CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

            Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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                    September 30, 2024
                    Start: 1:18 p.m.
                    Recess: 4:35 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM – CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Jennifer Gutiérrez, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
                    Erik D. Bottcher
                    Robert F. Holden
                    Vickie Paladino
                    Julie Won

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:
                    Rita C. Joseph

A P P E A R A N C E S

Matthew Fraser, Chief Technology Officer for the
City of New York Office of Technology and
Innovation

Ruby Choi, Deputy Commissioner of Strategic
Initiatives for New York City Office of
Technology and Innovation

Amrit Singh, Associate Commissioner of
Application Engineering for New York City Office
of Technology and Innovation

Kristen Gonzalez, New York State Senator, Senate
District 59

Cynthia Conti-Cook, Director of Research and
Policy at the Surveillance Resistance Lab

Deyanira Del Rio, New Economy Project

Kim Moscaritolo, Director of Communications and
Advocacy for Hunger-Free America

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

Raul Rivera, self

Shelby Lohr, Day Care Council of New York

Kate Brennan, Associate Director at the AI Now
Institute

Albert Fox Cahn, Executive Director of the
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project

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

Kate Kaye, Deputy Director of World Privacy Forum

Kevin De Liban, Founder of TechTonic Justice

Clayton Banks, digital equity advocate

Sara Luria, Director of Workforce Operations at St. Nick's Alliance

2   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone

3   check for the Committee on Technology, recorded on

4   September 30, 2024, located in the Committee Room by

5   Nazly Paytuvi.

6   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and

7   welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for

8   the Committee on Technology.

9   If you would like to submit testimony,

10 you may at testimony@council.nyc.gov.

11   At this point, please silence all

12 electronic devices. Please silence all electronic

13 devices.

14   No one may approach the dais at any point

15 during this hearing.

16   Chair, we are ready to begin.

17   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: [GAVEL] Thank you.

18 Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to our oversight

19 hearing on the MyCity platform. I am Council Member

20 Gutiérrez, Chair of the Committee on Technology.

21   Today, we'll be discussing New York

22 City's MyCity platform in Intro. 821, sponsored by

23 Council Member Holden, in relation to the creation of

24 a centralized mobile application for accessing City

25 services. This hearing will aim to examine MyCity's

2   platform delayed launch, its functionality, the

3   product roadmap, and concerns about efficiency and

4   cost effectiveness, as well as the exciting

5   potential. Since our earliest meetings in this

6   Committee, MyCity was presented as a centerpiece of

7   the Adams' Administration's vision, a one-stop portal

8   meant to simplify access to City services for all New

9   Yorkers. However, years later, we're still seeking

10 clarity on core aspects of the project. We've heard a

11 lot about what MyCity could be, but today I expect to

12 hear concrete, actionable plans, clear timelines, and

13 specific deliverables, not just broad promises. This

14 is one of the only public forums where we, both

15 representatives and constituents, are getting updates

16 on MyCity. If this platform is truly designed to

17 serve New Yorkers, we need to talk about it like it's

18 a real product, what it does today, and what we can

19 expect in the next month, six months, and a year. I

20 fully support the vision. A portal that allows New

21 Yorkers to easily apply for and manage services is

22 absolutely essential, but building this system

23 requires more than consultants. It needs meaningful

24 engagement with both everyday New Yorkers who will

25 use this platform and the City agencies responsible

2   for delivering services. Without that collaboration,

3   we risk falling short of the platform's potential,

4   not to mention millions of taxpayer dollars wasted

5   while vendors profit from their contracts on New

6   Yorkers' data. We are here to listen, but I want to

7   be clear, we also need specifics. How are you

8   involving New Yorkers and the agencies responsible

9   for services? What measures are in place to ensure

10   security, reliability, and privacy protection? How is

11   this being beta tested, and what are the next steps

12   for expanding beyond the limited services currently

13   offered?

14   With many agencies now interconnected, a

15   single recording mistake by one could have a

16   cascading impact across many areas of New Yorkers'

17   lives. MyCity is not just an experiment or a lofty

18   idea it should deliver on its promise to make life

19   easier for New Yorkers. That requires treating this

20   project with urgency, precision, and transparency.

21   I'd like to thank the Technology

22   Committee staff, Policy Analysts Charles Kim and Erik

23   Brown, Legislative Counsel Irene Byhovsky, and my

24   Chief-of-Staff Anya Lehr for their work to put

25

2 together this hearing and our repeated follow-ups on

3 MyCity over the past years.

4   I'd like to recognize the Technology

5 Committee Members, Council Members Paladino and

6 Holden.

7   Now, I want to turn to Council Member

8 Holden, who'll be giving some remarks on his

9 legislation.

10   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you very

11 much, Chair Gutiérrez, and Members of the Technology

12 Committee for the opportunity to testify on Intro.

13 821, which aims to make City services more accessible

14 by creating a centralized mobile app.

15   As a frequent user of 3-1-1, I've seen

16 firsthand how technology makes reporting issues like

17 illegal parking, dumping, dangerous trees, potholes,

18 and other City services quick and efficient. I

19 introduced this bill two sessions ago, and even

20 discussed the concept with then Borough President

21 Adams when he was running for Mayor. He ultimately

22 created the MyCity portal based on this very idea.

23 However, while the MyCity is a step in the right

24 direction, it needs to go further. My bill envisions

25 a broader, more comprehensive application that would

2 not only provide the services we see on 3-1-1, but

3 also allow New Yorkers to pay parking tickets and

4 property taxes or access vital resources like their

5 HRA benefits. It would be a central hub simplifying

6 access to all City services right from a smartphone,

7 thereby reducing bureaucratic hurdles and making life

8 more convenient for all New Yorkers. Other cities

9 like Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Chicago have

10 begun expanding their 3-1-1 apps to achieve this, but

11 New York City can be the first to create the ultimate

12 one-stop shop application for everyone to use. While

13 the MyCity portal is a good start, we need a

14 combination of 3-1-1, NYC Pay, and MyCity, and that's

15 the main thrust of this bill. This is about making

16 our government more responsive and accessible to the

17 people, leveraging the technology we already have. We

18 have the blueprint with 3-1-1, and it is time to

19 build on that foundation. Intro. 821 is a common-

20 sense solution that will not only streamline

21 interactions with City agencies, but also greatly

22 improve the experience of navigating government

23 services for all New Yorkers, making it more

24 efficient and user-friendly. I look forward to

25 hearing from the Administration on this bill, and I

2 want to thank again the Chair for allowing me to talk

3 about the bill. Thank you.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Council

5 Member.

6   Today, we'll hear testimonies from the

7 New York City Office of Technology and Innovation,

8 OTI, followed by testimonies from the public.

9   Now I want to welcome Chief Technology

10 Officer, Commissioner Matt Fraser; Deputy

11 Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives, Ruby Choi,

12 nice to meet you; and Associate Commissioner of

13 Applications, Engineering, Amrit Singh.

14   COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Good

15 afternoon, everyone. Before we begin with the

16 testimony from the Administration, I kindly request

17 everyone to raise their right hands. Thank you.

18   Do you affirm to tell the truth and

19 respond honestly to Council Member questions? Matt

20 Fraser.

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I do.

22   COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Deputy

23 Commissioner Ruby Choi.

24   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHOI: I do.

25

2   COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Associate

3   Commissioner Singh?

4   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: I do.

5   COMMITTEE COUNSEL BYHOVSKY: Thank you.

6   You may begin with your testimony.

7   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Good

8   afternoon, Chair Gutiérrez and members of the City

9   Council Committee on Technology. My name is Matthew

10 Fraser, and I'm the Chief Technology Officer for the

11 City of New York, and I lead the Office of Technology

12 and Innovation, OTI. With me, I have Ruby Choi, OTI's

13 Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives, and

14 Amrit Singh, OTI's Associate Commissioner of

15 Application Engineering. Thank you for the

16 opportunity to testify today on MyCity Portal.

17   We're extremely proud of the progress

18 we've made so far, and we're eager to discuss the

19 future of the project and its impact on New Yorkers.

20 The execution of MyCity has been one of the

21 Administration's top priority. Our vision for MyCity

22 is to provide New Yorkers with a user-friendly one-

23 stop shop that makes it easier to check eligibility,

24 apply for, and track City services and benefits

25 online with a single account. Consolidating and

2   streamlining New Yorkers' interactions with the City

3   is our primary goal. The portal eliminates the need

4   for New Yorkers to navigate the City's vast

5   bureaucracy, to know which agencies to turn when they

6   need help, and provides a single sign-on to eliminate

7   the need to input the same information repeatedly to

8   access different services. On the back end, we strive

9   to enable agencies to design and deploy solutions

10   quickly and cost-effectively on the platform. This

11   portal has been and will continue to be built out

12   incrementally, with a phased plan for conducting

13   research, designing, developing, user testing, and

14   launching additional individual services. In March of

15   2023, the first phase of the MyCity became available

16   at mycity.nyc.gov, and launched a rollout of a

17   childcare subsidy portal. This was the first

18   identified priority in the Mayor's Report on

19   Accessible, Equitable, High-Quality, Affordable: a

20   Blueprint for Childcare and Early Childhood Education

21   in New York City, and was later codified by the City

22   Council through Local Law 103 of 2022. It was built

23   in collaboration with the Administration for

24   Children's Services, New York City Schools, the

25   Department of Social Services, and New York State's

2   Office of Children and Family Services. Prior to the

3   launch of this portal, New Yorkers seeking childcare

4   subsidies had to fill out a paper application and

5   mail it to the agency, a less efficient, outdated

6   process that cost families excessive time and effort.

7   Now approximately 75 percent of all new applications

8   for childcare assistance are submitted through

9   MyCity. Additionally, in March 2024, we expanded the

10 portal to allow families to complete their annual

11 recertification in MyCity, further increasing

12 accessibility for families across New York City.

13 Nearly 26,000 families have been determined eligible

14 for childcare assistance as a result of applying

15 through this user-friendly, easy-to-access electronic

16 application. We are confident it will help many more

17 families in the city to the City's eight million

18 investments earlier this year to continue supporting

19 this important resource. As we work in collaboration

20 with City Council to invest and amplify information

21 about childcare and early childhood education, we

22 expect many more families to be positively impacted.

23   Since the launch of MyCity, we've also

24 focused our efforts on reaching New Yorkers and

25 helping connect them to economic opportunity. After

2   extensive user research, we launched a new business

3   portal in collaboration with Small Business Services

4   last September. The business portal assists business

5   operators, including entrepreneurs, who are opening a

6   business for the first time, navigate the process of

7   applying for various licenses and permits in a

8   simple, step-by-step form. The MyCity business portal

9   also features a beta phase AI-powered chatbot to help

10   users quickly and easily find information, a feature

11   we continue to improve. Over 141,000 users have

12   visited the site, and more than 19,000 individuals

13   have queried the chatbot. We'll keep improving the

14   chatbot's functionality on an ongoing basis.

15   Over the last year, we've launched a

16   redesigned jobs website to improve New Yorkers' job-

17   seeking and recruiting experiences. This phase of

18   MyCity has been executed in collaboration with the

19   Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development,

20   New York City Opportunity, Department of Citywide

21   Administrative Services, Small Business Services, and

22   other agency partners. The Jobs NYC Talent Portal

23   unifies the New York City job-seeker experience,

24   modernizing how job seekers find and apply for jobs

25   with both private and public employers, leveraging

2 curated online resources, up-to-date training

3 information, and career fairs. This endeavor has led

4 to significant engagement, with email signups

5 increasing over 79 percent in the past year, doubling

6 the City's job application rate, and increasing the

7 monthly users to the website by 326 percent. We're

8 proud of what we've built so far, which has been a

9 culmination of more than two years of OTI's

10 collaborative work with our agency partners and over

11 a dozen M/WBE vendors, and members of the community

12 who participate in user research and testing.

13   That said, we aim to accomplish so much

14 more with MyCity to integrate more applications and

15 services into our simple, easy-to-use portal.

16 Building off the foundation so far, we plan to

17 leverage the information that MyCity account holders

18 have been provided to inform them of other benefits

19 they are likely eligible for, in addition to easily

20 screening for, applying for, and tracking the status

21 of services they're seeking. A key component of

22 making this a reality for many City benefit

23 application processes is providing agencies with an

24 integration playbook that would allow them to

25 integrate new or existing applications into MyCity at

2 their own pace. As we continue to assess new phases

3 for MyCity, we're happy to discuss what these may

4 entail and keep the committee included in the process

5 along the way.

6   Finally, I will turn to the legislation

7 on today's docket, 0821-2024 by Council Member

8 Holden. It would require the creation of a

9 centralized application for accessing City services,

10 including the ability for users to schedule

11 appointments for City services, reminders for such

12 appointments and the ability to send and receive

13 messages to such agency. As we've demonstrated, we

14 focus our efforts on a set of services available via

15 MyCity and intend to continue to make other city

16 services available in the future, addressing those

17 that are most in demand and that would benefit most

18 from the MyCity model. Further, we can talk through

19 the technical aspects of the portal as it exists

20 today with respects to web versus mobile presence,

21 privacy, and cybersecurity. While we appreciate the

22 Council's desire to enshrine the MyCity portal in

23 law, it is important to note, as proposed, the bill

24 would impact the way that we've built so far and may

25 hinder the ability to implement our work while

2   maintaining the flexibility in the future. We'd like

3   to hear about the intent of the legislation from the

4   Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify

5   today. I will now take Council Member questions, any

6   questions that you may have.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,

8   Commissioner, and thank you everyone from the agency

9   for testifying today.

10   I'm going to just start off with some

11   general questions about the portal. It's been a

12   little while since we've focused on it, and

13   Commissioner, you, in your opening testimony, talked

14   a lot about specifically the benefit to childcare and

15   the amount of families that have applied, the amount

16   of folks that have access subsidies that maybe they

17   wouldn't have before, which I think is great. What

18   I'd like to spend some time on is if you can share

19   some specifics of the current phase we're in and the

20   next phase so I want to start with, if you can share

21   how far along, in your opinion, is MyCity in the

22   rollout, right? It launched in March of 2023,

23   officially, open, accessible to all, phase one. What

24   phase are we in, and what can you tell me about kind

25   of how that rollout has gone?

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sure, so

3 when you look at when we started the process, we

4 stepped in in January of 2022. Just reminding Council

5 of the climate at that time, we came in off the heels

6 of COVID and, in fact, we were looking at potentially

7 another shutdown. At the time, City's job numbers

8 were down, and we had a task ahead of rebuilding, not

9 just the business community, but getting people back

10 to work. One of the things that we saw as a critical

11 need for those that have families, getting back to

12 work is something that would be difficult to do

13 without having access to childcare in some meaningful

14 way so what we did was we took a look across the City

15 services and made a determination on what we would

16 prioritize and, when we looked at childcare in

17 particular, the process to get subsidized childcare

18 was abysmal. It required a paper form that you'd have

19 to send to one of three separate agencies, and then

20 those agencies would then make a determination, and…

21   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And I'm sorry to

22 interrupt. This is just to clarify. This was family

23 seeking childcare that would qualify for a subsidy,

24 correct?

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is

3 correct.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is

6 correct, that would qualify for a subsidy. They would

7 have to send it to one of three separate agencies.

8 Those agencies would then make a determination and,

9 if you applied to the wrong program, you would get a

10 rejection letter that would require you to submit a

11 paper form again so then when we looked at that

12 process, it was very simple to see. It was something

13 that was critical, critical to the economic vitality

14 of New York City so we determined to go in that

15 direction. Now, in doing that, one of the reasons why

16 we picked that as a test case, because it gave us the

17 capability, not just to see what it would be like

18 working between agencies, but also what it would look

19 like working across partners that extended beyond the

20 City. So, in order to get the first phase of this

21 done, it required work, not just with New York City,

22 but New York State, and also with our federal

23 partners to make sure that we were complying with all

24 regulatory requirements, and we were able to do that

25

2   within a year span, and which brought us the first

3   phase.

4   As we entered into the second phase, one

5   of the things that we wanted to ensure was that we

6   not only continued to build, but we gave agencies the

7   capability to build with us at the same time. So,

8   we're currently focused on building a common services

9   portal, and what that common services will do, it'll

10   basically mean for anyone that's interested in

11   integrating a system into the MyCity umbrella

12   authentication, the way you log into a system will be

13   the same across all systems. It'll have a common

14   framework for how data is stored. One of the things

15   that we have, and that's a tragedy, is there's a lot

16   of data within the City's estate, but there's not

17   much context applied to that data so, if I look at

18   how an agency looks at a person, there isn't a common

19   understanding between all agencies of how we identify

20   a person, a place, or a business and, because of

21   that, when you try to use the City's data and

22   maximize those touchpoints to see how we can further

23   enrich them, because of that complexity, it makes it

24   very difficult to do so because we don't have a

25   common understanding of what those things are. So,

2 this phase that we're currently in establishes a

3 framework that says, this is how we identify people

4 going forward, this is how we identify buildings

5 going forward, this is how we identify business going

6 forward across the entire city, and now that gives us

7 the capability to reach through all of the systems

8 that exist and start to weave together a picture of

9 what those interactions looks like between those that

10 interact with government, both from an individual, a

11 business, or a property perspective, and this current

12 phase, will give us the ability to springboard other

13 agencies that are building systems to integrate into

14 this common framework, which will make delivery much

15 faster. So, the thing for us is that we want to make

16 sure that as we deploy, we continue to build services

17 that are not only important to New Yorkers, but we

18 build them in a coherent way so that they can

19 continue to layer on top of each other versus

20 building individual things and trying to link them

21 together later. This is one of the reasons why most

22 large application development efforts, when they get

23 off the ground, they start building a system,

24 someone's building something else, and then they have

25 to spend millions of dollars to integrate those two

2   things together so we're trying to avoid all that in

3   this current phase.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. So, in

5   this current phase, however, you are looking to

6   continue to grow and improve the existing areas where

7   MyCity is linking New Yorkers, so childcare, jobs,

8   benefits, and small businesses.

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That's

10 correct. So, when you think about, and that's one of

11 the things that we also mentioned in the initial

12 testimony was about benefits and making sure that

13 people have easier access to benefits. So, there's a

14 benefits portal online where you can put in

15 information and get high level eligibility

16 information about what you may be eligible for. It's

17 disjointed. We brought it together into the MyCity

18 portal.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Are you referring

20 to AccessHRA?

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'm

22 sorry?

23   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Are you referring

24 to AccessHRA?

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No, so

3   AccessHRA is a services portal, but outside of

4   AccessHRA, there's an actual benefits engine where

5   you can put information in and see what benefits

6   you're eligible for across the City.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: As part

9   of this current phase, we're building that into the

10   MyCity process, and the best way I can put this is,

11   at home, you may get a credit card mailer that says

12   you're pre-approved for a credit card up to a certain

13   threshold, apply by this date, and this is what

14   you're guaranteed, pre-approved. Now for benefits, if

15   we have information about what your household status

16   is, if we have information about your dependent

17   status, and we have information about income, we can

18   do eligibility assessments based on that information,

19   and we can proactively serve you with other programs

20   that you may be eligible for so, although you're

21   applying for childcare, and although the systems may

22   be disjointed, while you apply for childcare, do you

23   also know that you're also eligible for these things,

24   and here are links to get access to that stuff. So

25   having a common way that we look at people, a common

2 way that we look at businesses, a common way that we

3 look at properties, it gives us the capabilities to

4 look at that information and make some determinations

5 on what ways to best serve those people.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And the data that

7 you, in this phase, where you're looking at the

8 context of all the data that the City has, are you

9 looking specifically at data collected through

10 existing accounts through MyCity, the search engine?

