 seats on the
22 Advisory Council.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Right, and of the 10?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Two per
25 borough, and there are eight vacancies.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Copy.

3 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And we'd be
4 more than happy to help you facilitate that process
5 through the appointment process.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: The two that are
7 filled are from Brooklyn, correct?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah. One in
9 Brooklyn, and one from Queens? Okay. Thank you. One
10 from Brooklyn and one from Queens are filled.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That means
12 Brooklyn has one, Queens has one, and the other
13 boroughs have two.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And we
16 really want cross representation there.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Because the
19 advisory council is really the, and you also have
20 requirements for that advisory council. Annual
21 workforce issues. We go through some of the local
22 laws with them that are required and we report to
23 them.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'll work with our
25 delegation chairs to make sure we're on top of that.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Perfect.
3 Thank you. I really appreciate that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thanks for sharing
5 that about the Advisory Council, and then coming back
6 to the commission for LGBTQIA+ older adults. Do you
7 think you'll have the members appointed by the May
8 4th deadline?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No. We won't
10 because we need recommendations from each of you as
11 to who you would want.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. That was
13 going to be my next question is how can we support
14 implementation efforts, sSo you need recommendations.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, please
16 recommend candidates, and we will work with you
17 getting them through the appointment process.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. We'll be sure
19 to work with you on that as well.

20 Service providers have reported to the
21 Council that they face significant difficulties
22 navigating multiple City agencies when seeking
23 repairs, renovations, or acquiring new equipment for
24 their facilities. This is especially true of
25 providers housed within NYCHA facilities, and this

2 goes back to one of the stories that I shared during
3 my opening remarks. Is NYC Aging aware of these
4 difficulties and, if so, what efforts are NYC Aging
5 engaged in to streamline these processes?

6 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: This has
7 been a recurring issue for us longstanding, way
8 before me, way before anybody in this room, but I can
9 tell you what progress we've made to date. We are,
10 first of all, NYC Aging is always aware of the
11 program challenges because we have program offices
12 that work directly with the program, with the
13 providers. That to be said, that doesn't mean that
14 solutions and resolutions are as quickly as we would
15 all want them to be. What we have done, particularly
16 because a third of our older adult clubs are in NYCHA
17 facilities and most of these issues come up around
18 NYCHA, we've established a very strong working
19 relationship with NYCHA. We meet every two weeks to
20 discuss some of these issues and start queuing them
21 up and putting them in priority order. Some of the
22 issues, as one of the examples you've mentioned, the
23 one in Flushing, it was a longstanding structural
24 issue, and to all of our surprise, we don't know how
25 it stopped, but it stopped leaking, but,

2 nevertheless, we have this longstanding issue, and we
3 have an arrangement with NYCHA right now, which is
4 that they take care of infrastructure, as I say,
5 everything inside the wall or above the ceiling, and
6 we take care of everything inside so we do the minor
7 repairs. We're working collaboratively and very
8 diligently to work with NYCHA, Fire Department, and
9 everyone else to get our kitchens up to code. That's
10 a much longer process than any of us would ever
11 imagine, but we're working very, very hard to get
12 those kitchens up to code. Why is that important to
13 us? As you mentioned I believe in one of your cases,
14 we prefer our programs to provide food, to cook food,
15 not to use commercial caterers because you have less
16 of control over the quality and the sanitary
17 conditions of those caterers, which is why, with your
18 support, last year or the year before about 18 months
19 ago, we developed five commissary kitchens as a model
20 to have those programs, provide meals and services
21 for other older adult clubs so that we would be less
22 dependent on commercial caterers so that's a long-
23 winded answer to say that we have a long standing and
24 now very, very intensive relationship and partnership
25 with NYCHA to look at these issues and, for those of

2 you who know NYCHA, you have a complaint, you issue a
3 ticket. Now we really follow through on the status of
4 that ticket and where the progress is.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. I know you
6 said you meet with NYCHA every two weeks, but I'm
7 wondering specifically if you're having conversations
8 with them on expeditiously resolving building
9 violations in OACs and other CBO programs that are
10 housed in NYCHA facilities.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, it's
12 the code issues that we're constantly working on. I
13 believe we've addressed, and I can get back to you if
14 they're all fully addressed, all the ADA compliance
15 issues, but we still have a lot of these code issues
16 that we're working on together.

17 CARL HEDMAN: And same with DOHMH and DOB,
18 right?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, and in
20 some cases, it involves more than one agency.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Local Law 73 of 2021
22 requires NYC Aging to report annually on the number
23 of complaints related to OAC facilities located on
24 NYCHA properties. Can you please provide the

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING

40

2 Committee with this information for the past three
3 years?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm sorry, I
5 was reading my notes, and I didn't listen to you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No problem. Local Law
7 73 of 2021 requires NYC Aging to report annually on
8 the number of complaints related to OAC facilities
9 located on NYCHA properties. Can you please provide
10 the Committee with this information for the past
11 three years and how many of these complaints were
12 investigated and resolved either as a number or as a
13 percentage?

14 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We have a
15 way of tracking those, we track them and then we
16 prioritize them for NYCHA, and then I'll get back to
17 you on the number that we have had over the last few
18 years.

19 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you.
20 Local Law 75 also of 2021 required the establishment
21 of a public housing liaison within NYC Aging. Do you
22 know who the current liaison is and what their
23 responsibilities are?

24 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We have two
25 liaisons. Ours is one of our Associate Commissioners

2 who serves the Borough, I believe, of Brooklyn. And
3 then we have Stephen Wilkinson, who also is over many
4 programs in our OACs. Both of them are in the Bureau
5 of Community Services and on work specifically on
6 older adult clubs, and their role is to maintain
7 those relationships with both our providers on those
8 repairs and bring those to NYCHA and escalate those
9 that are priorities.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

11 Subdivision C of this Local Law requires a liaison to
12 make recommendations to the Commissioner with respect
13 to how programs and facilities that receive funding
14 from NYC Aging can better serve older adult NYCHA
15 residents. What recommendations have been made thus
16 far and have these recommendations been implemented?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I would say
18 one of the greatest advances we've made is around
19 HVAC.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: On HVAC?

21 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: HVACs, the
22 air conditioning systems. Don't forget the most of
23 our centers are cooling centers. Thanks to the
24 Council a year and a half ago, you gave us money for
25 that specifically, and we've been able to really

2 start working on making sure all of those repairs
3 were done. It's something that we continue to work on
4 with them.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you. Can you
6 please describe the system in place to receive and
7 process complaints regarding OAC facilities located
8 on NYCHA property as required to be established by
9 this Local Law?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I don't
11 think I understood the question. I'm sorry.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: All right. You
13 addressed some of it earlier so we'll skip that.

14 Just since we're on the topic of some of
15 the difficulties and challenges from service
16 providers, I do want to turn it over to two
17 Colleagues at this time with questions. First,
18 Council Member Banks followed by Council Member
19 Salaam.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Chair,
21 and to my Colleagues, and thank you Commissioner, for
22 your testimony. Particularly as a former executive
23 director for a non-profit that did a lot of advocacy
24 for the aging and provided services, I know the
25 importance of transportation and the needs of

2 transportation for our seniors. I wanted to know, and
3 this actually came from a Queens provider who shared
4 this particular situation pertaining to
5 transportation capital need, one of the pressing
6 capital needs within our program involves acquiring
7 additional vehicles to expand our transportation
8 services for seniors in and out our neighborhood. We
9 offer transportation solutions that facilitate
10 seniors' mobility across our community, providing
11 access to medical appointments, recreational
12 activities, social engagements. Currently, we operate
13 a single multi-passenger van which limits our
14 capacity to meet the growing demand for
15 transportation assistance. Acquiring a second vehicle
16 would significantly enhance our ability to provide
17 seniors with access to essential services and
18 opportunities beyond the confines of our
19 neighborhood. The estimated cost for procuring a
20 second vehicle tailored to the seniors' needs range
21 from 50,000 to 100,000, encompassing customization
22 for accessibility features. I wanted to know are you
23 aware of these situations or similar situations that
24 are facing our service providers?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, we are.
3 Our vehicles are in great disrepair. Last year,
4 thanks to Chairwoman Hudson and this Committee, we
5 were able to acquire 44 vans to replace, and we did
6 those for vans that were older than 10 years or
7 something. We did it on an escalating scale. That
8 goes to show you how old some of our vans are. We had
9 to do priority. We're in a need for that. My request
10 is the same. I hope it's an initiative we can
11 continue to do because those are capital items and,
12 if we get the money from you, we can put it into
13 directly into the agency. We help monitor, we get the
14 scale, we monitor the procurement process so that we
15 are the ones dealing with the vendor to make sure
16 that they give a scale and what we want and the price
17 that we're looking for, but we're looking for that
18 initiative to be replicated again, if possible.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you. I have
20 another question, pertaining to Local Law 20, this is
21 separate from the transportation capital question,
22 pertaining to Local Law 20 and 25, we know with the
23 conversions of RAD/PACT NYCHA developments, and I
24 think about citywide you have about 21,000 units. I
25 know a large amount of those units or tenants are