11 Where else are you pulling New Yorkers' data from to

12 start making those assessments?

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

14 as it stands right now, the primary input is that we

15 have two ways that we look at information. When you

16 apply for social service benefits, whether that's

17 food or financial assistance, in the background, we

18 have an engine that collects a lot of that

19 information. Same thing with childcare. So now we're

20 unifying those worlds together and making sure that

21 as we collect that information, we continue to update

22 the context of the person who applied with the latest

23 information around the household so that we can serve

24 that information forward so we're using some of the

25 things that we've built in the past, we're enriching

2 it with some of the stuff that we're putting forward

3 with MyCity, combining those together to make a

4 better assessment engine.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And so the data

6 being pulled from childcare, that's specific to

7 information that people put on (INAUDIBLE) profile?

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is

9 correct.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And then on the

11 social services or cash assistance or…

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:

13 AccessHRA.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: (INAUDIBLE), okay.

15 And do folks know that? For folks that just have

16 AccessHRA, for example, do they know that their data

17 is being pulled for the purpose of improving MyCity?

18   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

19 when you apply for any City benefit, including things

20 like food benefits or financial benefits, part of

21 that application process is to make future

22 determinations or to make determinations on similar

23 services. That information may be used. So, we are

24 not taking anyone's information and using it out of

25 context for what they initially applied for, and I'd

2   also like to remind Council that we have an Office of

3   Information Privacy that's also built at reviewing

4   our use of the data and working out agreements

5   between the agencies that house that information and

6   anyone in between that may have access to it.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, great. I use

8   the app for my mom so I'm going to take a look at it.

9   For that information, how long do you all have that

10   information, people's data for, outside of the, what

11   you have from the MyCity portal?

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I'd

13   say retention of data is heavily tied to regulatory

14   requirements. So, depending on what you applied for,

15   the regulatory requirements and retaining that data

16   may be different, but in the specific data sets, we

17   could sit down with Council at any point in the

18   future and review the existing data sets and the

19   specific retention requirements. It's hard to tell

20   you that right now because some of that requires the

21   subject matter expertise of the agencies themselves,

22   but we can certainly facilitate a conversation where

23   we can review that.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: For the current

25   phase that you're in of assessing, I think it's

incredibly useful for people to know what they

qualify for, what they're eligible for. I think

that's all really empowering. What is that timeline,

I guess, or what are the internal benchmarks you all

are instituting? What does success look like in this

particular phase? Is success, we have client New

Yorker number one, we've connected them to these four

additional benefits. Is that success? What is that

for you all? And what is that timeline where you're

looking to be able to achieve that?

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, a

part of the complexity in building something like

this is that you have systems that are in the City

that have decades of inertia behind them and the

technical expertise behind those systems and building

those integrations, there's a mix of capability, and

I think for us, a lot of the work that we're doing

right now is going back re-engineering some of the

things that's been done and making sure that when we

collect information, it's the right information. But

for the specific program deliverables and things that

are coming out within the next quarter, our Deputy

Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives can highlight

2   some of those and what's coming in the immediate

3   future.

4   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHOI: Hi, thank you

5   for that question. So, I think the CTO had already

6   mentioned the platform that we're building everything

7   on is called Common Services, which has launched last

8   summer. The landing page where a user can create a

9   profile, that's where they save information they have

10   used before for applications. Our goal is to use that

11   platform to send notifications based on the

12   information they provided, what other programs and

13   services a user may be eligible for so that is going

14   to be a pilot that we're hoping to launch before the

15   end of the year ideally, but it still has to go

16   through user testing and review.

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, when

18   we say user testing, a lot of the feedback that we're

19   getting as we're building in the process, as we

20   mentioned in our last appearance, it's human centric

21   design. So, what we're doing is we're going to the

22   agencies that are providing service today to their

23   existing user base. We're getting a sample set of

24   users and we're showing them what we're building,

25   we're getting feedback. As we enrich and we enhance

2 the application, we bring them back to get more

3 feedback just to make sure that what we build is

4 useful for the people that actually have to use the

5 service so part of our development cycle is ensuring

6 that from a public sentiment perspective, we're

7 meeting the mark in terms of what they expect and,

8 before we stick to a hard timeline and deploy

9 something that doesn't work, we are more focused on

10 making sure the capabilities are in place and they

11 function in the right ways.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And notifications

13 are intended to be sent electronically only?

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sorry?

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Notification to

16 New Yorkers, like once you get past this pilot, how

17 do you intend to notify folks? Is it just through

18 their email that they provided?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20 it's either through email, going to the centers as

21 they apply, having resources go with laptops, asking

22 people if they're willing to help us test. I mean,

23 there's a myriad of ways that we collect sentiment.

24 It's not exclusively through a digital means. It's

25

2 also through in-person and going to actual centers

3 when benefits are being issued.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I'd

5 like to acknowledge Council Member Erik Bottcher,

6 who's joined us.

7   Can I ask, you touched a little bit on

8 this in your testimony, Commissioner or CTO, do you

9 have a preference?

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sorry?

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Do you have a

12 preference if I call you Commissioner or CTO?

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Whatever

14 you're comfortable with is fine by me.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Commissioner

16 is faster. For improving the remaining aspects of

17 MyCity, you touched a little bit on it through the

18 JobsNYC website, the small businesses, and then

19 benefits so I would love to know if you can share any

20 specifics of how you're looking to improve those

21 existing pieces of the portal. I can tell you from

22 feedback that I've heard, obviously, the childcare

23 piece seems to be the most successful, was the first

24 phase. People have been utilizing it now for over a

25 year, but it feels like the small business one, the

2   jobs piece, and even the benefits piece kind of just

3   refers folks out, particularly the jobs one and the

4   benefits so I would love to know if you have

5   specifics on how you are looking to integrate it more

6   or if at all improve, what are some of the specifics

7   that you can share with us that you've seen are

8   necessary to improve the functionality of the portal?

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I'd

10   say in order to understand how far we've come,

11   sometimes we have to take a look back at where we

12   came from. If you went to the legacy

13   nyc.gov/jobsportal and you looked at that, it was a

14   legacy PeopleSoft application. In order to search,

15   find, and apply for a job, it was not only complex,

16   but the website experience was poor. So, what we did

17   in those seeking jobs, we went to both hiring halls,

18   we went and we brought individuals in, and we got

19   feedback in terms of what about the site worked, what

20   did not work, and then we took market data by looking

21   at those that have the highest demand in terms of

22   employment, those that are getting a lot of

23   applications to see what works, and then we modeled a

24   portal that was heavily based on that design, that

25   approach, and what people liked about that. And as a

2   result, what we've seen is a 326 percent increase in

3   the amount of people that are not just visiting the

4   site, but also that are actually applying for jobs so

5   it tells us that, one, the portal is more friendly in

6   a way that people can use, and then also it's more

7   appealing for them to apply. I think any place that

8   you want to work, if you look at the digital

9   experience as your first glimpse into what the front

10   door of that operation looks like, the legacy jobs

11   portal was very poor, it did not provide a good

12   story, and I think now we're seeing based on use case

13   that it's doing what we intended it to do.

14   Now, when it comes to the business portal

15   and what we've done around the chat function, I think

16   for us, I'll give Council Members, the Committee just

17   a highlight. Like when you look at 3-1-1, New York

18   City runs one of the nation's largest information

19   support lines. Over 70 percent of the calls in 3-1-1

20   does not result in a City agency having to respond to

21   anything. People are calling for information. Now, if

22   you look at that demand and you look at the amount of

23   wait time that exists within the 3-1-1 universe,

24   we're doing a great job, but we could do a better job

25   if we can field some of these lower level requests

2   for information by providing something that's more

3   usable. The chatbot was the first phase at testing

4   that in a very specific and limited universe around

5   small business services, and that seemed to work out

6   very well for us. There was some initial sentiment

7   feedback that came out of press about it providing

8   some hallucinations and things along that lines,

9   which we quickly refined but, by and large, that's

10   giving us a foundation where we can start to serve

11   New Yorkers and provide more context to digital

12   assistants so they can start to field more of those

13   questions. So when you think about the limitation

14   that's on the chatbot today where it's limited just

15   to Small Business Services or people that are looking

16   to open a business, if we could open the universe of

17   that up to everything that 3-1-1 can service, it

18   would significantly help relieve some of the back

19   pressure that comes to coming into 3-1-1 and gives us

20   a better response time in terms of dealing with New

21   Yorkers that need urgent assistance from quality of

22   life related issues. In addition to that, the actual

23   small business portal that exists, again, that was

24   one of the things that we built in conjunction with

25   industry to figure out where New York wasn't getting

2   it right, and we've gotten great feedback from

3   industry that the portal's in the line of what they

4   need, but I think we are, in many cases, a victim of

5   our success. So as good as that is, people always

6   want more, and we're working to give more as quickly

7   as we can.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Thank you.

9   Can I ask for, related to the jobs site, the old one

10   that you're referring to, I agree, I'm looking at it

11   now. I'm looking at, so I got on MyCity, checked for

12   jobs, and then it refers you out, it sends you out to

13   the Jobs NYC, so the data that you were referring to

14   that people applied, that's from this separate site,

15   from Jobs NYC.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That's

17   correct.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so they're

19   not creating a profile on the MyCity portal to be

20   able to apply for jobs. They don't need to.

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So in

22   the background, although you have two different

23   experiences, that's the part of building common

24   services. The common services piece integrates

25   everything together. So, whether you've applied to a

2 job, or you're seeking City services in some way,

3 shape, or form, being able to give you one

4 introspective look at the City, and I think, as it

5 stands right now, in order to deliver expediently, we

6 had to reshape based on some of the existing

7 capabilities that we had. There was a jobs

8 application portal, how can we launch that without

9 losing customer information? There was a business

10 portal, how can we deploy that without losing

11 customer information? So, in each one of these

12 spaces, we use common design approaches, we use

13 common implementation schemes and, in the background,

14 as we look to build common services, we're going to

15 be in a space where it doesn't matter which website

16 you hit, or which one it looks like, when you go to

17 log in, and when you go to navigate through, all the

18 data between them, where relevant, with user

19 permission, will be shared.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, I'm clear on

21 that. I think it is slightly faster than 3-1-1, I

22 mean, I don't know how much faster, I just went on 3-

23 1-1, literally just put in jobs, and it recommended

24 the same site.

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'll

3 take slightly faster, I'll take it, I'll take it.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I don't know, I

5 don't know, I'm trying to understand. Okay, and then

6 on the chatbot piece, Commissioner, I think there was

7 a little bit more than just a little annoyance, a

8 little flack on, I guess, the information that people

9 were getting back, and I think AI can be a very

10 useful tool, I think especially in the way that a lot

11 of folks have been conditioned to search, I think AI

12 is the tool for them, right, but we heard of a number

13 of accounts, which I know I think the agency then

14 started to include a disclaimer for folks using the

15 chatbot so I would just like to understand how, and

16 can you confirm, are you using a separate vendor for

17 the chatbot piece, it was not created in-house

18 through OTI, the chatbot tool for the MyCity Portal?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20 both the MyCity Portal and the chatbot tool were

21 built with an amalgamation of internal and external

22 resources. The actual concept of the MyCity chatbot

23 was led and overseen by a number of people within OTI

24 and actually helped built by the folks within OTI as

25 well.

2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And so I think it

3 was a little bit more than just like a little bump in

4 the road because I think still, as of last week,

5 there were some instances of folks using the chatbot

6 for basic small business information, how to get

7 started, where to find a permit, and the information

8 was not necessarily accurate, so how are you all

9 looking to kind of assess that, like how are you

10 improving it, what does that look like, how can you

11 improve this chatbot feature if still, through last

12 week, there was inaccurate information.

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, the

14 initial version of the chatbot that was released was

15 using a legacy version of GPT, GPT 3.5, and then we

16 subsequently upgraded to GPT 4.0, right? Now, what

17 that means is the engines that make the

18 determinations in terms of what information it pushes

19 forward, as you go up in versions, the capability

20 significantly increases and it gives the algorithm

21 the ability to make better determinations on what it

22 puts out. In the cases where we got public sentiment

23 around hallucinations and things along that lines,

24 even in the reported cases, we ran an assessment of

25 every time the chatbot had been asked any one of

2   those questions, and outside of the cases that were

3   reported, there were very few and few and far in

4   between. I think for us, one of the things that we

5   consistently do, and it's part of the development

6   process, especially when you're leveraging emerging

7   technologies, is you continuously assess, collect

8   feedback, and refine, and when we're looking at

9   something like a chat instance that gives information

10 back in real time, and a closed instance, one of the

11 things that we did as part of the New York City

12 development process, we made a determination that

13 anything that we built, we had to ensure that we

14 protected our constituent data first so a lot of the

15 people that leverage public models, that model's

16 continuously refined by public feedback, someone's

17 using it, or you have multiple customers using the

18 same model, they can update in real time. For us, we

19 wanted to ensure that as we built, that those models

20 were only updated with content that we wanted it to

21 learn, and we have a team that's dedicated in

22 ensuring that we continuously refine that to make it

23 better. I think after the upgrade, or I shouldn't

24 say, I know after the upgrade when we went from GPT-3

25 to GPT-4, we updated some of the safeguards in place,

2 we've now put a lot of control in place. When someone

3 searches something which is outside of the chatbot's

4 capability, we've been very clear at proactively

5 serving up, saying this is outside of the use case,

6 please refer to the disclaimer.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and can you

8 just remind us when was the upgrade? If you've said

9 it, I'm sorry.

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

11 we upgraded the backend engine that's used to provide

12 information out. There was ChatGPT version 3.5, we

13 upgraded from 3.5 to version 4.0.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But when was that,

15 I'm sorry?

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Oh, I

17 defer to our Associate Commissioner, Amrit Singh.

18   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: That was

19 over the summer.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, because it

21 was launched in, was it announced in, where do I have

22 it? October?

23   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: September.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: September of last

25 year?

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

3   yeah.

4   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: (INAUDIBLE)

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so just this

6   summer it was updated.

7   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yep,

8   that is correct.

9   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Beyond

10   whatever phase we are in right now, which is unclear,

11   assessing data, hopefully getting through a

12   successful pilot program, hopefully sending

13   notifications out to folks, maybe by the end of the

14   year, maybe early next year, what is after that? What

15   comes after that phase?

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So,

17   after that phase, we're in the process of assessing

18   all digital City services and we're trying to make

19   the determinations of what makes the best sense to

20   integrate so everything from the universe of

21   AccessHRA to filing for building permits to anything

22   else that you can apply to online, we're trying to

23   figure out which is the best path and what's the

24   easiest thing to integrate into the system without

25   disturbing any of our existing user base so it's an

2 assessment that's currently underway and as we have

3 services that are identified for integration, we can

4 gladly share that forward with Council.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And do you have

6 agencies, for example, you mentioned that the small

7 business piece, that ask came from industry, do you

8 have the same with other, are you hearing from other

9 industries, from other agencies that want to

10 integrate their services into the portal? Do you have

11 any feedback on that?

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, one

13 of the things that we did, and this was a part of

14 establishing the Office of Tech and Innovation. Prior

15 to the start of this Administration, we didn't have a

16 centralized catalog of what the City was doing from a

17 tech perspective, and one of the things that we

18 wanted to ensure, and this would help us forge a

19 pipeline of what went into MyCity, is understanding

20 where the City was investing from a technology

21 perspective so what we did across all agencies was we

22 developed a survey tool, and we collected information

23 from every agency that was conducting a technology

24 project that had an individual or aggregate spend

25 that was two million or over, so that we can take a

2   look at where we were building and what information

3   we would be deploying and where we would put capital

4   out over the next two to five years. From there,

5   we've been looking at each one of the programs that

6   have funding, and we are looking at what's the best

7   pathway to deploy those programs. Instead of

8   deploying them in a vacuum, how can we use the

9   opportunity to renew those applications and fold them

10   into the MyCity universe?

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And do you have a

12   sense of when you would be able to make that

13   determination as an agency for the purpose of the

14   portal?

15   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I'd

16   say as we get closer to the common services

17   deployment and as we continue to refine the existing

18   services, as we enter the next quarter, we're going

19   to have a roadmap that's going to deploy or display

20   what's coming over the next year.

21   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So potentially

22   early 2025?

23   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

24   I'd say before the end of 2024, we'd have a decent-

25   sized roadmap of what will come over the next year.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, before my

3   baby's born, maybe?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sorry?

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Before my baby's

6   born, maybe?

7   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, okay,

9   December. Mid-December.

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It's

11 December?

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Mid-December.

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Mid-

14 December?

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I want to show

16 this baby the world.

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: All

18 right, all right, all right. You know, now that I

19 know that, that's going to be the gift.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: We want to see,

21 yeah, we want to see progress, and I think folks,

22 again, would love to have a better understanding of

23 like what's next, and I think in the launch, I was

24 like, oh, childcare and small businesses, that's an

25 interesting combination of like areas to focus on,

2   and so, yeah, I just think folks want to know what's

3   next.

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, I

5   appreciate the enthusiasm behind it, and I would say

6   our greatest accomplishment so far is the fact that

7   we've been able to deliver not one, not two, but

8   multiple services in conjunction with doing a bunch

9   of other things at the same time, and I share that

10   enthusiasm.

11   One of the things that I'm very conscious

12   and cognizant about is that it's easy to come out and

13   make public commitments about things that we will do

14   and not be held accountable for actually doing those

15   things. That's why I'm very conscious about when we

16   say we're going to do something or when we announce

17   something, it's something that's tangible, that's

18   something that will be done so, when you get that

19   list before the baby is born, right, anything that we

20   commit to will be something that's tangible enough

21   where we feel fairly confident that it will be

22   delivered within the timeframe that we set forward.

23   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, I love

24   hearing that. Can I ask a little bit more on the

25   childcare piece, because I am hearing kind of mixed

2   reviews from some folks about the length of time that

3   it takes to process so I'm not sure if what is the

4   system that you all have to be able to hear feedback

5   from folks that have already set up a profile, have

6   applied, is there a survey? What happens in those

7   instances? I work closely with the early childhood

8   education movement, and I've heard from folks that

9   saying like it's taking too long so they're just

10 going to the site and sending a paper application in

11 any way.

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So what is your

14 response to that? Have you heard a lot of that? And

15 what are some of the steps that you are taking to

16 prevent that?

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, we

18 collect sentiment in different places along the way.

19 After application submission, we collect initial

20 sentiment to see how people felt about the process.