2 seniors. I want to know what is being done to assist
3 those seniors as far as knowing their rights because
4 we know that there will be a right-sizing that is
5 going to take place, and we know that could be a form
6 of displacement so I want to know what is being done
7 by the agency to make sure these tenants know their
8 rights, the fact that they are entitled to a
9 reasonable accommodation, and that they're being
10 protected and they're not being aggressively taken
11 advantage of by these management companies.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you
13 for that because we've been focusing on one part of
14 that RAD conversion and we will now look very
15 differently at the impact on the older adult
16 themselves and on the tenant, all right. We've been
17 looking at RAD conversions with licensing because so
18 many of our facilities are in NYCHA facilities and
19 many of them are being changed into RAD. What we are
20 coming to is a licensing agreement with this new RAD
21 developer and the provider to make sure that their
22 rights again are protected and that we have the same
23 understanding between capital improvements and
24 infrastructure improvements versus repairs, and so
25 that's what we've been focusing on, but I will look

2 into the tenant part of this issue and get back to
3 you on what we are doing because we may be doing
4 something and I'm not aware of it or how we're going
5 to do it.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Please do because
7 it's a definitely an important issue to me, and And I
8 don't want our seniors to be displaced for the sake
9 of profit. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council
11 Member. I do have..

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: (INAUDIBLE)
13 look at it as part of our tenant protection
14 initiative.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I do have one
16 followup question regarding RAD/PACT. How have
17 RAD/PACT conversions affected NYC Aging contracted
18 providers who utilize spaces in previously NYCHA-
19 owned property? We've heard from advocates that the
20 new private companies managing these spaces have been
21 more difficult to work with, that they're unclear on
22 their responsibilities, and have made capital
23 investment very difficult.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And that is
25 exactly why we're working on a licensing agreement

2 that each one of our providers in a RAD will have the
3 same licensing agreement, and the expectation is
4 that, again, from the wall in, the provider will be
5 responsible for with the Department for the Aging,
6 and infrastructure will be the RAD owner's
7 responsibility as we have with NYCHA at this moment.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great. Thank you.
9 I'll turn it over to Council Member Salaam.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Good afternoon.
11 Thank you, Chair. Thank you, my Colleagues. Thank
12 you, Commissioner.

13 This is from a provider. They shared that
14 we have a number of annual maintenance contracts for
15 the facilities such as the HVAC system and the
16 boilers, which are not covered by DFTA budgets. We
17 recently had to replace the glass front door to one
18 of our centers, and we were only able to do so with
19 City discretionary funds because our regular DFTA
20 budget didn't have the funding to cover it. Many of
21 our facility costs are covered by private funding,
22 and so what I wanted to know was what can be done to
23 secure more funding from the City for essential
24 maintenance?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: In our last
3 hearing, in our budget hearing, one of the things
4 that we talked about was as a result of that. You're
5 absolutely right, Council Member. The repairs now are
6 within your budget structure because we don't have a
7 dedicated plan or money for looking at those repairs.
8 What we have done since our last Council thing is
9 establish having our unit look at all of the repair
10 and capital needs in the kitchens and doing an
11 inventory of what those are so that we can come up
12 with a plan and an estimate of what the needs are to
13 do those kinds of things. That would not handle a
14 glass door. We're looking at kitchens, we're looking
15 at some of the major systems, and looking at what the
16 state of those are, but it came from this Committee,
17 and so that's what we're looking at right now. We do
18 have a Construction and Design Unit within the
19 Department for the Aging that works with each
20 provider as they get contracts and reviews the bids
21 and make sure that the bids are adequate, but we're
22 looking at that now in a much, much more, from a
23 broader perspective and looking at what a citywide
24 plan would look like rather than individual
25 situations. We can forecast what those would be.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thanks.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thanks, Council
5 Member.

6 I'll turn it over now to Council Member
7 Mealey for her question.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you. Hi. I
9 just want to ask a few questions about Local Law 75,
10 2021, the liaison for the aging. You said it's two
11 people currently the liaison? Stephen Wilkerson?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Stephen
13 Wilkerson and Merlaine Shaddle.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Excuse me?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Merlaine
16 Shaddle.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Is this
18 information available for people to call, any of our
19 seniors to call if they're having problems?

20 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: If they're
21 having problems with the NYCHA facility?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: If it's
24 related to the older adult club, yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: So where's these
3 numbers posted up at that our seniors could know
4 because I have to say I went to one senior center and
5 it was a youth senior center, and it was a LEAP, so
6 we had to bus our children to a whole other center
7 but, until I started speaking to NYCHA Chair, it got
8 done so if I would have saw those numbers, I would
9 have went through that procedure so I'm asking you
10 where's these information posted to let the seniors
11 know. If their director could not do it, they're
12 going to call someone else and, specifically, I don't
13 have that much time, why do you think Mount Ararat is
14 still closed? A senior center with 300 seniors where
15 they used to come downstairs and eat, and it's still
16 closed to this day. We don't know why it closed.
17 Could you give me why it closed? It wasn't any
18 issues.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I believe
20 until you gave money for Mount Ararat through...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Gave it back then,
22 about to give it again, but it's still no center
23 there in which some of our seniors are dying now.

24 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That money,
25 Mount Ararat, is not a non-profit, and that money has

2 been placed in Fort Greene Council. You're aware of
3 that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: But she didn't
5 want to do it.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Then I think
7 that you and I can go back and revisit that issue
8 separately.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: I thought that you
10 said as long as I get the money. Haven't heard from
11 her...

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Until we
13 find a non-profit who can absorb that money and then
14 implement the program. That program is not an
15 established older adult club so we have to do that
16 through an existing program.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: (INAUDIBLE) 30, 40
18 years, so I'm going to leave that. We'll keep
19 talking.

20 How does the Cabinet structure...

21 Do you want to know how older, for the
22 record, I would like to let everybody know how older
23 adults can access any information that they may want.
24 All right, there is our Aging Connect number. Any
25 older adult or their family member can call Aging

2 Connect where you get a live person an expert on
3 aging services, and they will direct them to the
4 appropriate agency or individual, and the number is
5 212...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Is it posted
7 anywhere?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Huh?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Is it posted in
10 every center?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It is
12 posted...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: That the seniors
14 could even do a barcode. I went to a school today,
15 308, and they were there making barcodes so maybe you
16 should coordinate with a school, 308, my school, and
17 let them do the barcode that our seniors could just
18 click it on their phone, and they could see all the
19 resources right there, and do you mind, Chair? She
20 took up some of my time.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: One more question if
22 you have one.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: Brevard Senior
24 Center. They've been asking for a facility. That's
25 where I remember it. I got my vaccination there. It

2 was a medical center where you could get your dental
3 done, everything. It's closed now. Would you be
4 available at least to come see that space that maybe
5 we can really keep it separate from our seniors and
6 our young adults. They interact with each other,
7 that's fine, but just to give them a little bit more
8 space. The space is not being utilized. I already
9 spoke to NYCHA. I would love to see how DFTA can help
10 also with maybe some of the funding.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am always
12 available to visit with any of you but, more
13 importantly, to visit with any older adult facility
14 because we are always in need of potential facilities
15 so I'd be more than happy to visit any potential
16 facility, especially if it's City-owned property
17 because that means no rent and so we're always
18 looking to explore those opportunities.

19 Now, if it's co-housed with a DYCD site,
20 if it's one of those (INAUDIBLE) zones, we want to
21 encourage that they stay co-located because we want
22 to encourage intergenerational programming...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: They just need
24 more space, more space that more children could come
25 in and more seniors could come in. They have the

2 knitting, they have everything, they are teaching the
3 young people how to knit so it's good.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALEY: So thank you, I'm
6 looking forward.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council
8 Member.

9 Council Member Zhuang.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Chair.
11 You actually already asked my question, do you guys
12 work with HPD, you already answered yes. I just
13 wonder, because my District has 90 adult center and
14 also senior centers, 90, and I only have one senior
15 housing in my District. Do you guys already work on
16 that issue or...

17 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: On social
18 adult daycare centers?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: No, we need more
20 senior housing.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Is there any way,
23 as a City Council Member, how do we help, and my
24 District definitely needs more senior housing.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We would be
3 more than happy to work with you and the HPD
4 liaisons. The way we make recommendations is usually
5 on population, but I'd be more than happy to get back
6 to you on that specific area that you may be
7 interested in.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay so who...

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Remember
10 that that's long-term solution.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Yes, but we need
12 to start now. We cannot wait anymore.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you. That's
15 only my concern. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council
17 Member.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I thought
19 you were going to ask me about social adult daycare
20 services.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Council Member Lee.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hello, Commissioner.
23 this is also related to housing and HPD because I'm
24 all the way in Eastern Queens where we are a transit

2 desert and we have a very high population of older
3 adults...

4 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And growing.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And growing, yes, for
6 sure, so that presents a few challenges so my first
7 question to you is around just the models that you
8 might be looking into for communal housing and if you
9 are talking to HPD about that in lower density
10 neighborhoods because I know that they've had
11 challenges getting approvals and so just wanted to
12 know how you could champion, how we could be helpful
13 because this is definitely something that our
14 neighborhoods would want, but I know it does create a
15 lot of challenges.

16 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, I'll
17 follow up with you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, if you could
19 follow up with me, that would be great.

20 My other question is, I'm actually asking
21 if you and the older adults could help us, because
22 I'm not sure if the Queens residents are aware, but
23 we're in the process right now in terms of
24 finalizing, the MTA's doing a Queens bus redesign,
25 they're rerouting all the buses in Queens, and this

2 has been going on since pre-COVID, but then they
3 paused on the redesign because COVID happened, and
4 there's another in-person feedback session tomorrow,
5 but you can actually submit online feedback as well
6 as on the website for MTA, there's actually a place
7 where you can put feedback, and the reason why I'm
8 bringing this up is because when I had a conversation
9 with MTA, I said, what about the older adults,
10 because there are many, many concerns because we are
11 a transit desert, I have no railways in my District,
12 I don't have a subway, I don't have a long Island
13 railroad in my District, but we have a ton of older
14 adults that really need the bus transportation.
15 They're trying to be more efficient and they're
16 touting efficiency but, in terms of efficiency, the
17 way that they're meeting that goal is they're
18 reducing the number of stops, right? But if older
19 adults as well as those who are disabled, and I'm
20 also Chair of the Disabilities, Mental Health and
21 Addictions Committee, and this is a huge problem in
22 the disabilities community as well, is I need folks
23 to submit public testimony, so please, I just
24 encourage anyone here, if you all live in Queens,
25 please look at the bus redesign routes, and let us

2 know the feedback and submit it because we need to
3 make sure that those bus routes are not negatively
4 impacting our older adults.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So I'll even
6 go one further. One of the things we've done with MTA
7 in the past, obviously it's too late for tomorrow, is
8 that we would have them make presentations at the
9 older adult clubs. We've not heard about this, but
10 what I would do for this one for tomorrow is if you
11 give me the bus stops that are close to older adult
12 clubs that you want to retain, we will submit
13 something to the MTA.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes, next to the
15 older adult clubs but also just like residentially,
16 yeah, we'll talk offline, but I realize that in-
17 person, it may be difficult, so they're still taking
18 public feedback so if you just go to the website,
19 they actually have a location where you can input
20 your feedback online or you can reach out to my
21 office as well.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I'm Linda Lee, just
24 in case, sorry, but yes, that would be really helpful
25 so thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, Council
4 Member.

5 Okay, so what is NYC Aging doing to
6 increase intergenerational programming between older
7 adults and young people? You talked about this a
8 little bit. How is NYC Aging working with other City
9 agencies on this work?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The two
11 agencies we work with on intergenerational is DYCD
12 and Department of Education. What we've done with
13 DYCD is we established programs in 10 facilities was
14 our first pilot with older adults, and it wasn't just
15 storytelling. It really was the emphasis was on
16 community building. It was getting to know each
17 other, on projects together, and we've had one whole
18 group graduate, and we really do look at that as a
19 successful model because what we are seeing is that
20 older adults can recognize young people who they met
21 with in these community meetings and that tension
22 between them is lessened. It's all about community
23 building. I keep saying this is not just share my
24 story and tomorrow I feel good about it and Thursday
25 I forget about it. This is about making sure that

2 they see themselves as key elements in that
3 particular NYCHA facility, and we're picking NYCHA
4 facilities, and I believe that project continues,
5 right? Janine Ventura is the person who oversees the
6 Cabinet and oversees these initiatives.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: (INAUDIBLE) and are
8 there any challenges or opportunities, aspirations in
9 this space?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The
11 aspiration is that older adults and young people get
12 to see who they are, get to know who they are and,
13 once you hear somebody's story, it takes away all of
14 that distance and unfamiliarity, dissipates fear and
15 sees you as allies. That's the aspiration for that.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, and how is
17 NYC Aging supporting the provider network to do this,
18 which many are already doing?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Many of them
20 are doing. One of the things that we did was we
21 submitted a grant to the Robin Hood Foundation. We've
22 gotten accepted for the first round. We'll see where
23 we are, and it's basically to expand this kind of
24 work. We also wanted to do some work with Robin Hood
25 on looking at what are the intergenerational programs

2 citywide, what are the models so that then we, as a
3 Department, could start figuring out a way of
4 replicating those models. We're still at the very
5 young stage of that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely, and I
7 just want to confirm, you mentioned DYCD and DOE as
8 two agencies that you're working with on
9 intergenerational programming. Are there any other
10 agencies that you're working with on
11 intergenerational programming or just those two?

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, those
13 are the two that we..

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, great. Thank
15 you. Can you please clarify the differences in
16 responsibilities and functions between the Senior
17 Advisory Council and the Cabinet for Older New
18 Yorkers?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh, very
20 different functions. The Cabinet is City agencies
21 looking at services that they currently provide and
22 how we could accelerate those services or also
23 identify the gaps, look at the message and outreach
24 efforts towards older adults. That's the work of the
25 Cabinet.

2 The Advisory Council is a council of
3 leaders in the aging field. I think 50 percent of
4 them, somebody will correct me, they have to be older
5 adults, but they could also be providers so sort of
6 like me, I'm a, what is it, I always say I'm
7 Commissioner and I'm a client so you can have over
8 overlapping roles so you can be an older adult and
9 also be a provider and serve on the Cabinet, but its
10 function is, it really is, and I meet with them
11 quarterly, it is advising counsel to to us and also a
12 way of us reporting back to them what we're doing,
13 and it is a consultative process. I don't see it as
14 just ministerial and a rubber stamp that we have to
15 do.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, and what
17 is the full list of agencies and offices that
18 comprise the Cabinet?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I have that
20 here.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And do all parties
22 participate in every meeting of the Cabinet?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm glad you
24 mentioned that. I am pleased to say that many, many,
25 many of the Commissioners come to the quarterly

2 meetings. It has been such a model that the Tenant
3 Protection Council or Cabinet has been formulated
4 based on the work and the structure of this aging
5 Cabinet.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's great.

7 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So 24
8 Commissioners, do you want me to give you the list or
9 do you want me to just email that to you? You want me
10 to list 24 agencies now for the record?