21 I'm proud to say that most New Yorkers that have

22 taken the tool, I believe, is it over 90 percent,

23 that has filled out the application online has rated

24 the application a four out of five or higher, which

25 is significant, which means that people are pleased

2 with the application process. Now, fulfillment of

3 benefits is something that I would have to defer to

4 the agencies that actually fulfill those benefits, so

5 I would say New York City Schools, Small Business,

6 DSS, and everyone in between that actually pays that

7 information out, they're responsible for delivering

8 post receipt. I think if you apply online, or I

9 should say, if you apply online and then you submit a

10 paper application, in that process, it's more like

11 duplicating effort. I'm not necessarily certain that

12 a paper application, I'm confident that paper

13 application is not going to be served any faster than

14 a digital application. In fact, the digital

15 application's coming faster so they will be served

16 faster, and I think that the agencies in this

17 process, just like we've refined the submission

18 process, there's an opportunity to refine the

19 eligibility review process, and that's one of the

20 things that we're looking at when we talk about

21 future refinements with MyCity. It's like, it's great

22 that you can apply for the service in one place, you

23 can get a preliminary review of what your eligibility

24 looks like. All that's great. But after I submit, now

25 what happens? And that's the part of the refinement

2   piece that we're bringing into the childcare universe

3   to ensure that after you apply, that entire universe

4   of processing that application lives in one space so

5   you can get real-time feedback in terms of where your

6   application sits, and I think right now part of the

7   clunkiness that people feel to a degree is the fact

8   that you can apply and you can get determinations

9   back through one interface, but the thing in between

10   is being managed in separate places, which is what

11   we're trying to integrate now.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That's what you're

13   trying to do now. But you, OTI, besides getting four

14   out of five stars or five out of five stars, you're

15   not hearing individual takes of folks who are saying,

16   the processing time is taking a really long time, I

17   haven't gotten a response. Are you all hearing that

18   specific?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20   as the Chief Technology Officer for the City of New

21   York, my purview is technology. In terms of business

22   operations, I'd have to defer to the agencies that

23   are responsible for fulfilling those.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And do you send

25   those directly to the agencies?

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes,

3 those go directly to the agencies.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and then do

5 you have a sense if it's resolved?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sorry?

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Do you have a

8 sense of if and when those instances, those issues

9 are resolved?

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'm

11 going to defer to my Deputy Commissioner for

12 Strategic Initiatives.

13   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHOI: So like the CTO

14 says, we can't really speak to the processing on the

15 agency side, but we convene meetings with the agency

16 stakeholders on a regular basis, and we do hear the

17 feedback of some of the challenges and how long it's

18 taking for the agency to review an application. Many

19 times it's because of inaccurate or incomplete

20 applications, and that we are thinking about

21 incorporating into our future phases so that the

22 application itself can auto-check if you've missed

23 providing information or incorrectly provide the

24 information. This would help the reviewers review the

25 application faster. The other thing we're looking to

2 do is screening eligibility in a faster way so that

3 you provide less information as a user and being able

4 to move faster through the application process so

5 that's the type of feedback that we get from the

6 agency and that we build into our next versions of

7 upgrading the child care service application.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sure, and I

9 understand that. I think working government, I

10 certainly understand it but I'm just giving you the

11 perspective of a New Yorker who is, you know, just

12 online, could easily go to 3-1-1 and decides to set

13 up a profile on MyCity, has heard good things from

14 other parents, for example, and is setting up their

15 profile, putting in all their personal information

16 despite maybe what they wanted, but they're doing it

17 and they're applying it this way. If they're having

18 an issue, they're not thinking that it's the DOE,

19 which is, for example, maybe like the second or third

20 process, right? The first line is the MyCity portal,

21 and so for a New Yorker that is functioning on that

22 bit of information, they're expecting some kind of

23 service to the customer, to the client through the

24 portal, and it's the way that we're conditioned to

25 receive services, government or not.

2 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I

3 think you're spot on on that front. One of the things

4 that we are looking very diligently at is how do we

5 provide a more common way to collect sentiment, not

6 just after a process has been submitted, but as a

7 process is underway, and we're currently in a phase

8 where we're assessing tools that'll give us the

9 capability to do that, and do that not just within an

10 application but across applications so that we can

11 manage constituent satisfaction so we're looking at

12 that, and it's reasonable to assume that we should

13 have those types of capabilities across all City

14 systems and all City processes but, again, this is

15 one of those things where I say, we have decades of

16 inertia behind many of these systems, and user

17 sentiment, user feedback, public satisfaction wasn't

18 something that was contemplated at the time that

19 those things were built.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I have a

21 couple more questions, and then I want to pass it off

22 to Council Member Holden who's got some more

23 questions, but my questions right now are

24 specifically about the childcare piece again. Is

25 there any plan to incorporate benefits for New

2 Yorkers that qualify for Head Start or Early Head

3 Start? I know that has been an issue or a complaint

4 that folks have said like, yeah, I tried it, but what

5 I'm looking for is information about Head Start and

6 whether or not I can apply for the local Head Start

7 in my neighborhood, and so that they're doing

8 separate and apart. What was the decision to have

9 that be a separate process, and is there an intention

10 to integrate it because it's a City program.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It is a

12 City program, but it's administered in a different

13 way. So, one of the things that we looked at when we

14 built the childcare portal was it was built around

15 the childcare application, the subsidy childcare

16 application, which is regulated on a state level. We

17 don't have the regulatory authority in that space so

18 what we basically did was we built a process around

19 that childcare subsidy, and one of the things that we

20 heard, as you've mentioned, is that it's great that

21 it covers that universe, but what about everything

22 else, and we're currently in conversations with

23 schools about integrating the early childhood

24 education piece of it into one universe so that we

25 can provide more information out. Again, where we

2   started was a space where we had a lot of demand and

3   we had low tech capability, and we've brought that

4   all the way forward. In Head Start, there are

5   capabilities that exist in that space, but it's about

6   providing an integrated experience. Common Services

7   gives us a pathway to do that in a much simpler way.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So is that a yes

9   or a no that you are looking to integrate?

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It's

11   yes, we're evaluating.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: You're evaluating,

13   so it might not be possible.

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That

15   determination, it's hard to tell you at this moment,

16   but I think not possible means that you're not trying

17   hard enough. I think it's not a question of if it's

18   possible or not, it's a question of when.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And the reason

20   it's not included right now and it's something that

21   you are evaluating, is it because there's also a

22   federal interface or what is the reason for why it's

23   not included now?

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The

25   reason is the teams that review these childcare

2   applications versus the Head Start teams, and across

3   the agencies, those are different teams and different

4   eligibility reviewers, so we took this process

5   holistically across all agencies, and we took it in

6   place for this childcare subsidy, for Head Start and

7   everything else that has a different eligibility

8   review team that has a different process. It's almost

9   like taking a separate application and integrating it

10   into the MyCity universe as well so that's why the

11   determination was made. We found everything that had

12   anything to do with the State-regulated childcare

13   subsidy, we pulled it all into one universe. Head

14   Start is not in the same space as these.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: It's not in the?

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Same

17   space as these.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Have you heard

19   that from folks as well about their interest in

20   wanting to apply for Head Start?

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, what

22   we've heard across the spectrum is that what you've

23   done so far is great, but when will we have more?

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Do you

25   have a sense of, and I know that the data that we

2 have and you shared really, I think, promising data

3 of the amount of folks that have been applying for

4 childcare, where 75 percent of all new applications

5 are submitted through MyCity. I think that's great,

6 congrats. Do you have a sense of like what was the

7 amount of people applying just through paper

8 applications? Do you have, just so that we can

9 compare, because I will also say that the same time

10 that folks were applying, the City and the Council

11 had invested money in marketing so basically like

12 helping to point people towards the app, like we want

13 you to enroll your kids in our programs, we want you

14 to know what you're eligible for so it would give me

15 a really good sense of kind of like where we've come

16 from and where we're at now. Do you all have that

17 information of paper applications versus obviously

18 the information that you have today?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, for

20 statistics on applications, I can refer to our

21 Associate Commissioner for Application Engineering

22 that can talk about what the existing pipeline looks

23 like versus paper.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And then also, I'm

25 sorry if I could just add, if you have information of

2 people that are still using paper applications in

3 FY24?

4   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: So, right

5 now the majority of applications are digital. As of

6 this morning, we've looked back at the stats and now

7 it's closer to 90 percent actually that's digital so

8 there's a very small percentage of applications that

9 are paper. So, as far as applications that have been

10 sent, we're close to 69,000 applications that have

11 been sent and, approximately around the same time,

12 around 9,500 applications that have been paper, and

13 the trend has been that more and more applications

14 are now digital than paper.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So 9,500 in this

16 last Fiscal Year were submitted via paper?

17   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: Since we've

18 started this program.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, since March

20 2023.

21   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: Right.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And then what is

23 the amount, I'm sorry, you said it, of folks applying

24 online, you said 69,000?

25

2   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: Right now,

3   90 percent of the total applications are digital.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: k.

5   ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER SINGH: So it's

6   gone up from 75 percent since we've checked earlier

7   and, as far as paper stats from before, it's a little

8   bit difficult to report because there were a lot of

9   other things happening around that same timeframe

10   with COVID and those types of things so those stats

11   on paper applications are not as reliable.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And do you all

13   have a breakdown, I didn't ask for this before, but

14   of folks applying in the specific languages, just

15   curious for how many folks are applying in Spanish

16   and other languages and, if you don't have it, you

17   can submit it because I don't think I asked for that

18   before.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We'll

20   gladly follow up and submit in the languages that are

21   being submitted.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, so the

23   portal is in the 10 languages, right? Okay, yeah, so

24   if you have that…

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That's

3 correct.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That would be

5 great.

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Not a

7 problem.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Is it

9 possible for someone who is interested in filling out

10 the childcare application to not agree to the

11 permission to allow their information to be shared

12 with other applications, so if it's someone that's

13 just like, I just want to apply for childcare, I

14 don't want the City to share any of that information,

15 I don't want you to evaluate, assess what else I

16 qualify for. Is that an option or for someone to

17 utilize the portal, apply, they have to agree to that

18 term?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20 there's consent language that someone can opt into as

21 they're going through the application process and

22 they don't have to consent to sharing for it.

23   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'm so sorry, say

24 that again.

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: There's

3 a consent process as you're filling out the existing

4 application and, if they don't want to consent for

5 application being used beyond the scope, they just

6 don't have to consent to it.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, but they can

8 still set up the profile and apply.

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yep.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, great. I'm

11 going to pass it to Council Member Holden. I still

12 have some more questions on the childcare, but I've

13 spoken enough. Is it good now?

14   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, that's good.

15 Thank you. Thank you, Chair, and thank you. I'm going

16 to call you CTO.

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Oh,

18 that's fine by me.

19   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That sounds

20 cooler.

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

22   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Anyway, thank you

23 for your testimony, and thank you, by the way, for

24 upgrading 3-1-1, the app. I love it. It's getting

25

2   there, but we're not quite there, but I'll get into

3   that.

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We

5   couldn't do it without your feedback.

6   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Well, I have to

7   give you some more feedback because there's a few

8   things that I would still talk about, but we'll get

9   there because I use it every day and it's easier now

10   so it's getting there. Location services, still not

11   so great.

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yep.

13   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: A lot of dead

14   spots where I have to double back and look at the,

15   try to find an address, but we're getting there so I

16   appreciate that it was out of the blue, just, I don't

17   know if the Committee was apprised that there are

18   changes, but there's been some positive, very

19   positive changes.

20   You mentioned, on my bill, Intro. 821,

21   you mentioned in your testimony, the bill could

22   impact what we have built so far and may hinder the

23   ability to implement our work while maintaining

24   flexibility in the future. Could you elaborate on

25   that because this is why we have hearings so we could

2   get feedback and we could negotiate and we could

3   change things and we could change the language to fit

4   your goals.

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So one

6   of the things that I think we found that was a bit

7   taxing was the fact of a mobile application. I think

8   more and more services are being pushed towards a web

9   version, right, so as long as it's capable of being

10   deployed on a mobile format on a web version, that's

11   what we've been opting towards. It includes the

12   greatest amount of flexibility with the greatest

13   amount of compatibility so it doesn't matter what

14   type of device you have. When you have a mobile app,

15   in the event that you're building for Android, in the

16   event that you're building for iOS, you'd have to

17   either build specifically in those platforms or build

18   something that's a cross-platform application, and

19   those experiences aren't usually the best experience.

20   And I think for us, especially with the agility that

21   we're moving and the amount of services that we're

22   deploying, if we hold that to something that's web-

23   based but that's mobile-aware and mobile-friendly, I

24   think that's more aligned to what we've been building

25   towards.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right., so the

3 mobile devices, it won't fit right or it doesn't work

4 properly?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So when

6 you build an application that's web-aware, whether

7 you're using an iPhone, whether you're using an iPad,

8 whether you're using an Android device, a Galaxy, or

9 you're using a tablet, scalability, awareness of how

10 big your display is and adjusting content

11 accordingly. With a mobile-aware website, it's

12 capable of doing all of those things without

13 committing to building an actual mobile application

14 itself so most application processes today, there

15 isn't a specific…

16   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But see, that's

17 something we could talk about.

18   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes.

19   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: If it's easier or

20 if it's better that you have a way, other than what's

21 mentioned in the bill, we can negotiate that. That's

22 why we're here.

23   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

24 for sure.

25

2   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So I'm open to

3   that, I think the Committee's open to that if you

4   feel it doesn't work on the…

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

6   for sure. I think we can certainly follow up outside

7   of the forum and then we can look in detail at the

8   specifics of what works and what's the best path

9   forward and we can sort that out together.

10   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So like your

11   ultimate goals, do you plan to adopt the MyCity

12   portal as the only method to access services provided

13   by City agencies or each agency, what's happening

14   now, each agency will continue to provide access to

15   services provided by those agencies. So what's your

16   ultimate goal here with the MyCity?

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: My

18   ultimate goal, I should say, our ultimate goal is to

19   democratize access to government services in a way

20   that the people care about. One of the biggest

21   challenges I feel and that I've seen across the City

22   is that all of our digital presence, all of our

23   applications have been built and it's been focused

24   around agency identity, right, and it's like each one

25   of these agencies are their own companies. And for

2   the City, the average person that lives in the city

3   doesn't want to understand the complexities between

4   where DOB steps in and where HPD comes in, and they

5   don't want to understand the brand and the propaganda

6   information around what the agencies look like. They

7   don't care. And our goal is through MyCity is for it

8   to be your pathway into the City. Remove the agency

9   specific branding, remove the agency specific

10   experience and build one way where our constituents

11   can interact with government in a way that provides

12   them access to what they need. And I think for us,

13   the more that we continue to propagate the agency

14   specific approach, we find ourselves further and

15   further away from what the actual individual, what

16   the person in New York City is looking for.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, and that's

18   the reason why we want that one portal where the

19   agencies can hash it out and we don't need to hear.

20   In fact, we get that every day in the Council

21   offices, like, well, DOT says it's not their

22   jurisdiction and they'll kick it to DEP and it goes

23   back and forth. This is talking about a manhole.

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yep.

25

2   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You know, just

3 like, you know, something very simple that turns into

4 a year-long debate of who's responsible, and these

5 are the things, that's why we need one location, one

6 site to access all City services and, you know, and

7 then a user number and I'd be able to delete things I

8 don't want on there and I'd be able to, it's like,

9 it's my own, you know, portal into the City.

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

11   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's what you

12 envision, right?

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'm with

14 you.

15   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'm with

17 you.

18   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: More

20 than you could imagine.

21   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right, so

22 let's keep this, the bill, at least let's talk about

23 it because then otherwise, you know, when I'm gone,

24 you're gone and then this could just go into outer

25 space again where there's no goals and we don't have

2   like sort of a roadmap for this where it can go on

3   and on. You know, it's happened before you came here.

4   We kept getting, the deadlines kept getting pushed

5   back even before the pandemic so that's why, I was in

6   the Council, the first Council, a lot of things in

7   technology were delayed.

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

9   I'd say, all right, so here's a…

10   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: It's complicated.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No, it's

12   not really that complicated. I'd say when you look

13   across the spectrum and you look back at legacy

14   instances of what technology looked like in the City,

15   you had a Department of Information Tech and

16   Telecommunications, which was a managed service

17   provider to City agencies and, as a result, it didn't

18   have any authority to look at programs that cut

19   across business lines and do anything about it, and

20   the biggest thing that they focused on on day-to-day

21   basis was whether applications were up or down where

22   the data centers were operating or not and things

23   along that lines. Our greatest success is that over

24   the past two years, we've taken that conversation.

25   These days, we don't sit and we don't talk about

2   infrastructure-related issues. We don't talk about

3   services being down. In fact, if you look across over

4   the past two years, services have been more stable

5   than they ever have in City history, and now we're

6   talking about rebranding, changing applications and

7   changing digital experiences in a way that the City's

8   never really considered it before, and a lot of that

9   is due to not just this Administration, but it's also

10   due to the Council leading and pushing us in the

11   direction to make sure that we get there so I'm not a

12   fan of continuing to perpetuate the individual

13   experience. I think it's important for us to continue

14   to democratize that and, instead of focusing on an

15   agency-specific brand, it has to be the New York City

16   brand.

17   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Good answer. Thank

18   you so much, CTO.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank

20   you, sir.

21   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Council

23   Member.

24   Council Member Paladino, you have a

25   question? Go for it.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you very

3 much. I'm taking a slightly different turn on this.

4 I'm going to talk a little bit about security. And

5 when we brought up last year, we talked about the

6 wallet, the City Wallet, what security measures are

7 being put into place, but let me start off by reading

8 a little paragraph here. Intro. 0821, a local law to

9 amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York

10 in relation to the creation of a centralized mobile

11 application for accessing City services. This bill

12 would require the Department of Information

13 Technology and Telecommunications to create a single

14 mobile application allowing the public access

15 services provided by different City agencies. The

16 application would be accessible for persons with

17 disabilities. Now here it is. The Department would

18 encrypt all exchanges or transfers between the web

19 server, the mobile application, the application

20 software would open a source and make it publicly

21 accessible. So here's where my question is. What

22 measures are going to be taken to ensure the identity

23 is protected? AI information is accurate, yes? How

24 much money has been spent so far on the MyCity

25 portal? But let me go back again to the protection of

2 a person's public trust, and it seems like 821 is

3 addressing that. Centralized system to access

4 services is great. It needs to be simple system. But

5 more importantly, what I fear, and I always do that,

6 it's the big brother stuff that I always have a

7 problem with. We have data breaches all the time.

8 Identity theft is common. Encrypted exchanges, as

9 outlined in Intro. 821, would ensure safe exchanges?

10 Can you explain this to me, please? And how can we be

11 concerned about the tracking aspect of all of this? I

12 know I just laid out a whole bunch of stuff to you so

13 let's just talk about what measures are being taken

14 to ensure that a person's identity is not, like, this

15 is like super important.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank

17 you very much for the question, and it's actually a

18 very insightful question. So, here's the thing. When

19 you look at AI tools and tools that make

20 determinations based on any information that's

21 provided, one of the reasons why we built the MyCity

22 chatbot in a closed environment is we wanted to make

23 sure that we didn't inadvertently share our

24 constituent information with anyone except the City.

25 So whenever you use the MyCity chatbot, no one

2 outside of the City has access to any of that

3 information and can use that information towards

4 anything because it's developed in a closed

5 environment.

6   From an authentication perspective, the

7 thing that you mentioned in terms of services when

8 you log in to make sure that data is encrypted,

9 that's a common practice that we employ across not

10 just internal applications, but applications that are

11 deployed out to the public. Part of any application

12 development process, New York City Cyber Command has

13 an application review process where they look at the

14 security of the application, not just for internal

15 use, but from a public perspective, and then we also

16 have partners that we use to validate that those

17 applications are secure and they meet industry

18 standards in terms of best security practices.

19   I think for us, and as you mentioned,

20 like the big brother aspect, a lot of times when

21 you're leveraging tools online and you're using

22 things like chatbots to some degree, a large part of

23 the information that you provide out is used in the

24 background and can be used to enrich that chatbot,

25 but that means other people have access to it. That's

2   part of the reason why when we deployed it, we wanted

3   to make sure that that wasn't the case for the New

4   York City instance, which is why it's in a closed

5   environment.