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can list them now
12 if you don't mind.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you
14 very much. It's Civic Engagement Unit, Commission on
15 Human Rights, Department for the Aging, obviously,
16 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. By the
17 way, the Commissioner of the Consumer Protection and
18 myself go to many older adult clubs. We're doing this
19 little circuit thing now where we're informing them
20 about fraud and scams and tax preparation, and we're
21 doing that as two Commissioners, the Department of
22 Cultural Affairs, Department of Education, Department
23 of Health and Mental Health, Department of Parks and
24 Recreation, Department of Small Business Services,
25 that's because we're looking for opportunities for

2 workforce for older adults, Department of Social
3 Services, and the Human Resource Administration,
4 Department of Social Service and the Department of
5 Homeless Services, Department of Transportation,
6 Department of Veterans Services, Department of Youth
7 and Community, Housing Preservation, Mayor's Office
8 of Community Mental Health, the Mayor's Office of
9 Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor's Office of People with
10 Disabilities, Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, Health
11 and Hospitals, New York City Housing Authority, New
12 York City Police Department, NYC Service, and the
13 Office of Technology and Innovation, and I misspoke
14 before. The other agency that we work with on
15 intergenerational is New York City Service. We're
16 just starting a project with them and the Board of
17 Education, oh, they're no longer call that, New York
18 City Public Schools, and we're looking at
19 intergenerational programming with them centered
20 around pen pals, again, started by a high school
21 student.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Wonderful. Thank you
23 so much for listing the agencies.

24 When you said many, many, many of them
25 attend, do you have an approximate number or

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING

65

2 percentage out of the 24? Is it like 20 out of 24 on
3 average?

4 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's
5 probably about a good 18 to 24, and it varies. We all
6 have different schedules..

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, of course.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Which is why
9 we're trying to schedule them in advance so that we
10 can lock the date, and I must say that our Deputy
11 Mayor is very, very supportive. She attends every
12 meeting, and our Deputy Mayor also encourages other
13 Deputy Mayors to encourage the principals to attend,
14 which is why it serves as a model.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, that's great.
16 Is there a reason why certain offices like the
17 Mayor's Office of Food Policy were not included in
18 the Cabinet?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: If you're
20 not in the Cabinet, it doesn't mean that we don't
21 have a strong working relationship with you. We work
22 with many agencies that we are not...

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That are not in the
24 Cabinet.

25

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That are not
3 in the Cabinet. We work with the Mayor's Office of
4 Food Policy on a regular basis because our
5 nutritionists work with their units all the time so
6 that's an ongoing relationship.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and what about
8 the Office of Criminal Justice to assist older adults
9 who are justice-involved or exiting the system?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, we
11 didn't. I think they asked to be on the Cabinet, and
12 there was a rationale why we didn't at the time, and
13 I think it was probably because all of our services
14 are available to older adults, like there's no gap in
15 service, but I'll look into that. I don't remember.

16 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and are you
17 regularly adding new agencies or offices to the
18 Cabinet and, if not, are you open to that?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We're open
20 to that, but it has to be from a visionary
21 perspective. To sit on the Cabinet, someone's going
22 to poke a note at me right now to sit on the Cabinet
23 for the sake of sitting on the Cabinet and not having
24 a long-term vision of how your agency is involved in
25 aging, it really has to be like how are we pushing

2 this forward, and how will we, food policy is our
3 whole, like 90 percent of our work is around food
4 policy and we're working with them on a regular basis
5 so them sitting on the Cabinet doesn't improve or
6 change our food policy.

7 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I mean, sorry, go
8 ahead.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I know, so
10 I'm thinking, of course, I'm always open to that, but
11 there has to be a purpose and a vision for that.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I mean I would argue
13 that because of the strong working relationship you
14 have with the Office of Food Policy, that's even more
15 reason to include them in the Cabinet because then
16 they can provide best practices and learnings that
17 you all already have established with some of the
18 other agencies that maybe don't have as close of a
19 working relationship as the Office of Food Policy.
20 That's just one example, but I would also say about
21 the Office of Criminal Justice. It may be the case,
22 too, where the Office of Criminal Justice doesn't
23 understand how their agency might benefit from being
24 involved in the Cabinet and how, by being involved in
25 the Cabinet, maybe they can provide better services

2 and resources to folks who are coming out of the
3 justice system.

4 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.
5 Sometimes people have to be brought along, you know
6 what I mean?

7 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah. Yeah.
8 No, and I can see in that case, I can see the
9 rationale for the justice-involved and because we
10 have a Re-Entry Task Force, it's one of the things
11 that why we said probably not, but no is not forever.

12 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

13 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm an old
14 fundraiser. I know that. No is never forever.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Fair enough,
16 and are Public Libraries invited to attend Cabinet
17 meetings since they operate services for older adults
18 outside of what NYC Aging provides?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No. They
20 have not been.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Maybe that's
22 also something to consider.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's also
24 a consideration.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great. I assume that
3 you and your team organize the meetings, the agenda
4 items, and the priorities for the Cabinet?

5 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We present
6 to them the priorities that have emerged from the
7 liaison meetings, right...

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And the
10 principals come up with the priorities that we want
11 to also work on moving forward but, yes, we
12 administer it and we manage it, but we are not the
13 only ones who dictate what the priorities are.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And how does the
15 Cabinet structure work? Is there like, you mentioned
16 earlier, reporting back, that you report back to them
17 on what you're doing but do they report back on what?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'll give
19 you the structure. There's the 24 principals, then
20 each one of them has a team of liaisons that work
21 with each other on these programs. We meet quarterly,
22 and then the liaisons meet sometimes once a month and
23 sometimes they meet more frequently than that,
24 depending on the project.

25 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay? And
3 all of those meetings are hosted by Janine and her
4 team at New York City Aging.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great, and has the
6 Cabinet identified short- and long-term goals to
7 address? I assume that's part of the regular agenda
8 and program.

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Do you have any
11 of those goals that you might be able to share and
12 how they were established?

13 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The one goal
14 is to make sure that all NYC Public Schools have an
15 aging community. Guide and curriculum. Another goal
16 is to, in every NYCHA facility, create an
17 intergenerational team because we're looking at
18 community building. That's future. The other one is
19 looking at transportation and transportation deserts
20 and pedestrian safety. The big one is around public
21 safety and working very closely. We have trained the
22 police officers who are the liaisons and to continue
23 that work and then to continue even other officers in
24 precinct that may not be the community officer. They

2 may have an expert but then training other officers
3 so that's a long-term vision.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you just talk a
5 little bit more about the training specifically with
6 the NYPD? Is it training around ageism specifically
7 or is it?

8 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's two
9 things.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So it's on
12 ageism, but the other one is what are the services so
13 you might think this person that has been victimized
14 in their conversation with the police officer may
15 reveal that they're food insecure or that they no
16 longer have their footsteps so the police officer
17 then will know that there is a service that they can
18 refer them to to help them with that aspect, which
19 may have had nothing to do with their victimization.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, the initial
21 call.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So it's just
23 to make them knowledgeable. It's the same thing that
24 we're doing with the health professionals is to give
25 them a knowledge and a sense of what the network of

2 services are so that they could then be prepared to
3 also serve as intermediaries.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you, and then
5 in my District specifically, we get a lot of calls
6 from concerned neighbors about older adults who might
7 be exhibiting signs of Alzheimer's or dementia, and
8 so I'm curious to know if that's included in any of
9 the training or information sharing, specifically
10 with the NYPD. We work with our local precincts on
11 some of that not formal training but just
12 conversations around things to look for, who to
13 contact.

14 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I will
15 verify that, but I believe it includes some of that
16 information also.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then it seems
18 like this happens, but I just want to get it on the
19 record. You mentioned when the liaisons meet and it
20 seems like they meet more frequently than the full
21 Cabinet.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Are the liaisons
24 sharing information and experiences with each other
25 among themselves?

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, and
3 those experiences or those projects that they may be
4 working on, it's what becomes part of my monthly
5 report to the principals.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Got it. Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So I report
8 back because it's important, I don't want them to
9 just hear at one quarterly meeting everything that's
10 going on.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you, and
12 what areas for improvement does NYC Aging see for the
13 function of the Cabinet, and how could codification
14 of the Cabinet serve as an opportunity for
15 strengthening or improving it?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We'll talk
17 more about that as you develop the bill, and we'll
18 see the components of the bill but, from the intent
19 and in a broad stroke, as we are hoping other cities
20 pick this up to the extent that this is codified,
21 then you serve as a model and that this becomes a
22 practice. I see the Cabinet also as a strong partner
23 in terms of legislative needs, also a strong partner
24 in advocating for federal and state dollars as we all
25 emerge and we're not getting our fair share in the

2 state or federal funding either and so we just see
3 that as ways of leveraging resources for this growing
4 population.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Monetary and
7 not monetary resources.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Understood. NYC
9 Aging's Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for
10 Fiscal Years 2024 through 2028 decreased by 10
11 percent when compared to the Adopted Capital
12 Commitment Plan. The Adopted Capital Plan was 80.3
13 million, which has dropped to 72.3 million as of the
14 Preliminary Capital Plan. What is causing the
15 decrease in the Capital Plan?

16 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I have that
17 answer for you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: No problem.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I just have
20 to find it. Where is it, John? Because we went over
21 the capital plan again, and then I'm going to share
22 the Brooklyn example, right? No? All right.

23 As you know, we have a Capital Plan, but
24 we are also dependent on other agencies to implement
25 our Capital Plan. This has been citywide, there had

2 to be a redistribution and a reduction of capital
3 plans to some of the City's overall constraints and
4 the need to fund other mandated items in the near
5 term, and that was the impact that the reduction of
6 our Capital Plan so I think it's a broader issue.
7 It's not just an NYC Aging issue on capital plans.

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. So I'm sorry.
9 What specifically are you attributing the decrease in
10 the Capital Plan to?

11 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Just the
12 redistribution and reduction, the constraints of the
13 overall budget of the City.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and what are
15 some significant projects that were impacted by this
16 Capital Commitment Plan reduction?

17 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'll follow
18 up with you on exactly what some of those projects
19 may have been.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay and, for that, I
21 would also love to know if any of the projects were
22 in coordination with other agencies.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And which ones, if
25 so.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

3 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: During the
4 Preliminary Budget Hearing, NYC Aging stated that
5 many of its Aging's capital projects are managed
6 through other agencies. Which agencies, how much
7 capital funding, and what kinds of projects, and how
8 is NYC Aging coordinating with other agencies to
9 carry out these capital projects?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The majority
11 of our capital projects are around New York City
12 Housing Authority, and we've already discussed that
13 at length. The other ones are projects that we may
14 have that are handled by Design and Construction
15 Authority. One is the Covello Center and then the
16 other one may be Department of Finance.

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you know how much
18 capital funding for those projects?

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Do I have
20 the amount?

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I can get
23 you that.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, and can you get
25 us this...

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And we can
3 get it for you by agency, by project.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That would be great.
5 I was just going to ask for details on the projects
6 too. That would be great. Thank you. And then how is
7 a decision made in determining which projects are
8 managed by NYC Aging or other agencies?

9 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's the
10 type of the project. The Covello Project with
11 structure, elevators, and that's a design and
12 construction issue. If it's a NYCHA facility, then
13 it's a NYCHA issue.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, thank you. In
15 recent conversations with advocates, a common issue
16 mentioned was the lack of reliable equipment found in
17 older adult kitchens. Many have also reported
18 facilities within NYCHA buildings that aren't
19 operable and haven't been for a while. How many are
20 currently out of service, if you know, and how many
21 NYC Aging kitchens and clubs are there in NYCHA
22 buildings?

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Of our 308
24 older adult clubs, I believe the numbers, and I'll
25

2 verify, but I believe that we have 108 are in NYCHA
3 facilities, right?

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: 108 in NYCHA, okay.

5 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah. A
6 third of them are in NYCHA facilities, and in terms
7 of...

8 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Can you follow up
9 maybe with a borough breakdown?

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And do you know how
14 many are currently out of service?

15 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Our
16 kitchens?

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We're
19 developing that plan right now, and I can get that
20 information to you.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, perfect.

22 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: But just
23 remember, equipment is different from code issues.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yes, understood.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And then a
3 lot of the information is supplied in whatever the
4 Local Law 140 is.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: And then specific to
6 Intro. 689, is the Administration supportive of this
7 Introduction which would codify the Cabinet for older
8 New Yorkers? You addressed a little bit of it in your
9 opening statement, but.

10 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah. We're
11 supportive of the intent and our Deputy Mayor is very
12 supportive of the Cabinet so it's just a matter of
13 what the bill looks like and what are the
14 requirements, but absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Do you have any
16 suggestions or thoughts on how to improve the bill as
17 currently drafted?

18 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Absolutely,
19 I would love to have that discussion with you.

20 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay, but not now.

21 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Because we
24 have to think about what you're thinking about it,
25 what I'm thinking about it.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And then
4 beyond us, what do we want for the future, and so
5 that could happen in a way that works.

6 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. I look forward
7 to having that conversation.

8 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Just give me one
10 second.

11 Thank you. That concludes my questions.

12 We're going to move on to public
13 testimony. I would encourage you to keep one person
14 from your staff here. We only have about ten.

15 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We always do
16 that. I leave, and we also have people...

17 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Watching online, I
18 know, yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And they
20 report back on issues that we need to follow up with
21 you on.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Okay. Great.

23 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much,
25 Commissioner.

2 COMMISSIONER CORTES-VAZQUEZ: As always,
3 thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: All right. Thank
6 you very much to the Commissioner and members from
7 the Administration and thank you, Chair.

8 We are now going to open the hearing for
9 public testimony. I want to remind members of the
10 public that this is a formal government proceeding
11 and that decorum shall be observed at all times.

12 As such, members of the public shall
13 remain silent at all times.

14 The witness table is reserved for people
15 who wish to testify. No video recording or
16 photography is allowed from the witness table.

17 Further, members of the public may not
18 present audio or video recordings as testimony but
19 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
20 Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

21 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
22 please fill out an appearance card, if you have not
23 already done so, with the Sergeant-at-Arms, and wait
24 to be recognized. When recognized, you will have two
25 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic of

2 Interagency Coordination on Older Adult Issues as
3 well as the legislation being considered,
4 Introduction 689.

5 At this time, I'm going to call up our
6 first in-person panel. We will hear in-person
7 testimony first followed by virtual testimony.

8 The first in-person panel will be Kevin
9 Jones, Kevin Kiproviski, and Jeannine Cahill-Jackson,
10 if you could please come up to the table. Thank you.

11 When everyone's ready, we will start with
12 Kevin and then we will just go down the table. Kevin
13 Jones, yes.

14 KEVIN JONES: Good afternoon. Thank you,
15 Chair Hudson and the Committee, for having us here
16 today to speak about an issue that AARP New York has
17 long been supportive of. My name is Kevin Jones. I'm
18 the Deputy Director of Advocacy for AARP New York,
19 and we represent 750,000 members in New York City,
20 all across the boroughs.

21 Older adults are New York's fastest
22 growing demographic as has already been mentioned
23 here. According to a report from Center for Urban
24 Future, New York City's 65-plus population represents
25 grew by 36 percent or about 363,000 people between

2 2011 and 2021. These older adults are a tremendous
3 asset to our city and play a driving force in our
4 economy and our cultural life and basically act as a
5 giant volunteer base for a lot of the non-profits in
6 the city. Still, they face many significant
7 challenges that require unique policy solutions, and
8 older adults trust that the City will meet these
9 complex needs by providing resources and protection
10 throughout the work of all these agencies. I'm going
11 to submit written testimony, but I just wanted to say
12 how much we appreciate the codification of this
13 Cabinet, which we were very supportive of when the
14 when the Mayor's Office put that out, and I also want
15 to thank Council Member Hudson and her Staff for
16 reaching out in advance. We have provided some
17 feedback as well. I know there's several of us here
18 so we will submit this in writing as well, and we'll
19 continue to be in touch with your office through the
20 process so thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Great. Thank you so
22 much, Kevin. Appreciate it.

23 KEVIN KIPROVSKI: Good afternoon. My name
24 is Kevin Kiprovski. I am the Director of Public
25 Policy for LiveOn-NY. LiveOn's membership includes

2 more than 110 community-based non-profits that
3 provide core services which allow New Yorkers to
4 thrive in our communities as we age, basically
5 covering most of DFTA's portfolio. We're also the
6 home to the Reframing Aging New York City Initiative,
7 part of the National Reframing Aging Initiative,
8 aiming to counteract ageism and improve the way
9 policy makers, stakeholders, and the public think
10 about aging and older people so on that we're
11 completely aligned with DFTA and it's really great
12 that's becoming a big issue.