6   Now, the consequence or the trade-off

7   that you take by doing it that way, is it means that

8   everything that that bot has to learn, you have to

9   teach it, and it doesn't evolve as quickly as some of

10   the bots that are learning in real time from

11   information that's being used in a public forum, and

12   I think for us, I'd rather trade capability for

13   personal security every day, because once we lose it,

14   we can't get it back.

15   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Now, going to

16   the wallet, how do you plan to verify the identity of

17   individuals using the City Digital Wallet, or

18   otherwise prevent identity fraud?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20   one of the things that we're looking at right now,

21   and the wallet is a critical piece of how services

22   will be rendered going forward. The best way I can

23   put this is that when you look at whether you get

24   transit benefits or you get food benefits or you get

25   financial benefits, those are all served to you on

2   different means, meaning that in some cases, you'll

3   get a check, in other cases you'll get a card, and

4   you have to manage the balances on all those things

5   individually. The concept of having a digital wallet

6   where you can bring all those things together is one

7   of the things that we are diligently exploring, but

8   we want to ensure that when we do that, it's done

9   right.

10   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yeah.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So the

12   same, what we're exploring at this moment is, by the

13   time you get a check from us for anything, for any

14   benefit, or you get a card, there's an eligibility

15   review that's performed, your identity has been

16   confirmed, and that card, that check is issued to a

17   person.

18   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: But how do you

19   confirm the identity?

20   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, the

21   identity would be confirmed as part of the

22   application review process for anyone that's applying

23   for a specific benefit. So, because you signed up for

24   a digital wallet, or you signed up for the service,

25   theoretically, because it's not in place yet, but

2   when you apply for one of those services, and you

3   say, I want that wallet, that wallet will not have

4   any assets inside until your identity is validated as

5   part of the normal application review process so,

6   let's say, for this moment, if we had New York City,

7   newyorkcitywallet.nyc.gov and you applied for that

8   wallet and, before any benefits were distributed to

9   the wallet, someone would have to confirm that you

10   were eligible for those benefits. They would have to

11   link those benefits to a wallet, and to make sure

12   that information goes into a place where we know you

13   are who you say you are, and that's how we would

14   prevent fraud. Making sure that the people that are

15   responsible for reviewing the applications today,

16   reviewing the specific details around the person

17   that's applying, making sure that all those

18   components are a part of their review before a single

19   benefit was issued onto the wallet.

20   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I just think

21   because, you know, in today's world that we live in,

22   everything becomes public knowledge, whether it's

23   real or whether it's not real, and it seems like

24   people have got a great deal of power over us as

25

2   individuals and our right to privacy and all that. We

3   have the, what, the new phones coming out?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

5   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: The 16. That's

6   all AI. I don't know why anybody would want to put

7   their life in their… I just don't, I don't get it.

8   But security is super, super important, and what's

9   individual's privacy is their privacy, and they're

10   entitled to it so I always worry about who has

11   access, who can gain access to anybody's information.

12   You just don't really feel safe anymore in the

13   environment that we live in. We really don't. And

14   that's for the person that's doing the right thing

15   just as much as the person that's doing the wrong

16   thing.

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I'd

18   say it's a very valid concern. The one thing that I

19   would mention in this space is that inadvertently

20   when you apply for services or you download

21   applications, people should pay very close attention

22   to…

23   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Of course.

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The

25   disclaimers that they sign off on.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's right,

3 and they don't.

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Because

5 in those disclaimers is the details around how people

6 can use your information for other things.

7   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: The devil is

8 always in the details. I do a lot of shopping online,

9 and they pop up this thing, it says something about

10 cookies. What the hell is a cookie? I swear, I'm

11 like, no, all right. Whether I know what they're

12 talking about or not, the answer is no, and that's

13 it, but I want to tell you something. We used 3-1-1

14 over the past weekend, and I have to tell you, it was

15 phenomenal.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I love

17 that.

18   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Because we had

19 several drifting, they were homeless drifting through

20 my community, and man, oh man, got on the phone, they

21 hooked me up with exactly who needed to get hooked up

22 with, and the problems were solved within a three-

23 hour time period so I want to say thank you very much

24 for that.

25

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank

3   you, thank you.

4   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: So yes, there

5   has been changes.

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Oh, one

7   of the things I'd just like to give kudos to, like a

8   lot of this work wouldn't be possible without the

9   team at OTI that actually does the day-to-day work to

10 make sure things like this are reality. A lot of the

11 work that you're seeing on 3-1-1 was actually

12 overseen by my Associate Commissioner for Application

13 Engineering, Amrit Singh so day-to-day, making sure

14 that people get the best from those apps, he's one of

15 the people that actually made that happen.

16   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: (INAUDIBLE) some

17 debacle going. Three different areas of the

18 neighborhood in the community, and people not in such

19 great shape, and they managed to get their services

20 that they needed to them immediately, and when I say

21 immediately, three hours for New York City in what

22 we're in right now, I think it's pretty good so thank

23 you very much for your time.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Council

25 Member.

2   COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I appreciate it.

3   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Thank

5 you.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Commissioner, I

7 want to just touch on some of the responses about the

8 digital wallet. Thank you. You hadn't mentioned it.

9 You said it was a critical part of moving forward.

10 Every time I asked what the plan was earlier today,

11 you hadn't mentioned the digital wallet piece so can

12 we spend some more time on how you were all thinking

13 through how you plan on verifying individuals? How is

14 data being collected? What is it being used for? Who

15 would manage it? Can you speak a little bit to that?

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, for

17 the digital wallet component, what we're currently

18 evaluating is how can we have an account or a means

19 to provide distribution of financial benefits,

20 security access, and identification? How can we get

21 all those things into a single platform? And we've

22 been evaluating partners in this space that's capable

23 of doing these kinds of things, and I think for us,

24 one of the things we want to ensure that as we push

25 forward on this front, we provide something that

2   provides access to all of the key areas that we need

3   to serve without shortchanging New Yorkers. That's

4   why we haven't pushed to release anything as yet. We

5   want to make sure that it's done in the right way. As

6   it stands right now for eligibility review, what we

7   plan to lean on is the agency's eligibility review

8   for the applications themselves to deem whether

9   someone should get a benefit or not to validate both

10   identity and then from there, once an agency has

11   determined eligibility, they have a means to look up

12   an individual and link that distribution of benefit

13   onto a wallet or they can choose to redeem it how

14   they traditionally have in a different way. And I

15   think for us, over the next quarter, as we get

16   towards the end of the year, again, before the baby's

17   born, we're going to have more insight into

18   particularly what that would look like and the

19   platform that we may deliver it on.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That you may

21   deliver. So maybe no digital wallet through MyCity.

22   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So we

23   have a central identity store where we keep

24   information about the person who's applied and some

25   of the information that they provided. When I look at

2 the concept of a digital wallet, it's more than just

3 identity. It's identity. It's also access and

4 distribution, and the access and distribution pieces

5 are what we don't have today.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, but there is

7 theoretically a time and space with…

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No, it

9 will certainly come. It will certainly come.

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: You're confident

11 digital wallet will be a tool of the portal?

12 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I am

13 indeed.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. You know,

15 there's a ton of concerns about data collection and

16 data information, what you're doing with that

17 information. Can you share a little bit more about

18 that in the relation to the partners that you

19 mentioned in this space, if you want to get into

20 specifics, but is there anything you can share about

21 that?

22 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No

23 problem. So, we haven't determined who the partner is

24 yet. We're currently evaluating, and what I'd say in

25 that space is, regardless of the decision that we

2   make, there's a cloud rider, there's a privacy rider,

3   and there's a security review for any technology that

4   we adapt and we bring in that serves our

5   constituency, and we want to ensure that in that

6   process, we're not trading off security for

7   capability, as I mentioned. If I have to trade

8   security and privacy for capability, I will do it

9   every day of the week. In terms of public sentiment

10   around trust, I'd look back in the past when email

11   came out, everyone thought that email wasn't secure,

12   someone was going to get their information. At some

13   point, post mail was still the primary and we drifted

14   away from post mail and email is now the way that

15   most people send correspondence. I'd say very

16   similarly, when you look at the managing public

17   benefit, in many other spaces, rendering public

18   benefit or rendering benefits on a digital ID, a good

19   example of this is Starbucks. You go to Starbucks,

20   you buy coffee, there's a Starbucks application, you

21   can load that application with money, you can use

22   that application to conduct transactions and you get

23   loyalty from using the application. It's a way that

24   the public has come to terms with in many different

25   spaces. I think in government, we are in the digital

2   stone age when it comes to rendering these types of

3   benefits and as we mature, it's going to take people

4   who are recipients of the benefits a little bit of

5   time to get comfortable with it, but we're here, we

6   have offices that are dedicated to ensure that

7   they're secure and their privacy is maintained and

8   we're going to do what's necessary to continue to

9   maintain and build public trust.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, I mean, I

11   think the service, I mean, it's very different, I

12   think, for someone who uses Starbucks and is using

13   their app than someone who's depending on cash

14   assistance or whatever it is, whatever the vision is

15   for the cyber wallet. I mean, just all of last year,

16   the number of constituents that came into my offices

17   for fraud because their EBT income was stolen and

18   continues to be so, I mean, you have to understand

19   that, I think the public's trust in a single City

20   agency to roll this out in a safe and secure way has

21   really certainly been eroded in the last couple of

22   weeks or so but I think it's a really tough sell

23   despite how much faster it could be and we're also

24   talking about people who are looking for a service,

25   who are in some kind of way, potentially in a

2   vulnerable position so I personally have a ton of

3   concerns about supporting and moving forward with a

4   digital wallet for the purpose of New Yorkers being

5   able to spend. I also think the feature about

6   potentially being able to monitor spending habits and

7   where they're shopping and the things that they're

8   getting, I don't know if that's being communicated to

9   New Yorkers, how that is beneficial to them so I

10   personally have concerns about that.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, I

12   agree. I think when we deployed MyCity around

13   childcare, we saw initial concerns around submitting

14   digital applications and as of this morning, from the

15   last quarter to this quarter, we've upgraded from 75

16   percent to over 90 percent of the applications that

17   are coming in. I think it's a process much like human

18   development, crawl, walk, run, jump, and I think a

19   lot of skepticism around the government's ability to

20   deliver has been earned over time and it's going to

21   take us a lot of time to unwork that so I hear the

22   concern. All I'm asking for Council is to give us an

23   opportunity and let's see and we'll continue to

24   deliver in the ways that we have since we've assumed

25   the positions.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And when do you

3 think that, I know you're still kind of evaluating

4 partners, do you have a timeline for announcements

5 about the digital wallet component?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, I

7 have a timeline about some announcements but not the

8 digital wallet, and I'd say as we get closer towards

9 the end of the year and I'm going to target the first

10 week of December because you said mid-December, first

11 week of December, we're going to have a tangible

12 timeline where we can sit down with the tech council

13 and we can review that together.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. And then the

15 last piece on the digital wallet, will the digital

16 wallet in the MyCity portal mirror the prepaid debit

17 program that was used for migrants through Mocafi or

18 Mobility Capital Finance?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20 I think that you can use that experience as a lessons

21 learned and you can see what works and what doesn't

22 work. I think the capability that was provided in

23 that space is something that we're looking to

24 provide. The specific vendor that would be used and

25 the way that we, and that determination hasn't been

2 made as yet, so I can't tell you that it would be the

3 same as what was done in the migrant space, but I

4 think that…

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Are they a partner

6 at this point? I know you haven't, are they a partner

7 as Mocafi because I know the City is still in

8 contract with them. Are they a partner for this

9 particular piece?

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Not at

11 this moment.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. And then,

13 question just about City government and direct

14 deposits with a cyber wallet. Is that something that

15 you're looking to do? I think it was referenced in

16 maybe a hearing that we had last year where you

17 testified about centralizing benefits on a single

18 digital platform and that could include replacing

19 traditional City government payroll to direct

20 deposits with a cyber wallet. Is that this?

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

22 this is one of the things that we're evaluating as a

23 use case for this. Unfortunately, in today's society,

24 there's still a significant portion that represents

25 the unbanked or underbanked community, and that

2 includes some of the members of the City workforce.

3 We have predatory institutions like check cashing

4 establishments that take portions of City employee

5 pay to provide them access to cash. And if we can

6 provide a service that reduces the dependency on

7 those types of businesses and provides the capability

8 for them getting real-time access to the money that

9 they need is something that we have a responsibility

10 of doing, and that's part of what we're evaluating.

11 And one of the things that I'd say it's part of this

12 Administration's approach is it's not just focused on

13 how it can make public, the public good better, it's

14 also how can we, part of the public good is also the

15 City employee good, and what can we do to enhance the

16 quality of life for those that work as a part of the

17 City that find themselves in some of the same

18 population that we're trying to serve?

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: As part of your

20 evaluation, do you have a sense of how much of the

21 City's workforce is engaged in the direct deposit

22 versus paper check conversion?

23   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, we

24 can confer with our colleagues at FISA OPA and get

2   that information, and then we can bring that back to

3   Council.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Also, as part of

5   your evaluation, have you been in contact with DC37,

6   for example, about the potential and kind of how you

7   were all thinking about cyber wallets and payment?

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, any

9   of the benefits that we look at bringing forward that

10   impacts the City's workforce at scale, we work in

11   collaboration with the Office of Labor Relations, and

12   that team coordinates the communication between us

13   and any of the unions that may be impacted by those

14   services. When it gets more material or we're in the

15   space where we're looking to collect sentiment or

16   feedback, we'd work directly with OLR to get that

17   information as we've had on a number of other fronts.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, you have

19   spoken to OLR about the evaluation?

20   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

21   as part of the evaluation process, the intent is to

22   ensure that we collect feedback from the unions to

23   ensure that as we bring services forward, we're

24   serving their constituents as well.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. And then I

3 don't know if you, I don't have any notes, I don't

4 know if you answered this, but the data collected

5 through the digital wallet, what would OTI be using

6 it for and kind of like what is the data that you'd

7 be collecting?

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So,

9 there's a concept of providing incentive benefits to

10 promote healthier behavior so, for example, in some…

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: There's so many

12 concerns about that.

13 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I'm

14 sorry?

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: There's so many

16 concerns about that.

17 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

18 I think that there's a concept that if you leverage

19 benefits in one way versus another, like if you buy

20 water versus buying soda, being able to provide

21 incentive points based on that, but all those things

22 are theoretical at the moment. I think once the

23 information is collected, you have ways where you can

24 do benefits, you can do matching, you can do things

25 that you can't do with paper-based benefits today.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And I'm glad you

3 said it's theoretical. Because I'm just curious if

4 that is like, in the way that you've been talking

5 about kind of the future of MyCity, where you're

6 really focusing on not the agency, but the client and

7 like kind of what their needs are. Is this a need

8 that people have expressed or that relevant agencies

9 have expressed where it would be good to monitor

10 spending habits so that we can potentially promote

11 healthier habits? Is that something that you're

12 hearing from folks?

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, what

14 we're hearing is that there are a number of programs

15 that not just exist in the City level, but at a

16 federal level that helps gear towards healthier

17 habits, and being able to track information in some

18 way, shape or form that can show compliance, which

19 means we can render more benefits or distribute more

20 to those that need it. I think that that's where that

21 comes from. But again…

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But it wouldn't

23 come from OTI.

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: It

25 wouldn't come from OTI. It'd come from those that

2   actually administer the benefits. We're the

3   facilitator of building the systems. They're those

4   that are responsible for the business end.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Now, my next

6   series of questions are going to be about kind of the

7   build-out of MyCity. I know that initially, certainly

8   before it was launched, there was the intention of

9   doing it in-house. That's not been the case entirely,

10   correct?

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yep.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So can you share a

13   little bit about kind of what those challenges were?

14   I know it was still very much like we were still

15   remote. There was still a pandemic. I know there's

16   been a number of hiring freezes so I would love if

17   you could specify if that decision was at all because

18   of a hiring freeze, because of capacity, and then

19   what were some of the, and if you can just specify

20   from the portal, what has a vendor and what's in-

21   house so the childcare piece, the business piece, the

22   jobs piece, the chatbot, what was produced in-house

23   versus utilized with a vendor?

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

25   I would say everything that was produced was produced

2   with an amalgamation of in-house and external

3   resources. As you mentioned, there has been a number

4   of constraints that has impacted the city as a whole.

5   OTI has not been exempt from some of those

6   constraints. Since the beginning of the

7   Administration from January 2022 to now, we've lost

8   over 350 employees, right, and that means that when

9   you lose that many people, that means that they're

10   naturally workload that has to be redistributed in

11   ways…

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That haven't been

13   filled, they're vacancies?

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is

15   correct. All right, of recent, we've been ensuring

16   that our most critical areas, things like New York

17   City Cyber Command and the areas that are in charge

18   of the most critical services, public safety, 9-1-1,

19   those kinds of things, that we ensure that we

20   maintain the staffing levels in those spaces to make

21   sure that we can continue to provide the critical

22   services that we do, and the areas where we're losing

23   application development resources, it's for a myriad

24   of reasons. And I think in that space, we still have

25   a commitment to deliver it to the public, and we do

2   that by using staff org and bringing in resources

3   that can help us maintain that delivery schedule.

4   For us, it's a mix of bringing in private

5   and public resources together to build something is

6   not a foreign concept. However, what is a foreign

7   concept is after a system has been delivered, the

8   City having the capability to manage it on its own.

9   So what we've done along the way as we developed

10   MyCity is we made sure that the City's development

11   teams have been integral part of how the systems have

12   been built so that we don't find ourselves in a

13   position as we turn over from phase to phase to phase

14   that we're continuously dependent exclusively on

15   external resources to build and maintain a system.

16   This is how the City finds itself beholden to vendor

17   partnerships, because it has no capabilities to

18   manage on its own. I can say with a high degree of

19   confidence, everything that we've built on the MyCity

20   side of the spectrum has been built with both City

21   and contracting resources but, when the time comes or

22   should the event call for it, the City is capable of

23   managing the systems that have been built and the

24   services with its workforce.

25

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Excellent. And can

3 you share how many vendors are registered or are

4 contracted with you all to work on MyCity

5 specifically?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: For

7 that, I would pass to our Deputy Commissioner for

8 Street Initiatives.

9   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHOI: Since its

10 inception, there've been 67 contracts, 58 of them

11 were M/WBEs.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Great. And of the

13 67 contracts, is there a particular feature of the

14 portal that is utilizing more of these vendors than

15 others?

16   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHOI: So, like the

17 CTO said, we use vendors and in-house staff for all

18 of the different services and platforms.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So in

20 terms of the vendor distribution on which specific

21 components, I think that for us, when you look across

22 the spectrum, it isn't that any one particular is

23 heavily subsidized by the vendor community. I'd say

24 there's a fair distribution across the board, and key

25 capabilities where we need support, there isn't any

2   one specific area of the development for MyCity that

3   is more heavily subsidized than another.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And was there an

5   RFP that went out for the app?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

7   many of the components that we have M/WBE

8   participation in, each one of those required an RFP

9   to go out, for a vendor to respond to fill that

10   request.

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And what are the

12   durations for some of the contracts? Are they all,

13   because we're all, it was one RFP, correct?