13 Aging affects all areas of our cities,
14 and we need to have all agencies recognize that and
15 act accordingly. The Cabinet for Older New Yorkers
16 has been a key policy priority for LiveOn and our
17 partners at the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging
18 for many years, and we were very excited in 2022 when
19 it was convened by this Administration. We would like
20 to thank NYC Aging for their commitment to this
21 Cabinet and their efforts to create a whole of
22 government approach to aging through this Cabinet. In
23 partnership with Brookdale, we've also created a
24 policy agenda called Aging is Everyone's Business
25 that covers services including housing, technology,

2 healthcare, social engagement, financial security,
3 and age-friendly design for physical spaces. We would
4 invite the Council and the Cabinet to review these
5 recommendations and include them in policies across
6 all sectors of the city, especially since the
7 Commissioner said that advocates can be key partners
8 for legislation, and we fully support the proposed
9 legislation, Intro. 689, that would formalize the
10 Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, and we truly thank
11 you, Chair Hudson, for your commitment to making this
12 city a better place to age.

13 I did want to highlight a couple of
14 places in which a collaboration between agencies can
15 benefit through the Cabinet. The first, I think, has
16 been spoken about at length today, which is NYCHA and
17 NYC Aging. We still have many issues both in clearing
18 capital funding to get to where it needs to go for
19 centers, even in the internal spaces in which it does
20 fall in NYC Aging spaces due to NYCHA issues. And the
21 second one, sounds like it's already being fixed,
22 which is great, which is the RAD/PACT clarifications
23 for centers in RAD/PACT spaces.

24 The next one is with HPD and NYC Aging,
25 there's a lot of opportunities for unique and

2 innovating housing models that utilize existing
3 housing stock to serve more people with services.
4 India Home is one of our members. They run a great
5 co-living program, but issues with HPD have always
6 prevented them from formalizing it through the City,
7 and we think that working with NYC Aging to show how
8 effective these programs are can push HPD to realize
9 how important they are and get them over the finish
10 line.

11 Finally, the Council and the Cabinet
12 should utilize the Aging is Everyone's Business
13 Report as a framework to create a just city that
14 allows older New Yorkers to stay in their homes and
15 thrive in their communities. Thank you again for the
16 opportunity to testify and thank you for your work as
17 always.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

19 JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: Good afternoon.

20 My name is Jeannine Cahill-Jackson. I'm the Director
21 of Elder Law with the Legal Aid Society, and thank
22 you very much for the opportunity for us to comment
23 on the subject of interagency coordination for older
24 New Yorkers and for convening this hearing.

2 A little bit about the Elder Law Unit. We
3 recently were created within Legal Aid in the
4 beginning of 2023, pulling together two units that
5 have existed for in Brooklyn for 50 years now and in
6 the Bronx for over a decade, and we're currently a
7 multi-disciplinary team, specializing in eviction
8 defense for seniors in the Bronx and Brooklyn, hoping
9 to spread citywide. We seek to address all issues
10 that allow the senior not only to prevent their
11 eviction, but to alleviate the underlying causes that
12 were leading to their eviction in the first place.

13 We first want to express our support for
14 the interagency Cabinet. So often we do see the folks
15 that come to us fell through the cracks for a variety
16 of reasons and aren't accessing services and benefits
17 that they could be entitled to and so, to the extent
18 that this Cabinet can help identify those gaps and to
19 either find need for new programming or to find some
20 maybe coordination for increased access to that
21 programming, this could be really vital. To that
22 extent, if the Cabinet was extended to include legal
23 services providers or other community-based
24 organizations providing these direct services, we do
25 believe we could provide unique insight into where

2 gaps may exist and perhaps some creative solutions,
3 and the Legal Aid Society would welcome the
4 opportunity to participate.

5 A few ideas that we do have regarding
6 ways that coordination could enhance the receipt of
7 benefits and services for our seniors and a few gaps.
8 So a few I wanted to raise are first that the full
9 implementation of the Right-to-Counsel could really
10 meet those needs as that's a large portion of what we
11 do is help the seniors access these programs and
12 maximize their benefits and income so increased
13 ability to reach Access to Council, and I'm happy to
14 talk about that more at length, and I will be
15 submitting written testimony about still the amount
16 of seniors that aren't receiving representation.

17 A few other ideas just briefly, I heard
18 my buzzer, there's really a need for a full
19 eligibility assessment for benefits and programs for
20 any particular senior. We get clients who, for
21 example, have public assistance but are unaware they
22 were eligible for SSI years ago. They might become
23 SCRIE participants when they become our clients, but
24 their rent actually would have been far more
25 affordable if they had received the benefit 10 years

2 when they aged into the program and then, to that
3 extent, a large gap is that once these seniors are
4 enrolled in programs, there's no agency we can
5 connect them to do the ongoing recertifications so we
6 can set our clients up with CityFHEPS, ongoing public
7 assistance, SCRIE, etc., all which require yearly
8 recertifications and failure to do will put them at
9 risk losing the benefits again that we just got them
10 so it would be hugely beneficial if that gap could be
11 filled, either perhaps through assistance in managing
12 these procedures and deadlines for seniors or perhaps
13 the elimination of the recertification requirement
14 for the seniors.

15 An additional gap which is always
16 surprising exists is that there is no agency or
17 service to relocate seniors that must move due to an
18 eviction case so they might have a rental voucher for
19 CityFHEPS, they might have their own ability to pay
20 ongoing rent, but there is no one that can help them
21 in the process of searching for the apartment,
22 procuring it, packing, and moving into the new unit.
23 APS doesn't do this service, legal services providers
24 don't provide this service, and so that's another
25 gap. While we all continue to work towards, and

2 that's fantastic, expanding rental vouchers for
3 seniors and affordable housing options, there is
4 definitely a need to fill that gap of how to help
5 them relocate. Some of these folks have lived in
6 their apartments between 10 and 50 years that we have
7 on our current caseload in the Elder Law Unit and
8 have substantial disabilities within their
9 households.

10 The last gap I want to highlight is the
11 one that's created by the failure to fully implement
12 the CityFHEPS expansion. One that particular pertains
13 to the senior population is there's a large gap
14 between who might be in need of CityFHEPS rental
15 assistance but does not qualify for APS services. One
16 example of a current client we have, she has a
17 granddaughter who comes to visit her to provide her
18 company. However, that made her ineligible for APS,
19 but that granddaughter cannot provide rental
20 assistance and so now she's facing losing her
21 apartment under the current CityFHEPS structure as
22 implemented.

23 We will be submitting our written
24 testimony to further explain and thank you very much,
25 and I apologize for going a little bit over my time.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: That's okay.

3 JEANNINE CAHILL-JACKSON: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.
5 Thank you all.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you very
7 much to this in-person panel.

8 We will be moving to our next and final
9 in-person panel.

10 Just a reminder that if you wish to
11 testify in person, please fill out an appearance card
12 with the Sergeant-at-Arms if you have not done so.

13 We'll be calling up Valerie Reyes-
14 Jimenez, John Holt, and Jeanette Estima. Please come
15 up to the table.

16 John, we can start with you and then
17 we'll just go down the table, please.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: It's funny. I was
19 going to ask if the mic was on, but I heard you well
20 so I assumed it was.

21 JOHN HOLT: I can run it back with ease so
22 I'll start again from the top.

23 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Yeah, if you don't
24 mind starting it from the top.

25 JOHN HOLT: Not in the least, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Sorry about that.

3 JOHN HOLT: No, quite all right.

4 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you.

5 JOHN HOLT: All right. Good afternoon,
6 Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee. I am John
7 Holt, the Senior Staff Attorney for the Harry and
8 Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice at the
9 Hebrew Home at Riverdale. As a multidisciplinary
10 provider of shelter services to older adults who have
11 experienced harm, we at the Weinberg Center see every
12 day the impact that coordinated responses across
13 government and non-government systems have in
14 assisting survivors of elder abuse. By identifying
15 the interconnected legal, medical, mental health, and
16 long-term care, social, spiritual, and emotional
17 needs of the older adults we serve, The Weinberg
18 Center is able to craft tailored solutions that help
19 them build supported, safe, and sustainable futures
20 free from harm. The Weinberg Center supports the
21 Council's proposal to apply this same holistic
22 approach to meeting the needs of older adults on a
23 citywide level through the codification of a Cabinet
24 for Older New Yorkers. We strongly encourage the
25 Cabinet to incorporate elder justice principles and

2 an understanding of the relationship between
3 accessibility and elder abuse in fulfilling its
4 mission to ensure equitable access for older adults
5 to City services. It is estimated that 1 in 10 older
6 adults experience some form of elder abuse each year
7 but, in spite of the prevalence of harm experienced
8 by older New Yorkers, studies have shown that only
9 approximately 1 in every 24 instances of abuse are
10 ever reported. In New York, City agencies and their
11 employees are on the front line, interacting with
12 older adults who may be at risk of abuse or currently
13 experiencing harm that they are unable to recognize
14 or unwilling to report. New initiatives, such as
15 training of staff on elder abuse detection, creation
16 of elder abuse screening tools focus on outreach to
17 isolated, older adults, and inter-agency coordination
18 of responses to reported or suspected harm will help
19 ensure that the City-provided services become more
20 dynamic in preventing ongoing and future abuse. We
21 thank the Committee on Aging and the City Council for
22 your work to support older adults and create systems
23 that better meet our needs. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much.

2 VALERIE REYES-JIMENEZ: Thank you,
3 Chairperson Hudson and Members of the Committee of
4 Aging to be able to testify today in support of
5 Intro. number 869. My name is Valerie Reyes-Jimenez,
6 and I'm the New York City Community Organizer for
7 Housing Works. We're a healing community of people
8 living with and affected by HIV. It was founded in
9 1990 with a mission to end the dual crisis of
10 homelessness and AIDS. Housing Works currently
11 provides a full range of integrated medical,
12 behavioral, health services and support services for
13 over 15,000 low-income New Yorkers annually with a
14 focus on the most marginalized and underserved, those
15 facing the challenges of homelessness, HIV, mental
16 health issues, substance use disorder, and other
17 chronic conditions, and incarceration. More than half
18 of the New Yorkers living with HIV are over the age
19 of 50. Housing Works, like other New York City HIV
20 service providers, are working hard to identify and
21 meet the unique medical, housing, and psychosocial
22 needs of older people living with HIV. I, myself,
23 came to Housing Works in 1991 homeless and at the
24 lowest point in my life. I was 26 years old. Now at
25 59 years old, I work full-time in the Advocacy

2 Department. I will have to say that I will have to
3 work until I die or can no longer work since I have
4 no savings or way to support myself other than Social
5 Security when the time comes. I also manage my
6 mother's healthcare, her appointments as well as
7 my uncle who resides in a senior living facility and
8 dealing with Access-A-Ride so those are a number of
9 things that I also have to deal with in the work that
10 I do. We're grateful to the Council for always
11 supporting the vital implementation of the Ending the
12 HIV/AIDS Epidemic Initiative, the ETE Initiative. We
13 clearly need better coordination across systems to
14 improve HIV prevention and early diagnosis among
15 older New Yorkers, and one piece of data that jumps
16 out regarding new infections among older adults is
17 they are overwhelmingly among black and Latinx New
18 Yorkers, and there's plenty more that I would love to
19 say, but ran out of time. The testimony will be
20 submitted, and you will have it. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Excellent. Thank you
22 so much. We appreciate that.

23 We do just want to remind people that
24 when you do submit the written testimony, we receive

2 and read everything so, even if you didn't get a
3 chance to finish it here, we've got it. Thank you.

4 VALERIE REYES-JIMENEZ: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Jeanette.

6 JEANETTE ESTIMA: Hello. Good afternoon.

7 My name is Jeanette Estima, and I'm the Director of
8 Policy and Advocacy at City Meals on Wheels. Thank
9 you, Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee, for
10 the opportunity to testify today. City Meals was
11 established over 40 years ago to fill a gap in the
12 City's home-delivered meal program by providing meals
13 on weekends, holidays, and during emergencies across
14 the city. City Meals strongly supports Intro. 689 as
15 it will codify an important effort to improve
16 interagency collaboration, remove bureaucratic
17 barriers, and better serve the City's older adults.
18 The Cabinet for Older Adults was created to bring
19 various City agencies together with NYC Aging to
20 facilitate the coordination required to address the
21 intersectional issues facing older adults. As you've
22 already heard, this population is rapidly growing and
23 increasingly diverse. Many experience chronic health
24 conditions, language barriers, mobility limitations,
25 food insecurity, poverty, cognitive challenges, and

2 social isolation, all of which are compounded by
3 ageism. Each of these factors can prevent an older
4 adult from aging in place safely with dignity and
5 social connection. One example of an area where
6 interagency collaboration is needed is the
7 maintenance of older adult centers housed in NYCHA
8 buildings, which was discussed at length today. The
9 Cabinet for Older Adults can and should help to
10 address exactly issues like this. Therefore, we
11 support this bill to ensure that the Cabinet
12 continues in perpetuity and with a defined reporting
13 process that ensures it can be an effective,
14 transparent, and accountable force advocating for
15 older New Yorkers. We've included some
16 recommendations in our written testimony, namely to
17 mandate quarterly meetings, establish working groups
18 to facilitate progress on targeted issues, and the
19 addition of several City agencies and offices. Thank
20 you, again, for your continued partnership in meeting
21 the needs of older New Yorkers.

22 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for
23 your testimony. Thank you all.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you so much
25 to this in-person panel.

2 At this time, if there's anyone in the
3 room wishing to testify who has not heard their name
4 called, please fill out an appearance card with the
5 Sergeant-at-Arms.

6 All right. Seeing none, we're going to be
7 moving on then to virtual testimony.

8 Virtual panelists, you will each have two
9 minutes to deliver your testimony. Please do not
10 begin your testimony until time is called by the
11 Sergeant-at-Arms, until you're prompted.

12 We're going to first hear from Coleton
13 Whitaker followed by Xi Zhu and then Ruth Stein and
14 then Dr. Cynthia Maurer.

15 We'll start with Coleton Whitaker. Please
16 wait for the Sergeant-at-Arms to call time before you
17 begin your testimony.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

19 COLETON WHITAKER: Good afternoon. Thank
20 you, Chair Hudson and the Committee on Aging, for
21 holding this important hearing today and for your
22 leadership in supporting the needs of older adults in
23 New York. My name is Coleton Whitaker, and I am the
24 Director of In-Person Experiences with Older Adults
25 Technology Services, or OATS, from AARP. OATS is an

2 award-winning social impact organization that offers
3 technology programs, community training, and
4 strategic engagements to shape the future of aging.

5 OATS is also the creator of Senior Planet, a national
6 program that helps older adults age 60 and over
7 thrive in the digital world and use technology to
8 improve their daily lives in five areas of impact,
9 social engagement, financial security, civic
10 participation, health, and creativity. OATS' flagship
11 Senior Planet Center opened in Manhattan in 2013 and,
12 in the past decade, has provided older New Yorkers
13 with a warm, welcoming community space to learn, use
14 innovative technology and be entrepreneurial. The
15 Center has a robust computer lab, an open seating
16 style working space, and cutting-edge technology
17 readily available that older adults can touch and
18 experience for themselves. OATS has historically and
19 currently received funding from the New York City
20 Department for the Aging to operate the Senior Planet
21 Center in Chelsea and the widely successful
22 programming at partner sites around the city through
23 the Community Connected Communities Initiative. As
24 the oversight City agency for older adult services,
25 DFTA plays a crucial role sitting at the intersection

2 of older adults and City services. That's why I'm
3 here today to speak in support of the expanded
4 interagency collaboration to improve services for
5 older New Yorkers across the city, specifically
6 through Intro 689. Formalizing stronger collaboration
7 across agencies alongside DFTA will help eliminate
8 age-related barriers and inequities in the provision
9 of services for older adults while also reviewing
10 current and future initiatives to ensure that they
11 are fair and inclusive for older New Yorkers. Our
12 hope is that in addition to the greater collaboration
13 as specified, there will also be stronger commitments
14 to collaborative data collection and, of course,
15 representation of older New Yorkers on the Cabinet,
16 which are key areas of importance.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

18 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can wrap up,
19 Coleton.