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

15   in some cases, there were multiple, and the duration

16   of the contract heavily depends on the component so

17   some of the technology components of the contract due

18   to aligning with capital eligibility are somewhere

19   between three to five years. The professional

20   services contracts, and some of them run year to

21   year. One of the things that we wanted to do as part

22   of building this process, and as Council had

23   requested, and as the Mayor has committed, to

24   delivering higher use of our M/WBE partnerships,

25   instead of launching one massive systems integration

2   contract in this space, we chose to take components

3   of this, and to farm it out to the M/WBE community,

4   so that we can distribute part of the City spend to

5   ensure that those areas also got part of this

6   contract work.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And how long are

8   some of those contracts?

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The pro

10   services contracts tend to run on an annual basis,

11   and the technology contracts tend to run on a multi-

12   year, for the actual components themselves.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And could you

14   share, so and then you started working with vendors,

15   or contracting out since 2022, since the announcement

16   or around?

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

18   since a lot of the development work began in mid-

19   2022, and I'd say between then and now that that work

20   has been continuous.

21   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And do you have a

22   sense of what the total cost has gone out to vendors?

23   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, the

24   total to the vendors in particular?

25   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Mmhmm.

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: We would

3   have to get a specific breakdown for you in that

4   space. The total in the MyCity universe, total spend

5   aggregate is about 60 million.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Six zero?

7   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: 60,

8   yeah.

9   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Million.

10   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Million,

11   right. So that 60 million is inclusive of platform

12   support so things that you, legacy, that you may have

13   known as a data bridge, or things that provide

14   information out to Open Data, things like that, all

15   those things have been conformed into the MyCity

16   universe, because as part of building core services,

17   or common services, all those things, or those

18   discrete components, they may have lived in

19   individual places before, but because they're being

20   used for MyCity, and we're going to standardize on

21   those platforms, we've brought them all into one

22   universe instead of having them live in different

23   spaces.

24

25

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, excellent.

3 For the childcare portion of the portal, that was

4 also using in-house and external vendors?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That is

6 correct.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Do you have

8 a sense of how many vendors were utilized?

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, the

10 total that Deputy Commissioner Choi laid out is

11 across the entire universe. And when we talk about

12 MyCity, we talk about it as an ecosystem. The

13 childcare component is a business component, but in

14 the background, the components that are used to

15 deliver childcare are in line, or in common, with the

16 same things that are used to deliver jobs, and the

17 same thing that's still used to deliver small

18 business services. They're all the same.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But you're using

20 specific vendors for the childcare piece, right, or

21 67 of them are, all involved in the childcare?

22   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: The 67

23 vendors that have been contracted provide different

24 components of MyCity. We can give you a detailed

25 spend review on each individual component. We can

2   follow up with that for sure. As it stands right now,

3   the reason why it's not broken down at that level is

4   simply because across the spectrum, a lot of the work

5   that's been done is shared between all three business

6   functions.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Okay, so

8   there's not a specific vendor that you can share

9   about, that worked on the childcare piece, for

10 example.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: As it

12 stands right now, if I just quantify budget-wise for

13 childcare in Fiscal Year '25, for services, we're

14 looking at 5,480,000 dollars that's been spent.

15   Okay. And is that contract still ongoing,

16 for example?

17   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

18 those contracts are still ongoing.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: For childcare

20 specifically.

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So when

22 you say for childcare specifically, childcare, I go

23 back to, is a business function but, to support

24 childcare, when you talk about building the digital

25 presence, the website, when you talk about building

2 the integrations between systems that support

3 childcare and MyCity, those things are the same, to a

4 degree, are the same teams that are building the

5 integrations between other systems and MyCity so it

6 isn't that their work is exclusive to childcare so

7 when those contracts are ongoing, when the childcare

8 work phases off, those same contracts will be used to

9 continue to build on for the other services that will

10 be delivered.

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. So the

12 reason I'm trying to narrow in on it is because,

13 obviously, the childcare piece is the most advanced

14 piece of the portal, it's the one that has had the

15 most interface, and I think is probably the one you

16 have the most feedback on so, just reverting back to

17 the responses, the delay in processing times, where

18 I'm clear that it's not necessarily the technology,

19 that the portal, it might be, they're not filling out

20 the information entirely, some of the information is

21 wrong. I'm trying to get to a place where we're

22 saying, this is the particular vendor, and this is

23 how we're working with them specifically on this

24 piece, to improve it so that's why I'm like, who is

25 it?

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Okay.

3   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I don't know if

4   that helps.

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

6   that helps to a degree. So, there's business analysis

7   work that's done exclusively for childcare, but a lot

8   of the other services, it's like hiring a painter to

9   paint a house. Childcare is one room of the house,

10 but the painter has more work to do across the space

11 so the contract for the painter is going to extend

12 beyond the room. It's going to go to cover the entire

13 house so what we can do as a direct follow-up from

14 this is we can provide a breakdown of the specific

15 hours that were allocated exclusively to each

16 component so that you can see, and then we can have

17 that aligned to the total contract allotment.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I

19 wanted to ask another question on the vendors piece.

20 Just because based on some of the responses, it seems

21 like there's kind of like a, there might potentially

22 be like a little lull because you're doing evaluating

23 and trying to launch the common services platform.

24 Are there other vendors or other RFPs that you're

25 thinking about as you are thinking through the

2   digital wallet, for example? Is there another moment

3   throughout the rollout of MyCity that we can

4   anticipate additional vendors for additional

5   services?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

7   as some services phase out and as other services roll

8   in, things like the digital wallet is something that

9   has to go out as part of an RFP process, and other

10   services that we look to integrate that are outside

11   of the universe of what we already have, those will

12   likely go out in the RFP process.

13   The things that we know and that we can

14   quantify in the things that we're using will continue

15   to be deployed leveraging the existing partnerships

16   and, when those partnerships expire, we'll follow PPB

17   rules to make sure that we bring in other partners

18   that can help us deliver in the same spaces. As it

19   stands right now, any service that gets integrated in

20   is going to require an RFP of some sort. That's

21   beyond the scope of what we're already doing.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'd like to

23   acknowledge Council Members Won and Joseph who have

24   just joined us from their marathon hearing across the

25   hall. Welcome.

2   Because you are utilizing in-house and

3 vendors, is there a time where you're completely

4 phasing out vendors for some of these?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes. So

6 as you start to build foundations it's almost like

7 having people that lay, or if you look at it like a

8 process that's building a building, there's a time to

9 lay the foundation, there's a time to put up framing,

10 there's a time to put in the electrical work, there's

11 a time to do painting and, as specific vendors move

12 on, they get phased out of the program and other ones

13 get phased in to do their specific component.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Excellent. Can you

15 share if the Administration has any plans to

16 incorporate biometric data or identification

17 technologies into the MyCity portal?

18   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, at

19 this moment incorporating biometric data is not on

20 the forefront of our approach. Even when you look at

21 things that use multi-factor authentication, those

22 methods are secured by platforms, that's not data

23 that's housed by the City so at this moment, there's

24 no current plan or projected plan to incorporate

25 biometric data.

2 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Great. Is there

3 any plan to include predictive models to the MyCity

4 portal? I know the Mayor, this was early back in

5 2022, wanted to kind of combine all agency metrics

6 similar to CompStat so curious if there is a similar

7 intention for MyCity.

8 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

9 we would want to keep agencies not just accountable

10 for the work that's been completed, but the quality

11 of work that's been done so predictive models,

12 analytics to a large scale is all part of what's

13 being done in this world. If you look at the scope of

14 what we're doing in terms of rendering benefits to

15 any degree, you want to ensure that you have the

16 maximum amount of efficacy in deploying those

17 benefits and also you're reaching the populations of

18 people that need that. In order to assess whether

19 we're doing a good job or not, we have to be able to

20 look back and, in order to assess how much we can

21 grow, we need the capability to look forward as well

22 so we expect that in both of those spaces to have

23 those capabilities in place.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sorry, and would

25 it be to predict behavior or to determine

2   eligibility? Is there a set, can you get, do you have

3   specificity on like what the?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So

5   behavior, when I say predictive capabilities, it's

6   predictive capabilities based on need and demand so

7   those that are applying, are they actually being

8   served, the areas where there are demand, how

9   effectively are we targeting those areas?

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I know that

11   in other cities they've attempted to incorporate like

12   predictive models into benefits and services, and

13   there's been negative side effects so just wanting to

14   kind of hear from you the steps, the steps you take,

15   just like profiling, right, sharing some of that

16   predictive behavior data with PD, for example. Just

17   wanting to like hear it from you, kind of like a

18   strong yes or no, or maybe if that is like a

19   potential feature of the portal.

20   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

21   I'd say for sure, it's a potential feature of the

22   portal. We would need the capability to, in order to

23   effectively serve, not just deal with situations as

24   they arise, but predict to a degree how much is

25   likely going to be necessary. A good example for that

2   is if you know what the pipeline for what childcare

3   looks like and you wanted to predict the amount of

4   pre-K seats that you would need during any given

5   period, having the capability to use the information

6   that you have to say, based on what we can see the

7   total volume of kids are, this is potentially what

8   the need would be for this particular thing.

9   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And would that

10   access be available to every single agency including

11   PD?

12   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No, no,

13   no. So, in situations like this, this is where role-

14   based access control comes from, and attribute-based

15   access control. What that basically means is that you

16   may work in DSS and you may need access to a specific

17   portion of a person's record but you don't need to

18   see everything in that record. Based on your role and

19   based on the attribute in that record, making sure

20   that you only have access to the things that you need

21   to make your determination and not any more than

22   that.

23   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

24   Specifically, would that also apply to the police

25   department? Would the role-based access?

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: For

3   sure, for sure. No one is exempt from that process.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, thank you.

5   With the chatbot, has there been any data collected

6   from the AI chatbot? Has there been any data

7   collected from users utilizing the chatbot?

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

9   we collect data all the time around questions that

10   are coming in, accuracy of information that's being

11   put out, number of people served, business areas that

12   they're querying, that type of information, but not

13   user-specific information, like who you are, where

14   you live, that kind of stuff. Not identifiable

15   information, but information in terms of what you've

16   searched and what the chatbot has been provided.

17   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And is the chatbot

18   still utilizing the vendor they were contracted with

19   originally, along with in-house staff?

20   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes, it

21   is.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and for

23   maintenance, because you mentioned this before,

24   obviously, the intention is to, yes, phase out some

25   of these contracts. Is the maintenance currently for

2   the chatbot being done split half and half between

3   in-house and the vendor?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yes, for

5   sure. So, it's currently being done by the OTI team,

6   and we're paying maintenance on the licenses that are

7   required for the vendor. One of the things that I'd

8   point out is, because I don't want you to be

9   blindsided by this, anytime we deliver technology,

10   regardless of what the scope of that technology is,

11   we have to be in a process where we continuously

12   evaluate to see if we're doing it in the most cost-

13   effective way. In this case, we delivered the chatbot

14   about a year ago. In the bleeding edge of the space

15   of artificial intelligence, technology is growing at

16   a rapid pace, and we're constantly evaluating

17   partnerships to see what's the best way to deliver

18   services at the lowest cost so if it should be so

19   required, we may be in the space where we would

20   continue, we would keep the chatbot going, but we may

21   switch or we may evaluate the partnerships that we've

22   established to see if they continue to serve us in

23   the ways that we need to be served.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And so the OTI

25   team, and I fully understand that, thank you, by the

2   way. The OTI team is doing maintenance on the

3   chatbot, and just to confirm that I heard it right,

4   and you're paying maintenance?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:

6   Licenses.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Licenses.

8   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

9   licenses.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: And in

12   some cases, there may be components of those licenses

13   that include pro support, but in general, the OTI

14   team is maintaining the deployment.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Do you anticipate

16   any future updates? I know you're for the chatbot

17   4.0, the ChatGPT 4.0. Are you anticipating other

18   future updates?

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, so

20   we're planning to have updates that are going to

21   expand the universe of the chatbot beyond Small

22   Business Services. More details on that will come

23   within the next month, but we're certainly looking to

24   expand the use and capability of the chatbot beyond

25   that.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And was there any

3 testing done prior to the launch of the chatbot, and

4 is testing continuous while potentially there'll be

5 another upgrade?

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: There

7 was a substantial amount of in-house testing, and we

8 also did sentiment testing with people out in the

9 public so they could use the chatbot, see how they

10 felt about the look and feel of it so we could get

11 some of that sentiment.

12   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: What was the

13 sentiment?

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, in

15 general, we had a lot of positive feedback around the

16 information that came out. We had testimonials the

17 day that we launched that included business owners

18 talking about their capability to leverage that, and

19 if it was around when they were launching their

20 business how much easier the process would have been.

21 So, so far, we've gotten a lot of positive feedback,

22 but we still have a long road ahead of us because

23 it's only serving one business function within the

24 City. If we can get it to cover more, we'll be in a

25 much better space.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Where do you

3   think it would best fit or kind of where are you in

4   that analysis?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: I think

6   for us, quality-of-life complaints is an area where I

7   keep honing in on. New York City 3-1-1, it's a fun

8   fact, right? For New York City 3-1-1, out of 10 New

9   Yorkers surveyed, nine of them rate 3-1-1 a 10,

10 right, which means that…

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Vickie Paladino

12 today.

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

14 Vickie Paladino.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Rated it a 10.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: And the

17 good Council Member Holden, right (INAUDIBLE)

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: He goes back and

19 forth, he's not a 10. I know this for a fact.

20   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Well,

21 the 10 only refers to the agent's response to the

22 call that come in versus the agency response to the

23 call so most people are satisfied with 3-1-1 agents

24 today. I'd say for us, for the quality-of-life

25 complaints and the quality-of-life information

2   requests, if we could serve that information out

3   faster and we can use AI to help us do that, that

4   would be great. As it stands right now, with the

5   staffing levels that we have, it would be great to

6   have that staff focus on more substantive calls so

7   that they can get to people that need information,

8   real information or service requests quicker and, if

9   we could serve the information up about general

10   services that the City has in an easier, more

11   digestible way, it'll give our agents the

12   capabilities of doing just that.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: The 3-1-1 agents?

14   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: 3-1-1

15   agents, correct.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Got it. I'm glad

17   we're talking about 3-1-1 very briefly. I know that

18   prior to me in the last Administration, back in 2018,

19   prior to your leadership, OTI had issued this report,

20   this feasibility report based on a legislation,

21   really to determine like, is it feasible to use a

22   centralized single web portal. The results of that

23   report, if I'm not wrong, was that leveraging 3-1-1

24   online as the City's single web portal is the optimal

25   solution. Again, this was back in 2018. Does the

2   MyCity portal use any of the infrastructure from 3-1-

3   1?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, the

5   MyCity infrastructure is, it stands outside of the 3-

6   1-1 universe, but things like content databases and

7   things along that lines, it uses some of that. What

8   I'd say from 2018 in that report, when Henry Ford was

9   building a car, at the time, everyone said if they

10   could get something, what they could get, and they

11   wanted a faster horse, and I think at that time,

12   people's capability to see the future and the thing

13   that we could deliver may have been limited, and I'd

14   say through MyCity in a very short span of time,

15   based on the multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional

16   effort, we've shown that getting there is not only

17   achievable, but it's achievable in a decent amount of

18   time, and it's going to require a lot of energy and

19   effort to make sure that we stay in that path.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So there's no, I

21   guess because I think that there's a lot of potential

22   overlap and similarities with 3-1-1 and the future of

23   MyCity, all with the goal of providing a service,

24   directing New Yorkers, making things easier,

25   improving quality of life, so I guess, what are some

2   of the infrastructure that everyone currently has

3   that you currently use or you're thinking about, and

4   how do you, we're not going to do away with 3-1-1…

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Of

6   course not.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: . How do you plan

8   on, it seems like quality of life is important, it's

9   important to the agency and important to the success

10 of this portal. How do you see that marriage

11 happening or living together, and then the

12 distinction being clear enough for New Yorkers to

13 understand 3-1-1 is here, MyCity is here. I don't

14 have to create a profile here, I have to create a

15 profile here.

16   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So 3-1-1

17 is about anonymity should you choose to want it or

18 being able to submit a request around something that

19 is impacting quality of life. So, a pothole in the

20 street, noise complaints, things along that lines,

21 clearly within the 3-1-1 umbrella. MyCity is geared

22 towards services rendered by the City. You need

23 subsidies, you need access to licensing and

24 permitting, you need something from the City that you

25 have to apply and the City has to render to you.

2   That's the difference between the two. One is

3   something isn't right or something is impacting me to

4   some degree, and the other one is I need something so

5   that I can do something. That's how the worlds are

6   separated. I think that out of the success that we

7   had at 3-1-1, we've got a lot of information around

8   design, a lot of information around usability, a lot

9   of information around what the public expects, and I

10   think under the covers, things like geolocation and

11   addresses, using common engines in the background so

12   that we do that consistently, I think that's one area

13   where things are shared, but outside of that, the 3-

14   1-1 service model is very different than what MyCity

15   stands positioned to do, and in areas where we can

16   learn and we can complement what's already been

17   delivered, we will.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Can you share,

19   just backing up a little bit with Mocafi, who you

20   said, not necessarily a partner in the phase of

21   digital wallet for MyCity but, as I understand it,

22   the City is in contract with them for a demonstration

23   project, correct?

24   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER:

25   Apologies, sorry, one more time.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: The City is in

3 agreement with Mocafi for what's considered a

4 demonstration project along with a number of other

5 demonstration projects.

6   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That was

7 correct.

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Do you have

9 a sense of how many demonstration projects are in

10 place?

11   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So,

12 across the City and across all agencies, it's hard

13 for me to quantify that.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: OTI.

15   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Within

16 OTI itself? I would have to get back to you with that

17 specific number because a demonstration project could

18 be as significant as having cost value or it could be

19 as insignificant of one person testing one technology

20 in a single space so, in order to quantify that, if I

21 gave you any number, it wouldn't be an accurate

22 representation of what may be in space, but I can

23 certainly get back to you on that.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: For the existing

25 demonstration projects, can you share if, sorry.

2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Oh, the

3   existing, I just want clarification. When you say

4   demonstration project, is it explicit to one

5   demonstration project or are you saying the entire

6   universe?

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Just the universe

8   within OTI.

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Because we're also

11   just starting to kind of get information about it at

12   the Council so it's fairly new so I'm asking very

13   preliminary questions.

14   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, okay, good,

15   good, good.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: For the

17   demonstration projects within OTI, which I understand

18   could be a lot, is there data from the MyCity portal,

19   or any other personal data that the agency is

20   collecting, is any of that data being utilized for

21   the execution of demonstration projects?

22   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: So, in

23   general, with demonstration projects, depending on

24   the size and scale of them, some of them are deployed

25   in a universe where they have access to limited or no

2   information, and some of them may be deployed in a

3   universe where they have access to some information,

4   and I'm not saying MyCity information, I'm just

5   saying information in general. In this case, in order

6   to answer that question accurately, I would need to

7   get a full catalog of what's in place, and I can come

8   back and provide an answer if any of that stuff is in

9   place. One of the things that I would also mention,

10   in terms of demonstration projects, or any project

11   that's engaged, there's an NDA, a non-disclosure

12   agreement, for any City data that's being used in any

13   one of the tests or pilots to ensure that they're not

14   used beyond the scope of the pilot, and they're not

15   shared outside of the City without the City's express

16   permission.

17   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and thank

18   you for emphasizing that, but you cannot confirm at

19   this time if there's information from MyCity, like

20   individual's information that is being utilized?