20 COLETON WHITAKER: Absolutely, and we'll
21 be submitting formalized testimony that includes a
22 bit more of our suggestions here. Again, thank you
23 for the time, and I appreciate the opportunity today.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you so much for
25 your testimony.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you very
3 much.

4 We'll be moving on to Xi Zhu. I apologize
5 for any mispronunciation of names. Please wait for
6 the Sergeant-at-Arms to call time before you begin
7 your testimony.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Okay. We're going
10 to be moving on to Ruth Stein. Ruth Stein, please
11 wait for the Sergeant-at-Arms to call time before you
12 begin your testimony.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

14 RUTH STEIN: Thank you, Chair Hudson and
15 fellow Members of the Committee on Aging. Thank you
16 for taking the time to hold this hearing on
17 interagency coordination on older adult issues. My
18 name is Ruth Stein. I'm an attorney at the
19 Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, focusing on
20 elder abuse legal services. For over 50 years, my
21 Council has been one of America's largest Jewish
22 charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate
23 10 departments ranging from 100 percent affordable
24 housing to our award-winning family violence program
25 to comprehensive Holocaust survivor assistance, other

2 senior programming, crisis intervention, and the
3 country's largest kosher emergency food network. In
4 total, we provide a wide array of support to over
5 320,000 clients a year, many of whom are older
6 adults. Met Council plays a unique role by offering
7 remarkably wide breadth of services to older adults.
8 Elder abuse prevention program, including the DFTA
9 Elder Justice Contract for Brooklyn South, family
10 caregiver support, geriatric case management and case
11 assistance, social work services at Met Council's
12 low-income senior buildings and our community center
13 sites in Brooklyn, Holocaust survivor services
14 including grocery home delivery and home repair
15 services for seniors. We are committed to serving any
16 New Yorker in need regardless of race, ethnicity, or
17 religion. My Council unequivocally supports Local Law
18 689, calling for the formation of an interagency
19 Council to provide collaboration to improve services
20 for older New Yorkers. Currently, there is no
21 formalized coordination amongst the various public
22 systems providing older adult services, leading to
23 both duplication of services and systems that are at
24 odds with one another. All too often, vulnerable
25 seniors fall through the cracks because existing

2 systems are confusing and cumbersome. It is our hope
3 this Council will address integration and
4 simplification of these systems, making it easier for
5 older New Yorkers to access services they need, and
6 Local Law 689 is a promising step. Our elder abuse
7 prevention program works with some of the most
8 vulnerable older New Yorkers who interact with the
9 social service, legal, healthcare, and housing
10 systems. Policies currently in place can re-
11 traumatize rather than support these clients.
12 Coordination between the various systems would
13 strengthen the City's ability to support these
14 vulnerable seniors. I'd like to share an example of
15 the Met Council client who suffered due to a lack of
16 coordination. Edith was assaulted after a verbal
17 altercation with her brother who shares the family
18 home. She was referred to us by the Brooklyn District
19 Attorney's Office who was unable to pursue further
20 legal action and advised us to seek a family court
21 order of protection. However, her brother obtained a
22 counter order of protection and since...

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: You can continue.

25

2 RUTH STEIN: Thank you. Her brother
3 obtained a counter order and has since called NYPD to
4 make false statements against her, getting her
5 arrested several times. The order has not prevented
6 the abuse, but her brother uses it abusively against
7 her. Her income is extremely low so she's unable to
8 find other housing options and, with inter-agency
9 coordination, her order could be honored and
10 monitored through NYPD, APS, the DA and/or her Met
11 Council social worker coordinating. We fully support
12 a codified Cabinet, and we hope to see progress
13 toward coordination. Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you very
17 much.

18 At this time, we're going to move on to
19 Dr. Cynthia Maurer. Please wait for the Sergeant-at-
20 Arms to call time before you begin your testimony.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

22 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Hello. First of all,
23 I want to thank you for allowing us to say a few
24 words. We absolutely, at Visiting Neighbors, are in
25 support of this law and also the fact that having

2 inter-agency communicating with one another very
3 vital, and it's wonderful to see this work going on,
4 but we know that there's a lot more potential. I'm
5 Cynthia Maurer with Visiting Neighbors. We're a non-
6 profit organization dedicated to keeping seniors
7 independent and in their own home for as long as
8 possible, and we provide a variety of support
9 services to do so, and we utilize volunteers of all
10 ages so we are probably an amazing intergenerational
11 program on many fronts. We serve majority, mostly the
12 oldest old. We've helped people from 60 to a
13 centenarian plus, and we have currently 25 seniors
14 that have hit 100, and we have a few more coming so
15 we are definitely growing older as a population. We
16 have a couple of concerns. One, we want to make sure
17 that organizations like us who are on the front
18 lines, in the senior's homes, seeing what's going on
19 are there to be able to make comments and suggestions
20 about concerns, large and small. Sometimes even for a
21 caregiver when there's an elevator that's out and
22 they're trying to get their beloved one out to a
23 medical appointment and that person is elderly and in
24 a wheelchair, it's impossible to do it, and it's not
25 always easy to reschedule a doctor's appointment,

2 especially if it's urgent. If a supermarket doesn't
3 have a ramp and seniors need to get in and out, that
4 could be a big concern. There could be issues with
5 medical billing, and it's annoying when you're
6 dealing with automated telephone services to get
7 through so we're hearing large concerns, big and
8 small, and basically every one of them counts and
9 matters so it's important to hear from the people
10 doing the direct services and on the front lines.
11 Also, it's very important to...

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

13 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Focus on advocacy
14 because we need point persons for these issues and,
15 if there could be somebody or a group where you call
16 for each individual thing, whether it's a housing
17 problem, whether it's emotional issue, that would
18 make it really helpful.

19 I want to just end on this note. My
20 grandfather used to say to his doctor, I'm having
21 aches and pains at 84, and his doctor would tell him,
22 Leo, I can't make you any younger. He goes younger, I
23 want to get older, and that's the goal here, is to
24 age well and to have a safer, happier city for our
25 seniors, and thank you for this oversight of all

2 these groups because that's important to Chair
3 Hudson, and we're thankful for that as well. We want
4 to help seniors change perspectives and see a
5 campaign. This is one last suggestion on aging issues
6 and not just the concern of having seniors that are
7 looked at in a different way but also having seniors
8 view themselves in better ways. We can't tell you how
9 many situations we have where seniors are still using
10 shopping carts instead of walkers and umbrellas
11 instead of canes for going outside and, when I asked
12 a 94-year-old Sue why she's doing that, she goes I
13 don't want to look old, and when we change the
14 narrative and perspective and say we see somebody
15 else who is looking very (INAUDIBLE) being able to do
16 this, all of a sudden they'll take the chance and use
17 the right mobility equipment or senior who doesn't
18 think that they can do some walking and gets outside,
19 and now we have a 90-year-old who's become a power
20 walker and our volunteers can't keep up with her.

21 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Absolutely. Thank you
22 so much.

23 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: Thank you for
25 sharing.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL PEPE: Thank you very
3 much.

4 At this time, if there's anyone on Zoom
5 who wishes to testify who hasn't had their name
6 called, please indicate that you would like to
7 testify using the Zoom raise hand function.

8 Seeing no hands, turning back to the
9 Chair for closing remarks.

10 CHAIRPERSON HUDSON: I'd just like to
11 thank everyone who's testified today. Thank you to
12 the Commissioner and NYC Aging for their testimony as
13 well. I think we can all agree that this is a great
14 opportunity for us to have further collaboration
15 around this Cabinet for Older Adults, and I think
16 it's a great example, as the Commissioner mentioned,
17 of more efficiency and ways that agencies can work
18 more closely together on behalf of New Yorkers so
19 thanks again to everybody, and I look forward to
20 finalizing the bill language. Thanks to all of the
21 testimony we've received today and all of the
22 suggestions and recommendations. Thank you.

23 The meeting is now adjourned. [GAVEL]

24

25

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 May 6, 2024