21   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: To the

22   best of my knowledge at this moment in time, I can't

23   say that I can think of a single one of those

24   initiatives where that's the case, but as I said, to

25

2   provide a more holistic answer, I would have to do a

3   full assessment of everything.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, okay, I look

5   forward to that. Thank you. Just on any kind of data

6   sharing by vendors of the MyCity portal, is that

7   happening with any and all of the vendors for MyCity,

8   is there data sharing happening?

9   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Any data

10   sharing of anything that comes out of the MyCity

11   portal is shared between the agencies that are

12   responsible for rendering the services. We do not

13   share constituent data out publicly to any partner

14   outside of the use case that it was initially

15   submitted for.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And is information

17   being shared vendor to vendor?

18   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Vendor

19   to vendor, the vendors themselves have no specific

20   business need to have direct access to information

21   outside of facilitating transfers between agencies.

22   The information for the MyCity application lives

23   within the systems themselves, and they're not purged

24   or pulled out of the systems to be shared between

25   vendors for any purpose.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and that's

3   in their contracts? That's in their contracts?

4   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: That's

5   in their contracts.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Do you have

7   any more questions, Council Member Holden? No, okay.

8   I think maybe outside of a few other

9   follow-ups that we can get to you and some of the

10 information on vendors and the specific data.

11   Give me one second.

12   We just had the State Senator (INAUDIBLE)

13   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: No

14 problem.

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sorry. I wanted to

16 give some time to State Senator Gonzalez who I know

17 wanted to testify, but is it okay with just two more

18 questions? I know it sounded like I was done.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Sure

20 thing.

21   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Can you share if

22 there's any role that MyCity's backend plays in

23 agency-to-agency data sharing or coordination of

24 that?

25

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2   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah,

3   for sure. So, between the agencies, especially for

4   benefits rendering, if there's information that's

5   required to be shared between agencies, there are

6   MOUs in place that govern the specific use of data

7   and the purpose for which that information is being

8   shared, and any information that's shared is covered

9   in that space. We also have privacy riders and

10 addendums that align to the use of that information.

11 So, I think for us, in general, any information

12 that's shared, again, we are the facilitators of

13 building the technology. The specific business

14 agreements between the agencies of how they use the

15 information in it is shared between the agencies.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Is there an

17 MOU with NYPD to access?

18   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Not at

19 this moment.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: No. Okay, okay. Is

21 there any reason or anything related to, you know, as

22 someone's creating a profile and as you all are

23 analyzing and launching the common services,

24 potentially a scenario where you're utilizing

25 someone's information about substance abuse or

2   anything like that? Is there a future where this kind

3   of very personal information could be shared with PD

4   at their request?

5   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Unless

6   the NYPD becomes in the business of starting daycare

7   facilities and childcare, we're not, there's no…

8   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: We just want to be

9   very careful about how we're protecting people's, you

10   know, personal information, and I think so much of

11   what I'm hearing about the future of MyCity is like

12   seeing where people need help and connecting them to

13   that help so I just want to be very, very specific

14   and very careful about how we integrate law

15   enforcement, for example, in some of these instances,

16   and you can, I think, also understand why some New

17   Yorkers wouldn't want to share some information for

18   this fear.

19   CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER FRASER: Yeah, I

20   can definitely understand that concern, and one of

21   the reasons why we have a Chief Privacy Officer for

22   the City and that Privacy Officer sits outside of any

23   specific entity, it's responsible for overseeing

24   privacy across the City, is for that point, to ensure

25   that we're not biased in any way by any specific

2   agency's mission, and it's done at a level where

3   we're overseeing what's best for our constituents,

4   not for the agency that's requesting the information.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That's right. I'm

6   glad it's on the record. I appreciate that. Thank

7   you. So, I think we're going to wrap up with

8   questions. I know that you probably have to leave,

9   but if you can stay just a couple moments or your

10   team can stay for the public testimony.

11   I'm just going to open the hearing for

12   public testimony. I remind members of the public that

13   this is a formal government proceeding and that

14   decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,

15   members of the public shall remain silent at all

16   times.

17   The witness table is reserved for people

18   who wish to testify. No video recording or

19   photography is allowed from the witness table.

20   Further, members of the public may not present audio

21   or video recordings as testimony, but may submit

22   transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-

23   Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

24   If you wish to speak at today's hearing,

25   please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-

2   at-Arms and wait to be recognized. And when

3   recognized, you'll have three minutes to speak on

4   today's hearing topic, MyCity Portal and Intro. 821.

5   If you have a written statement or

6   additional written testimony you wish to submit for

7   the record, please provide a copy of the testimony to

8   the Sergeant-at-Arms. You can also email written

9   testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72

10   hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings

11   will not be accepted.

12   Now I'd like to welcome New York State

13   Senator Kristen Gonzalez, the Chair of the Internet

14   and Technology Committee in New York Senate. Come on

15   down. Hi. Good to see you. Good to see you as well.

16   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: Phenomenal,

17   phenomenal job on the questioning, and I'd just like

18   it on the record that this Committee and the City

19   Council is in very good hands.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: The team, the team

21   gets all the credit. Thank you, Senator. You can get

22   started whenever you want.

23   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: Fantastic.

24   Thank you, Council Member Gutiérrez, for inviting me

25   to share my statement at today's hearing. I am New

2 York State Senator Kristen Gonzalez, representing

3 Senate District 59, which consists of parts of

4 Western Queens, Northern Brooklyn, and the East Side

5 of Manhattan.

6   As Chair of the Senate Internet Committee

7 on Internet and Technology, I passed legislation on

8 government use of artificial intelligence this

9 session through both houses of the New York State

10 Legislature. At a time when trust in government and

11 our democracy is at a low, it is of the utmost

12 importance that any government use of technology be

13 reliable. However, despite warnings from experts that

14 generative AI tools cannot be trusted to give

15 accurate information in consequential contexts, the

16 MyCity chatbot was rolled out in October of 2023. Let

17 me make one thing abundantly clear. New York City

18 made a major error in releasing the MyCity chatbot.

19 Using public dollars to deploy a chatbot that gives

20 inaccurate information is exactly why we need clear

21 regulation on government use of artificial

22 intelligence prior to deployment.

23   This is not the first time, however, that

24 this Administration has invested in untested

25 experimental tools that have failed to deliver on

2 their promises. In September 2023, Mayor Adams

3 announced the K5 security robot to patrol the Times

4 Square subway station. We don't know what it did, if

5 anything, and this robot that Mayor Adams said would

6 be part of the fabric of our subway system was

7 retired by February of 2024. Mayor Adams also pushed

8 for and won deployment of the Evolve AI-powered

9 weapon detection system in subways, despite company

10 warnings that technology would not work well in our

11 transit system. On top of this, Evolve has been sued

12 by their shareholders and is under a federal

13 investigation for discrepancies between what they say

14 about their technology and what it can actually do.

15   New Yorkers deserve better. We deserve

16 technology that has been tested and is of the highest

17 possible quality. We deserve our public dollars to be

18 used to maximize public good. We deserve an

19 Administration that will be responsive to these

20 concerns. Instead, Mayor Adams refuses to take down

21 this faulty tool because he claims it needs to be in

22 public hands to iron out the kinks and that this is

23 how it's done in tech.

24   I am here today to send a very clear

25 message that how it's done in tech is certainly not

2 how it should be done in government. Our lives should

3 not be made worse so that a product can be made

4 better. That is poor technology product development

5 and more importantly, poor governance. Good

6 technology is thoughtfully designed and thoroughly

7 tested to minimize its negative impacts and to

8 demonstrably improve lives. Just as we rigorously

9 test any other new tool before it is deployed, we

10 must hold these new technologies to the same

11 standards. I look forward to continuing to work on

12 legislation on this issue and working across levels

13 of government to ensure that our city and state

14 government prioritizes safety and responsibility in

15 technology, and I certainly want to thank the work of

16 this Committee to asking really important questions

17 that I know my constituents also have as we overlap

18 around issues of privacy, the use of our public

19 dollars and having clear standards for things,

20 especially like we heard today, the digital identity

21 wallet. So again, I want to deeply thank this

22 Committee. I want to thank the Chair, and I look

23 forward to working with you on these issues.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,

25 Senator. Thank you for being here in person and

2   testifying and for your patience. Can I ask a couple

3   of questions?

4   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: Oh yeah, yeah,

5   yeah.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Have you heard

7   from constituents about utilizing the portal at all?

8   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: So, we have

9   heard, I have heard on actually Community Boards for

10   concerns around privacy. They want to see a New York

11   State privacy bill pass so, for example, in Queens

12   Community Board Two, that's one of the bills that my

13   constituents directly support, specifically because

14   they know that our city and state governments are

15   deploying tools, but even though they have internal

16   standards on privacy, these standards aren't codified

17   into law. So theoretically, data can be shared across

18   agencies, shared with policing entities, and also can

19   be used to make predictive decisions about their

20   lives so having a baseline of privacy is actually

21   something that has come up several times.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That's excellent.

23   Yeah, I mean, I think the Commissioner, you know,

24   barely touched on that. I think often reverts to kind

25   of like, what is already existing. Seems like they've

2   not really engaged in a ton of feedback besides maybe

3   like a survey situation. So I mean, what I got clear

4   from the Commissioner are MOUs, agency to agency.

5   Obviously, I was asking specifically about law

6   enforcement. He couldn't really speak to that a lot.

7   So, I'm encouraged that constituents are asking about

8   that.

9   Are there, I guess, specific concerns

10   about kind of the future, and you can get back to me

11   with this because it sounds like they're really

12   looking at a sense of like kind of predictive

13   services with the information that people are

14   supplying. Do you think that there is concern for

15   what he laid out or what they laid out today, which

16   is we want to see what services people need so we can

17   provide solutions versus kind of like what you're

18   hearing on the ground? What people really, do they

19   really need that?

20   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: That's a

21   phenomenal question. So, I think we can all agree

22   that we want to see our technology stack in our City

23   and State government be responsive, be easy to use,

24   you know, from a New Yorker perspective, also give us

25   the information that we need. But deploying new tools

2 that are untested certainly isn't the answer to that.

3 And what I really wanted to point out to your

4 question is that the question of automated decision-

5 making systems having implicit bias is one that we've

6 been dealing with in our City and State governments

7 for years, and now that we're adding new types of

8 technology like generative AI and large language

9 models, which again have been proven to have certain

10 challenges and hallucinate, you know, we have the

11 risk to actually amplify some of that bias. And what

12 we've seen in other states is that when these tools,

13 whether an automated decision-making system that did

14 not have a clear, again, a framework mandated by

15 government to reduce bias, or a generative AI-based

16 tool, and definitely in the latter right here, we've

17 actually seen when these tools have been deployed

18 some serious issues like folks losing some of their

19 benefits because the decisions were inaccurate and

20 folks being accused of things like fraud in other

21 states because the systems were actually flagging

22 people unnecessarily, and that's why we want to see

23 before we go ahead and do any of this, that we have

24 clear standards and at least a human in the loop when

25

2 a consequential decision is being made about

3 someone's life with an AI-based tool.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That's right.

5 Yeah. Well, the Administration seems very hopeful

6 they'll figure this chatbot situation out. but thank

7 you so much for coming and thank you for your

8 testimony.

9   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: Thank you so

10 much for having me. And again, appreciate the

11 conversations today around the digital identity

12 wallet.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: You're welcome any

14 time.

15   SENATOR KRISTEN GONZALEZ: Thank you.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,

17 Senator.

18   Next panel, I would like to call up

19 Cynthia Conti-Cook, Deyanira Del Rio, Kim

20 Moscaritolo. Those are the three names for this

21 panel.

22   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: Okay. Thank you to

23 Chair Gutiérrez and to the other Members of the Tech

24 Committee for holding this critical hearing. My name

25 is Cynthia Conti-Cook, and I'm the Director of

Research and Policy at the Surveillance Resistance

Lab. We've been researching MyCity and speaking with

a variety of stakeholders over the past year. We urge

the City Council to stop, question, and assess the

costs and serious risks associated with MyCity and

prevent this Administration from undermining local

governance by fostering increasingly opaque

procurement processes in the name of pro-industry

innovation and getting stuff done. We need to stop

MyCity because thus far its purpose and design have

been decided behind closed doors by cops and

corporate tech and now also because of critical

questions about potential corruption. We need to

question the intent of MyCity because this highly

consequential digital infrastructure has been built

alongside moves to embed NYPD officials throughout

City agencies, regardless of data sharing and

regardless of data sharing agreements, and this will

impact City government far beyond this

administration. We need to assess the potential

consequential costs and harm MyCity may inflict on

low-income immigrant, criminalized New Yorkers,

communities of color and anyone receiving public

benefits, mental health or substance addiction

2 services through City agencies and how MyCity will

3 enable digital stop and frisk and create an

4 inescapable digital cop city. MyCity must be stopped.

5 It is a clear example of what happens when cops and

6 corporations occupy central decision-making roles and

7 are able to design durable infrastructure without

8 public oversight. Just last week, this Administration

9 moved to make demonstration project procurement even

10 less transparent and accountable to the public. The

11 Comptroller's representative and a former Chief

12 Procurement Officer both opposed it. This is why

13 MyCity must be questioned. It is being built behind a

14 blue wall of silence by corporate contractors. We

15 must question how law enforcement will collect, share

16 and use the MyCity portal because we know that the

17 corporate vendors contracted to do so will not stop

18 or question them. For decades, the priorities,

19 personnel and power of the NYPD has transformed our

20 City government, and while the NYPD's mission creep

21 has been growing for decades, never before has an

22 Administration of this City so aggressively sought to

23 expand the power of police even farther into all

24 aspects of City government. We question whether this

25 Administration has held the boundaries between

2   corporations, police, and civilian agencies and their

3   data. This is why MyCity must also be assessed. Are

4   the unknown climbing costs of MyCity included in the

5   225-million-dollar price tag for cop city? What are

6   the costs to our digital dignity, tax dollars and

7   democracy of building a digital cop city? If we want

8   to use digital tools to enhance benefits access to

9   New Yorkers, how can we do that while still

10   protecting their identifying information from police

11   and data brokers, especially when NYPD is embedding

12   their officials throughout City agencies and

13   corporations are digging their claws into

14   infrastructure through demonstration projects?

15   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. We have

16   your testimony, right?

17   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: You do.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

19   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: The longer one.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, thank you so

21   much.

22   DEYANIRA DEL RIO: Good afternoon, Chair

23   Gutiérrez, and thank you for the opportunity to

24   testify today on behalf of New Economy Project, and

25   thank you for shining a light on the very important

2 issues and serious risks that this proposed project

3 could present for New Yorkers and for highlighting

4 the many unanswered questions about how this program

5 will be designed to ensure New Yorkers' privacy and

6 safety are fully protected. New Economy Project has,

7 since 1995, worked with community groups and low-

8 income New Yorkers throughout the city to fight bank

9 redlining, predatory lending, and other forms of

10 racial wealth extraction and discrimination in our

11 financial system and broader economy. Increasingly,

12 our work focuses on FinTech, financial technology

13 companies that claim to expand access to banking

14 services while, in fact, they are further entrenching

15 inequality in our financial system and often serving

16 to exploit unmet needs by low-income New Yorkers and

17 communities rather than equitably meeting those

18 needs, and so we want to encourage you to make sure

19 that you are clear-eyed about this digital wallet

20 proposal and really be skeptical of these claims that

21 this is about expanding access for unbanked New

22 Yorkers and to address banking deserts.

23   I wanted to just focus on the digital

24 wallet in my testimony briefly. First, I want to say

25 that back in 2018, our organization joined with

2 dozens of others across the city to fight back and

3 defeat a similar proposal in which the Administration

4 then was proposing to add a financial technology chip

5 to New York City's municipal ID cards, or IDNYC

6 cards, and this would have exposed low-income

7 immigrant, unhoused New Yorkers and others to serious

8 risks of surveillance and data collection and so much

9 more. This MyCity now proposal of integrating and

10 potentially requiring people to tap into and

11 participate in this FinTech digital wallet raises

12 many of the same risks and concerns that advocates

13 raised at that time and also, similarly, would risk

14 chilling New Yorkers' uptake of City services if they

15 had to subject themselves to such risks.

16   I want to just make a couple of very

17 quick points about FinTech. One is that FinTech is

18 predicated, this industry is really predicated on the

19 business model, it's built on a business model of

20 widespread collection and often sale of people's

21 personal data. This is not incidental, it's not a

22 side effect, this is built into that model and, oh my

23 gosh, my vision, and so we want to make sure that, in

24 this case, that it's very clear that MyCity's

25 integration with an array of City services could mean

2 that a wealth of people's sensitive information,

3 including their financial history, personal

4 identification numbers, and much more, could be

5 concentrated into one place, creating a sort of a

6 huge portal of data over which the City would have

7 very little control.

8   I want to raise a couple of quick points.

9 Sunrise Banks is a very important player in this as

10 the bank that partners with Mocafy. Mocafy's the

11 technology FinTech company, but it partners with

12 Sunrise Banks to manage and actually provide whatever

13 financial services are provided. Sunrise Banks is not

14 on the list of banks that are designated to hold New

15 York City deposits or to do business with the City,

16 which means that they haven't undertaken the

17 application process, the evaluation, and the

18 oversight that banks are required to do to do

19 business with the City so, in the absence of that, we

20 would ask what kind of scrutiny, what due diligence

21 has the City conducted to ensure that this is a right

22 approach?

23   Finally, New York City is home to

24 community development credit unions, to responsible

25 lenders and financial institutions. If the City wants

2 to incorporate an equitable and a fair way of

3 expanding banking access to New Yorkers, we have

4 those institutions and the City can partner with and

5 strengthen those institutions. It can advance public

6 banking, for which there is a strong movement in the

7 city. It can take other steps to make a real

8 difference that doesn't entail steering New Yorkers

9 to high-cost and often predatory fintech companies.

10   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much.

11   KIM MOSCARITOLO: Hello, my name is Kim

12 Moscaritolo. I'm the Director of Communications and

13 Advocacy for Hunger-Free America. I am here to speak

14 on behalf of the estimated 1.28 million city

15 residents who now struggle against hunger. we at HFA,

16 we are not technology experts, nor are we FinTech

17 experts, certainly, but every day, our dedicated

18 staff who deal with benefits access work with

19 struggling families to help them apply for and

20 receive the benefits that they so desperately need,

21 and so we see the difficulties that they face and the

22 pain and frustration that they suffer because of this

23 really laborious process. So, while it is true that

24 it is easier to apply for multiple benefits in New

25 York City than in much of the rest of the state, it's

2   still a really onerous process to obtain those

3   benefits. Rather than being able to apply for

4   multiple benefits at one time, low-income New Yorkers

5   are often forced to spend countless hours traveling

6   to and waiting at social services offices or spending

7   long times on calls, waiting to be served, taking

8   time away from work, and raising their children, and

9   if their employer pays by the hour, they often lose

10   wages to do so. So, we have actually long championed

11   the idea of a MyCity portal, which then-candidate

12   Eric Adams said would create a single portal for all

13   City services and benefits but, when the portal

14   finally launched in 2023, as was discussed earlier,

15   it only offered eligibility screenings and

16   applications for the childcare benefits and, even

17   now, New Yorkers who need to apply for SNAP, cash

18   assistance, and Medicaid renewal are directed to the

19   separate AccessHRA website. So, our position on this

20   is that, in principle, we do very much support the

21   idea of allowing people, particularly low-income

22   people, the opportunity to apply for multiple

23   benefits at one time because it is extremely

24   difficult for them to have to go through this process

25   with multiple agencies, many of which require the

2   same amount of information about them. Something like

3   90 percent of the information that you need to apply

4   for all these benefits is roughly the same, and we

5   know that there are the technology challenges. We

6   know there were issues that were brought up earlier

7   in this hearing related to concerns about privacy.

8   And those are all very fair concerns, but we do

9   believe that the potential upsides for the City once

10 the portal is fully implemented could be great. It

11 could save countless time and money for struggling

12 New Yorkers, could decrease the burden on City

13 workers, and improve the local economy because people

14 who receive these benefits will almost certainly use

15 them in local city businesses. So, we do believe that

16 the City Council and the City should do everything it

17 can to properly and fully implement the promise of

18 the MyCity portal, which would make life for low-

19 income New Yorkers who need these benefits much

20 easier. We would also suggest that the Council

21 formally endorse the Congressional and State Hope Act

22 bills, which would make it easier for people to apply

23 for these multiple benefits online, but we hope that

24 you work to address the delays in implementing the

25

2 portal fully so that it can help more New Yorkers.

3 Thank you very much.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much

5 for your testimony. I have a couple of questions that

6 I just want to make sure that we include for the

7 record. So, my first couple of questions will be for

8 (INAUDIBLE) and Dayanita, and then I got one for you.

9 So, I'm clear that there is more concern for the

10 future of MyCity, the way information is being

11 captured, the purpose, the efficacy, than hope for

12 this being a useful tool for New Yorkers. In a world

13 where MyCity does exist, what should be removed? What

14 do you think it needs to look like and operate to be

15 the tool where New Yorkers can go online and just get

16 information, if you can envision a world where that

17 is true? What needs to happen for MyCity to be better

18 and useful?

19   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: If the purpose of the

20 tool is just to receive information, then that's much

21 more simple. What we're concerned about is a tool

22 that is collecting information from New Yorkers about

23 their households, about their dependents. As the

24 Commissioner listed off this morning, there's many

25 layers of information that's collected from people as

2 they apply for benefits, as they apply for childcare,

3 and our questions and our concerns really stem from

4 what happens when all of that information is

5 collected together in one place that doesn't have

6 strong boundaries between what that information was

7 collected for and what it is being used for, and at

8 the moment, data sharing agreements aside, we already

9 heard from a report last week, again, this was only

10 in the public's eye because there was media reporting

11 on it, that an internal memo indicated an intention

12 for NYPD officers to be embedded in City agencies

13 across City government. And, if that is the case and

14 NYPD officials would then be able to get access to

15 such data, we have concerns about what then the

16 purpose of that data, which was collected for a

17 different purpose, is going to be used for,

18 especially in a world where automated systems are

19 kicking people off benefits that they are eligible

20 for, where fraud detection predictive algorithms are

21 wrongly accusing people of fraud, and where the push

22 for innovation and where the push for efficiency and

23 lowering staff counts is resulting in replacing long-

24 term unionized experienced workers instead with

25 algorithms that just don't have the context, don't

2   have the local expertise, and don't have the central

3   purpose being making sure that people who deserve

4   benefits get it and instead have a central purpose of

5   policing.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Are there other

7   cities or other communities where you've seen kind of

8   these worst case scenarios?

9   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: Yes, absolutely.

10   There have been lawsuits in Arkansas about a home

11   healthcare system that was used to reduce the number

12   of home healthcare hours someone was entitled to.

13   There is another lawsuit out of Idaho, similarly

14   about healthcare, and another one from Michigan where

15   there was an automated fraud detection services used,

16   and it was used 95 percent of the time it was

17   producing wrong accusations of fraud.

18   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And, Deyanira, I

19   know you raised a really good point about existing

20   financial institutions that are community-based that

21   in many ways try to right the wrongs of

22   discriminatory lending practices and redlining. Do

23   you think that there is a future for the design and

24   rollout of the digital wallet where it is

2 incorporating any of these core values of community

3 institutions, or no?

4   DEYANIRA DEL RIO: We do. I mean, I would

5 say that just to start in terms of the MyCity design

6 or what that could look like, just a first step would

7 just be making sure that there are real, meaningful

8 opportunities for public input into the design so

9 that we could hear directly, the City can hear what

10 concerns people would have and hear their reactions,

11 and make sure it's very clear what is being

12 envisioned in terms of the collection of data and the

13 sharing of that data. I think also consulting with

14 experts who are not from the for-profit corporations

15 that stand to gain from this project, but consulting

16 with mission-aligned experts in technology that are

17 concerned about the growth, the concentration of data

18 and the lack of control that people have over it at

19 times. I would also say that I found it very

20 concerning that the Commissioner talked about people

21 having to read disclosures to understand how their

22 data would be used when we know that very few people

23 do that, and there's just such a sheer imbalance of

24 power and information. Do we expect public assistance

25 applicants to read that and make a decision about

2   whether they need to apply for benefits based on the

3   disclosures that are in four-point font? I would hope

4   not. I think the City should make a clear commitment

5   to making sure that as a matter of policy, any

6   systems, portals that the City creates must protect

7   people's privacy to the highest standard. Otherwise,

8   the City is steering people into a profit-driven

9   system that isn't going to serve the public interest.

10 And finally, to your point, yes, there are, the City

11 right now has entered into another contract with

12 Mocafi to issue immediate response cards to migrant

13 asylum seekers with Mocafi, and some of the community

14 development credit unions that have long served

15 immigrants, undocumented, documented, and other

16 historically redlined communities have said they wish

17 that they had been approached by the City because

18 many of those institutions are already serving these

19 asylum seekers, not just with a prepaid card, but

20 offering an array of one-on-one support, help sending

21 funds back home, applying for tax identification

22 numbers, and providing full holistic services, not

23 just a card that they can use to swipe and generate

24 funds for the FinTech company. And then in the long

25 run, the City should create its own public bank

2   through which it can administer a lot of these

3   services directly rather than having to look to for-

4   profit partnerships.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, that's so

6   true. For a long time the credit unions were the only

7   institutions banking with undocumented New Yorkers

8   whose only ID was IDNYC, so absolutely.

9   Is it possible to deliver services

10   efficiently without centralizing data?

11   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: That's a great

12   question, and I think that those are definitely

13   questions and conversations that should happen with

14   technologists who can answer it with a lot more

15   detail and context than certainly I can, but the

16   issue from a perspective of governance is that at the

17   moment there is no way for people to understand what

18   the boundaries are between how their data is used

19   and, if it is used for multiple purposes, there needs

20   to be more access to that. We don't want to be in

21   this hall five years from now demanding a bill about

22   transparency reports for how many times the NYPD has

23   accessed data through the MyCity portal. I think that

24   what we need to be clear about from our perspective

25   is what boundaries are we setting up and not just

2   setting up and hoping that ethical companies comply,

3   but laws and clear categorical bans on particular use

4   cases if the data is collected from a benefits

5   applicant. If the data is collected from someone

6   who's going to City services for mental health

7   treatment, for substance use treatment, in those

8   cases, people need to have the assurance that their

9   information is not going to turn around and be used

10   to police them.

11   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. And for

12   Kim, thank you so much for your thoughtful testimony.

13   I think a lot of what you highlighted here is kind of

14   the hope that we had, a lot of folks had about what a

15   one-stop, centralized portal could do to improve

16   access for folks. I am most intimately familiar with

17   AccessHRA. I have the app on my phone. I know it was

18   a big undertaking. Have you heard specific feedback

19   from folks that you all serve or from just folks on

20   your team maybe about the usefulness of someone using

21   MyCity portal, for example, to apply for EBT or for

22   cash assistance or food, for example?

23   KIM MOSCARITOLO: So yeah, I mean, with

24   the caveat that I don't do the direct service work so

25   this is just what I hear from our staff. I mean, my

2 understanding is that currently the usability of

3 MyCity in particular is fairly limited. So, the work

4 that we do primarily is with SNAP and WIC access,

5 which my understanding is not currently available via

6 the MyCity portal. It is accessible through other

7 avenues through City agencies. But the feedback that

8 we often get from folks is the number of barriers

9 that are in place for folks receiving their benefits

10 and the frustration with spending a tremendous amount

11 of time filling out forms to apply for, say, SNAP,

12 and then realizing that there may be other benefits

13 that they're eligible for that they need to apply for

14 separately and basically fill out 90 to 95 percent of

15 the same information just on a separate form to a

16 separate agency, potentially having to go in person

17 to meet with people, to have their information

18 verified, which always includes potentially taking

19 time off work, having to find childcare, which is

20 extremely difficult so we look at it from a

21 perspective of, of course, we want to limit the

22 barriers that people face to accessing these

23 benefits. If there are significant trust issues, if

24 there are concerns about privacy issues which have

25 been raised during this hearing, of course, then that

2 lack of trust will lead to fewer people utilizing the

3 application, and that, of course, is exactly what we

4 don't want. So, yes, the process needs to be

5 transparent. It needs to be done in a way that

6 engenders trust in communities, particularly

7 communities where we have newly arrived immigrants,

8 folks for whom English is not their first language,

9 because these are the communities often most impacted

10 by poverty and hunger who really need these benefits.

11 But from our perspective doing predominantly the SNAP

12 and WIC outreach that we do, probably the largest

13 thing that we hear from folks is not specifically

14 about a specific City application or portal so much

15 as just the frustration with the amount of time that

16 it takes first to apply and then to receive those

17 benefits, and I realize that the time that it takes

18 to process those applications does not fall under the

19 purview of the Technology office, that has to do with

20 the workers who are processing those applications and

21 getting them through so that may be a whole separate

22 department and a whole separate hearing, but that is

23 the thing that is most frustrating so our message

24 really is just getting these people access to these

25 benefits is the most important thing and anything

2 that we can do to make that process easier and more

3 seamless for those folks is that that is what the

4 City and the City Council needs to be focused on.

5   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much,

6 but I think that that responsibility should be shared

7 with OTI about the timeliness of processing. I mean,

8 they're promoting this portal as improving quality of

9 life. The Commissioner emphasized this multiple

10 times, and it really is a shared responsibility so I

11 think this notion of like, well, we just have the

12 tool and it's up to the agency to process and we have

13 nothing to do with it, I don't think is justifiable,

14 and I think that there should be way more initiative

15 on their half to be able to bridge that connection.

16 Again, your average New Yorker that is going through

17 the motions of setting up a portal does not want to

18 hear that OTI is not responsible for processing their

19 application. That's just not real. And if they were

20 engaging with people, they would 100 percent know

21 that.

22   Thank you again. I just have one more

23 question. In your opinion, do you think that the

24 current New York City privacy law is doing enough to

25 protect our data and our data privacy?

2   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: It's not clear that

3   it's being enforced. I think that there's an actually

4   pretty comprehensive identifying information

5   protection in New York City. It's not clear that this

6   Administration is respecting or adhering to its

7   restrictions or adhering to the principles under it

8   as it is rolling out MyCity and the digital wallet as

9   well.

10   I would also just mention that this

11   Administration has gone to Albany to fight for the

12   One City Act, which is a bill that would permit for

13   cities over 1 million pretty broad data sharing

14   permissions, and that bill itself actually

15   contemplates a police use case for the purposes of

16   being able to police the subways, and so it's clear

17   that the care coordination and interagency data

18   sharing that's being contemplated by this

19   Administration is specifically being contemplated not

20   just for the purposes of using force to remove people

21   from the subways and voluntarily hospitalizing

22   people, but it's also being contemplated as the

23   Administration tries to spread out the NYPD through

24   other City agencies to also enforce non-criminal

25   violations, including City rules and regulations, and

2 so we have very serious concerns about the One City

3 Act as well and how it would actually undermine New

4 York City's otherwise very clear identifying

5 information protections.

6   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. And do

7 you want to comment on the changes in the PPB rules

8 related to demonstration projects? The Commissioner

9 did not touch on it a whole lot, but.

10   CYNTHIA CONTI-COOK: Yes, I would. So last

11 week the Procurement Policy Board did a rule, passed

12 a rule change, although it was opposed, it was passed

13 three to two. The procurement project rule change

14 would allow demonstration project procurement to be

15 used without public notice, without public oversight.

16 It would allow it to be expanded upon without the

17 kind of evaluation and more rigorous, or it's not

18 terribly rigorous to begin with. Demonstration

19 projects are supposed to be an exception to the rule

20 where you pilot something and see how it works before

21 you decide to engage with contracts in it. The

22 current expansion of demonstration project

23 procurement, which was really driven by industry and

24 the love of innovation and getting stuff done, the

25 limitation on that for New Yorkers is that we know

2 less about what is actually being contracted. There's

3 no RFP, it is not competitive, and it allows

4 companies to really get a head start against other

5 companies. It allows companies to go in and gather

6 data through City infrastructure, which is a very

7 valuable ability for a company to have and, once they

8 exclusively are capable of building a technology tool

9 based on the data that they've collected getting the

10 advantage of the City infrastructure they've been

11 able to access through demonstration project pilots,

12 they are then really well-positioned to be the most

13 competitive bidder. We've seen this with ShotSpotter,

14 we've seen this with Mocafi and the digital wallets,

15 and we're currently looking at all the demonstration

16 projects to evaluate just how many exist and get a

17 better idea of the full scope of how this really

18 opaque procurement process is replacing and

19 undermining local governance.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Wonderful, thank

21 you. Thank you so much for testifying and for

22 sticking it out. Thank you.

23   Next panel, we have Christopher Leon

24 Johnson and Raul Rivera.

25   CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Can I speak.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yes, you can

3 start.

4   CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hey, hey, Chair

5 Gutiérrez. Christopher Leon Johnson, The Record. I

6 want to speak, I know that, I don't know if Yusef

7 Salaam was here. He should be removed as the

8 Committee Council Chair because he's a lying bastard.

9 I'll tell him to his face. But let me say this right

10 now. Why does the OTI Commissioner have security

11 detail? Everybody know he does. I think you should

12 have a hearing with one agency, I don't know which, I

13 know Yusef Salaam is too scared to shake an apple

14 cart. You need to ask this OTI Commissioner, like,

15 why does he have a security detail? I just saw him

16 with a security detail outside City Hall. This is

17 getting, Adams is a liar. Eric Adams is a known liar.

18 That's why he's in this situation right now, and I'm

19 calling on him to resign as Mayor. Why does this OTI

20 Commissioner has a security detail? I think you

21 should ask him that question. I'm going to put this

22 in the record. I'm going to send it to your office in

23 Williamsburg. I'm going to go there, like, tomorrow

24 or Wednesday, I'm going to send an inquiry. I think

25 you should have a hearing, like, a special hearing

2   with the, and ask this guy, like, why does he have a

3   security detail? He's lying, Adams' Administration is

4   lying about the OTI Commissioner not having a

5   security detail. He does. They have NYPD badges, they

6   have firearms, they act as staffers, assistants. I

7   just saw one outside with him. Let me see how much

8   time I have left. How much time I have left? All

9   right, a minute 34 seconds. Okay, so My Portal, I

10   believe, is a good tool to use. Put everything in one

11   point. I don't know why it was the last panel

12   complaining about all this woke crap. Everybody has a

13   smartphone these days. Everybody has smartphones,

14   especially with the help of, what's this thing, ACP,

15   and the free phone program. You can easily access it.

16   If you know how to access booty shaking videos, I

17   know, and WorldStarHipHop, then you should be able to

18   access, know how to access the My Portal app. I think

19   that, to be honest with you, 55 seconds on the clock,

20   that for every phone that the city, that the

21   government supplies in the city, they should be able

22   to automatically upload, should be automatic on the

23   app when you get the phones, when you get the phone.

24   Every City Council, every type of governmental app

25   should be on this phone, should be on the government-

2   owned phones but, in this 30 seconds, like I said,

3   Gutiérrez, I will go to your office tomorrow. I know

4   I'm not doing it right now. I respect you, but I'll

5   go to your office, and I'm going to submit an inquiry

6   to have a hearing with the OTI Commissioner again,

7   probably ask him a question next time, what justifies

8   you having a NYPD security detail that acts as

9   assistance, calm people, and you see them at the

10   parades, you see them at the flag raisings with their

11   badges out and their guns out, and they have

12   community affairs officers with them so that's all I

13   gotta say. I gotta go to this hearing right now in

14   the Housing Committee before they cut off, but thank

15   you. Take care.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,

17   Christopher. Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

18   RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon. I want to

19   start off with a quote that I created a few years

20   ago. I'm a big fan of technology. I love technology.

21   Humans first, technology second, today, tomorrow,

22   forever. I'll repeat, humans first, technology

23   second, today, tomorrow, forever. Technology can be

24   very helpful and can be very dangerous. I tried to

25   link up with the Commissioner that was here to

2   Technology, and he spoke for like two hours, and we

3   tried to link up with his office. I tried to speak to

4   his people. Not one had a business card. So think

5   about that. We're talking about technology, but they

6   can't even have a little piece of paper. I do, I have

7   information. I have a dot card, so I can give out my

8   information. I'm the founder of NYC Drivers Unite.

9   I'm a taxi driver. I have over 23,000 trips with Uber

10   and Lyft. People may think that Uber is a cab company

11   or a cab base, but actually, they go into technology,

12   and that's why we're here today, and we just

13   testified on Friday about the exploitation of Uber.

14   Drivers are getting deactivated at will with no

15   recourse. They try to get reactivated by responding

16   to emails. They can't speak to an actual person. So

17   we spoke to the Chair, and we spoke to the

18   Commissioner, and we spoke to Josh Gold from Uber,

19   and we told them that we basically, we want Uber

20   deactivated from New York, and they can deactivate

21   thousands of drivers. Why can't, as a City, we

22   deactivate Uber? We can deactivate Uber. They're not

23   doing the right thing for the people of New York

24   City. I'm a driver. They're exploiting people of

25   color, right? You want to protect people of color? 90

2 percent of the drivers are immigrants with a language

3 barrier, and they're losing their livelihoods.

4 They're just getting deactivated. I know a driver

5 that just reached out to me. He had 29,000 trips with

6 Uber. You know how hard that is to do? 29,000 trips

7 with Uber. Somebody made a small complaint, and he

8 was gone. Now he's out of business, but he has a new

9 vehicle that he has to pay for. So with technology,

10 you have to be very careful. We're going to call for

11 the deactivations. We've been putting videos out. I

12 don't know who listens in this city anymore. You

13 know, the things that are happening here. We have to

14 advocate. We have to edit our videos. We have to be,

15 we have to do everything. So right now, we're calling

16 for the elimination of Uber from the App Store, and

17 we want them deactivated from the city. We spoke to

18 the Commissioner, and I told them there is a

19 solution, and the solution is to revoke Uber's

20 license. And then we got all these groups, these Taxi

21 Workers Alliance and IDG. They say all kinds of

22 things, and they draft bills here and there, but they

23 never say remove Uber, yeah? Go hard or go home. We

24 want to deactivate Uber from New York City. Thank you

25 so much.

2   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Mr.

3   Rivera.

4   Next panel, we have Shelby Lohr from the

5   Day Care Council of New York.

6   Shelby, you can get started when you want

7   to make sure the mic is on.

8   SHELBY LOHR: Thank you, Chair Gutiérrez

9   and the Committee on Technology for holding this

10 hearing on the MyCity Portal. The Day Care Council of

11 New York is the membership organization of early

12 childhood provider organizations in New York City. We

13 provide early care and education at over 200 sites

14 and neighborhoods across all five boroughs, and the

15 Day Care Council of New York is a steering committee

16 member of the Campaign for Children, and our

17 recommendations in this testimony align with that

18 coalition.

19   The City must continue to work to make

20 enrolling in childcare simpler for families. DCCNY

21 has been working with our member organizations to

22 identify challenges facing families seeking

23 childcare. Providers have indicated several ways to

24 improve the My Portal system to simplify the

25 enrollment process for families. For parents seeking

2 childcare, the portal contains some user design

3 flaws. In particular, the City directs families to

4 the official MyCity Portal for assistance, but then

5 reroutes them to other agency websites. For example,

6 when families on public assistance are on the MyCity

7 Portal, they're referred to the Human Resource

8 Administration, foster care families are referred to

9 their child welfare caseworker, and low-income

10 families seeking vouchers are referred to the

11 childcare enrollment application.

12   Further, applications for 3K and pre-K

13 for all are not part of the MyCity Portal. Instead,

14 families seeking free school day 3K or pre-K must

15 apply through DOE's My Schools application. At the

16 same time, families interested in extended 3K or pre-

17 K must first apply through My Schools, then

18 separately through MyCity to confirm their

19 eligibility. Creating a more integrated and single

20 platform can help the portal achieve its stated

21 purpose while increasing accessibility for families.

22 Families interested in Head Start, Early Head Start,

23 and infant and toddler programs face a different

24 pathway to care and must enroll directly with their

25 specific program. The infant and toddler programs

2   then submit enrollment applications to the DOE for

3   eligibility approval. The existence of multiple

4   portals and multiple steps creates severe hurdles for

5   families.

6   Providers have also had negative

7   experiences with the DOE's centralized enrollment

8   process as it prevents them from accepting children

9   on-site, resulting in open seats that they cannot

10   fill. This lack of flexibility has hindered

11   contracted ECE providers from enrolling families on-

12   site and creating competition between contracted

13   programs and those operated by the DOE in school

14   settings.

15   The Day Care Council of New York urges

16   the City to address these issues to ensure that all

17   families have access to quality ECE care that meets

18   their needs. The MyCity portal shall be consumer-

19   centered and support a seamless application and

20   enrollment process for all birth-to-five programming

21   in New York City. We therefore recommend the

22   following to improve the MyCity portal. Create a

23   consumer-centered platform where the applicant need

24   only know the age of the child they're seeking care

25   for and provide basic demographics on residence and

2 income levels of the household head; ensure the

3 portal interfaces with providers so that they can

4 assist parents in applying and enrolling in services

5 like full day, full year, or school day and school

6 year and connect them directly to open seats within a

7 center or family childcare network; ensure

8 multilingual access to the platform and that the

9 application is accessible to migrant families. This

10 could include through offering a multilingual

11 technical assistance phone number; ensure application

12 and enrollment for all birth-to-five ECE services can

13 continue all year round, and there are a number of

14 other recommendations, but you will see them soon

15 when we submit the testimony. Thank you so much for

16 your time.

17   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Shelby.

18 Please submit the testimony. We'd love to continue

19 reading through the recommendations, and thank you so

20 much for your thoughtful testimony.

21   Have you heard similar to what I've been

22 hearing about processing times and the fact that

23 people would, there's still 9,400 New Yorkers in the

24 last year that submitted paper applications despite

25 the success of the portal. Is that something that

2 you're hearing where they're choosing to do the paper

3 application versus the portal for maybe security

4 reasons or just the length of time it takes?

5   SHELBY LOHR: Yeah, we have heard a lot of

6 challenges with what is happening in terms of

7 enrolled students and then what the actual portal

8 expresses. So, for example, we heard from one

9 provider that said, we have 28 kids who are enrolled,

10 but then we get something from the portal that says

11 that they're not and then they get an email saying

12 that they're not enrolled so there's a lot of back

13 and forth that if there's a better integration

14 between the providers and the systems, it can help

15 parents not be as confused and it helps providers not

16 be as much on the, trying to interface between the

17 technology and the family so there is a lot of delay

18 and kind of a lack of communication despite many of

19 the positive steps forward that the portal has been

20 undergoing.

21   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And have you heard

22 from parents if they have any concerns about the

23 kinds of information that's being asked for the

24 screening or to even set up their profile?

25

2 SHELBY LOHR: Yes, absolutely. There are a

3 number of families, particularly migrant families

4 that are concerned when they're applying. For

5 example, if they need to provide information about

6 who lives in their household or any details about

7 birth certificates, they're very afraid that they

8 might give away somebody else in their family or any

9 other kind of information that they don't want to

10 apply at all, and also it's just a little complicated

11 with too many different places to apply. You don't

12 know how to do it, and sometimes you can just say,

13 well, I'll just try to figure something else out

14 because it's too invasive and it's too confusing.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That happens

16 often. Shelby, thank you so much. Thank you for

17 taking the time. Appreciate it.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Now,

19 we're going to turn to our witnesses joining us via

20 Zoom, and first we have Kate Brennan from AI Now.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

22 KATE BRENNAN: Hi there, can you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yes.

24 KATE BRENNAN: Good afternoon, Chair

25 Gutiérrez and Members of the Committee on Technology.

2   My name is Kate Brennan and I'm the Associate

3   Director at the AI Now Institute, a New York City-

4   based policy organization shaping artificial

5   intelligence in the public interest.

6   My brief testimony today highlights three

7   principal concerns we have with the MyCity portal's

8   current trajectory and, in particular, the future

9   vision of MyCity as a centralized predictive data

10   platform. First, MyCity must not be used to justify

11   and entrench big tech corporate interests in public

12   infrastructure. Public AI projects like MyCity are

13   currently designed to require partnering with large

14   tech companies. For example, the City has already

15   contracted with Microsoft AI to launch the MyCity

16   chatbot. These companies have everything to gain from

17   public investment. For one, they're enriched with

18   more data to train and improve their models, and even

19   where agencies don't contract with big tech firms

20   directly, these firms benefit because they control

21   all essential inputs in the AI supply chain, such as

22   cloud computing, data centers, and foundation models.

23   And what does this mean for the public? More opaque

24   infrastructures for citizen surveillance. This

25   concern is especially stark with the proposed MyCity

2 digital wallets that allow government agencies and

3 without proper safeguards, private companies to track

4 how New Yorkers are spending their own money. These

5 kinds of large government contracts only further

6 worsen concentration of power in the tech industry,

7 today widely understood to be bad for innovation, bad

8 for security, and dangerous for democracy.

9   Second, we cannot allow private firms to

10 hide behind corporate secrecy laws and evade

11 accountability when public AI projects fail. We've

12 already seen this play out. The MyCity chatbot

13 partnered with Microsoft and provided wrong and

14 illegal information to New Yorkers and, crucially,

15 when the City attempted to understand the chatbot's

16 training data, Microsoft claimed that the data was

17 proprietary to the vendor and evaded accountability,

18 leaving government oversight Committees in the dark.

19   Third and finally, we must push back

20 against the City's prioritization of outsourced

21 contracts over in-house public tech jobs. We expand

22 upon each of these concerns in our submitted written

23 testimony, which we'll submit shortly after this.

24   In conclusion, we must reject public

25 investment in AI projects that line the pockets of

2 large corporations at the expense of New Yorkers'

3 privacy, autonomy, and jobs. This Committee has the

4 opportunity and responsibility to ensure that New

5 York City invests in technology built by and for its

6 people. Thank you so much.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Kate, thank you so

8 much. Our next witness we have is Albert Fox Cahn.

9   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

10   ALBERT FOX CAHN: Thank you so much, Chair

11 Gutiérrez. My name's Albert Fox Cahn. I am the

12 Executive Director of the Surveillance Technology

13 Oversight Project. I'm also a practitioner in

14 residence at NYU Law School. And it is just stunning

15 that we are having to have this conversation today,

16 that this City, which has so often claimed that it

17 was going to hold itself accountable on AI, would go

18 down this perilous path to a unvetted chatbot, which

19 seems incapable of delivering anything that New

20 Yorkers actually need, but also is able to convey

21 proven incorrect statements and advise New Yorkers to

22 break the law. This is technology that is not fit for

23 purpose, that has no place in public life, and should

24 never have been deployed in the first place, but this

25 is a Mayor who remains committed to finding every

2 opportunity to deploy new and untested technologies

3 that transform our fellow residents into test

4 subjects for new private ventures. I want to correct

5 an important point that came during the

6 Administration's testimony, where they noted that

7 there's a Chief Privacy Officer for the City. What

8 was not noted is that under public Law 245 and 247

9 from 2017, the Chief Privacy Officer's jurisdiction

10 extends to almost every aspect of the City, except

11 the NYPD and law enforcement. The Chief Privacy

12 Officer has largely been stripped of the power to

13 hold the agency that most imperils New Yorkers'

14 privacy and to hold them accountable in any way when

15 they do so, and so what we end up with are empty

16 promises and unenforceable guarantees about the way

17 that the increasing amounts of data collected from

18 each of us will be weaponized against us. The truth

19 is there are no firm guarantees today about the

20 limitations on how that data is used. And

21 furthermore, it's clear that the most important tools

22 for banking access for New Yorkers today are not

23 high-tech, they are not fintech, they are not some

24 new startup, they are not some new AI-powered bot,

25 they are simply ensuring access to credit unions,

2   access to public banking, access to traditional

3   financial services, and not some new for-profit

4   venture. We have been fighting the inclusion of

5   payment technology as part of the City ID for

6   basically the entire existence of the Surveillance

7   Technology Oversight Project. We should not have the

8   MyCity app transform into a new form of digital

9   credentialing, digital financial surveillance, or

10   digital platforming. This is not a way to actually

11   address any of the issues that New Yorkers face, and

12   there are so many more modest technological upgrades

13   that we could actually take on as a City to improve

14   service delivery, to improve back-end coordination,

15   to make sure that our systems are actually operating…

16   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you so much. Your

17   time has expired.

18   ALBERT FOX CAHN: Thank you for your time.

19   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Al, thank you so

20   much. And please, I don't know if you have a written

21   testimony, but please feel free to share it.

22   I had one question, because I'm glad you

23   brought it up about PD. Do you know how PD could

24   access data from OTI in this instance? Is it through

25   a request, an access, an MOU? The Commissioner

2   multiple times said to his knowledge there was no

3   known MOU with PD specifically. Do you know if

4   something as simple as an MOU is enough for PD, or is

5   there another way that they can access that

6   information?

7   ALBERT FOX CAHN: Sorry, I wasn't able to

8   unmute myself. So, what we've seen historically is

9   that the NYPD is actually often able to access

10   municipal data without formal MOUs or formal

11   agreements in place. Under the New York State PPPL,

12   the law that governs a lot of that data access to

13   other agencies, they've been able to get it through

14   any number of informal arrangements, and the truth is

15   that because of the political power that the Police

16   Department wields at City Hall, we often see these

17   informal access arrangements with other City

18   agencies. Documenting them, being able to sue over

19   them, that's a much harder task, but the fact that

20   there isn't a formal MOU, to me, that is not

21   reassuring. If there was, in fact, like a forensic

22   audit by an outside entity that was able to certify

23   that the data had not been shared, that would go much

24   further in providing real peace of mind, but the

25

2   absence of a real enforcement mechanism isn't proof

3   that the NYPD has actually not accessed that data.

4   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Right. Thank you.

5   Thank you, Al.

6   Next, we have Katie Kaye from World

7   Privacy Forum.

8   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

9   KATE KAYE: Chair Gutiérrez and members of

10   the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to

11   testify about MyCity. My name is Kate Kaye. I'm

12   Deputy Director of World Privacy Forum. We're a

13   nonpartisan 501(c)3 public interest research group

14   focused on data use and privacy in complex technical

15   and data ecosystems, such as AI, mobile apps,

16   identity systems, and more.

17   Expanding access to City services is a

18   laudable goal but, without incorporating privacy and

19   security by design throughout MyCity development to

20   prevent unintended uses of data from MyCity, it could

21   introduce data privacy risks and negative impacts for

22   everyone using it, especially vulnerable communities.

23   These risks include unconsented or undesirable

24   sharing or exposure of data related to people's

25   identity, housing, health, employment, income,

2 immigration status, or business operations. Users'

3 data could be accessed by bad actors or used for

4 discriminatory algorithmic scores or decisions. To

5 understand how policies and regulations apply,

6 transparency and documentation are needed in the

7 following areas. What specific City services and data

8 systems will be integrated into MyCity? What vendors

9 will enable technical processes such as identity

10 verification, social media logins, AI chatbots, or

11 payment systems? What information such as identity

12 data, biometric data, or mobile location data will be

13 used or shared through MyCity? Why and for how long?

14 What MOUs or agreements such as data sharing

15 agreements exist for MyCity?

16   And here are a few suggestions to ensure

17 MyCity does not create privacy or discriminatory

18 risks. All connections to external systems, including

19 identity verification and social login systems should

20 be scrutinized according to privacy data and AI

21 governance policies. Secondary or downstream uses of

22 MyCity data, including by vendors, should be limited

23 or prevented. Some digital banking and wallet systems

24 offer people a false take-it-or-leave-it choice

25 between permitting secondary use or sharing of their

2   data and not getting the service at all. MyCity data

3   with no reason to be stored should be purged from all

4   data systems. Without appropriate data agreements and

5   use and sharing limits, connections between MyCity

6   and external systems like identity or AI systems or

7   social media platforms could allow unwanted data

8   sharing or exposure of identity.

9   World Privacy Forum urges the Technology

10   Committee to launch a taskforce, which includes civil

11   society groups and the people who will use the portal

12   or app. The task force should provide recommendations

13   for appropriate transparency disclosures and

14   guardrails.

15   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you very much.

16   Your time is expired.

17   KATE KAYE: I'm happy to answer any

18   questions you may have, and I'll be submitting

19   written testimony.

20   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Oh, excellent. I

21   was just going to ask, I want to make sure we read

22   through the recommendations. Thank you so much.

23   KATE KAYE: Thank you.

24   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Next we have Kevin

25   De Liban.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

3 KEVIN DE LIBAN: Good afternoon, Chair

4 Gutiérrez and other Members of the Committee. My name

5 is Kevin De Liban. I'm the Founder of an organization

6 called TechTonic Justice to fight the ground level

7 harms that artificial intelligence algorithms and

8 related technologies cause in low-income people. I

9 come to this work after 12 plus years as a legal aid

10 attorney in Arkansas, whose specialty was public

11 benefits, involving at points, the integration of

12 these various eligibility systems. The short version

13 is beware, run the other way, this is a warning, the

14 sky is falling, and all the other good things.

15 Similar projects oftentimes headed by large private

16 vendors in various other states have resulted in

17 enormous failures, and these states vary. It's not

18 just Arkansas, it's Rhode Island, it's Colorado, it's

19 Texas. Places of different sizes, different political

20 climates and everything else. And when they fail, the

21 result is outstanding and unsupportable human

22 suffering, right? People who are unable to get

23 benefits so that they can buy food or get healthcare

24 or do any of the other things that they need to

25 survive so these are incredibly high risk uses. There

2   hasn't been an instance yet where a jurisdiction has

3   successfully somehow overhauled their eligibility and

4   enrollment system to integrate multiple applications

5   without it entailing significant risks and failures.

6   If this is the path that New York City is going to go

7   down, I have some, I guess, cautionary guidance. One

8   is making sure that the problem is defined and scoped

9   in detail. What is it that you're actually trying to

10   solve for? What problems? Is this technology capable

11   then of solving that problem in a way that is

12   efficient, effective, fair, not harmful, and cost-

13   effective? If you're going to go this way, will you

14   commit to the resources to minimize the harm and

15   ensure proper oversight? That means making sure

16   agencies have the sophistication necessary to

17   interrogate vendors, contract well, run all sorts of

18   tests and projections, consulting community members

19   that are going to be affected in an ongoing way that

20   actually enables them to have power and to

21   participate meaningfully. Importantly, it's necessary

22   as part of this to have extensive public reporting

23   and forcing the agency to answer questions that might

24   not be answered in their own internal documents and

25   the things that they choose to make publicly

2 available. Of course, freedom of information laws

3 have to be strong around this so that the public can

4 have access to the information. There has to be pre-

5 deployment testing. There has to be phased

6 implementation so that it's not applied to everyone

7 at the same point. You have to maintain the non-AI,

8 the previous way of doing things so that you can turn

9 that switch off and get people benefits the previous

10 way. That concludes, I think, my three minutes. Happy

11 to offer any additional information or answer any

12 questions. Thank you very kindly.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Kevin.

14 Do you have specific examples of benefits being

15 denied or what kind of benefits that were denied

16 using a similar portal?

17   KEVIN DE LIBAN: Okay, thank you. Yeah, so

18 in Rhode Island, I think it was 2016 to 2018, massive

19 SNAP and Medicaid failures so I think at some point,

20 130,000 people on SNAP benefits lost their benefits,

21 and then there was a backlog of 15,000 or 30,000

22 applications that took months and months to receive.

23 You have in cases right now with like unemployment,

24 there are still cases in Michigan of people who are

25 waiting four years for pandemic era unemployment

2   benefits that they were eligible for originally. Same

3   situation in Florida, and even to a lesser extent, I

4   think, in Arkansas, so there's a lot of examples from

5   all over the country about lost benefits, and those

6   mean Medicaid, SNAP, and unemployment principally

7   when it comes to state benefits. Few people outside

8   of many places are on TANF anymore, Temporary

9   Assistance for Needed Families, so that might be less

10   impacted, but that's another benefit. It's usually

11   rolled into these sort of so-called integrated

12   eligibility and enrollment systems.

13   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Kevin.

14   Thank you for your testimony.

15   KEVIN DE LIBAN: Thank you.

16   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Next witness is

17   Clayton Banks, followed by Sara Luria of St. Nicks

18   Alliance.

19   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

20   CLAYTON BANKS: Hi, able to see me or hear

21   me?

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yes, we can hear

23   you.

24   CLAYTON BANKS: Okay. Well, Chair and

25   Members of the Technology Committee, thank you for

2   the opportunity to address this important topic and

3   thanks, Irene. As a longtime advocate for digital

4   equity, I am a longtime advocate for digital equity.

5   And the closing of the digital divide, I commend the

6   City for developing the MyCity Portal, a tool that

7   has the potential to be transformative for New

8   Yorkers seeking access to essential services.

9   However, however, for the portal to truly fulfill its

10 mission of equity and empowerment, we must ensure it

11 is accessible to all residents, regardless of their

12 technology resources or digital literacy. So mobile

13 app access, right? That's critical. Many New Yorkers,

14 particularly those in underserved communities like in

15 Harlem, where I'm there all the time, a smartphone is

16 their primary and sometimes only device for

17 connecting to the internet. You get to what I'm

18 saying. Internet is an issue here. An app allows

19 these residents to access services on the go, receive

20 notifications about deadlines and complete simple

21 tasks like checking application statuses. By making

22 the MyCity Portal accessible via mobile, we can reach

23 those who may not have home broadband, but rely on

24 affordable mobile data plans. I'm getting to that

25 broadband. On the other hand, web access through

2   computers is just as essential. There are many tasks,

3   from applying for housing assistance to uploading

4   important documents, that are better suited for a

5   desktop experience. The larger screen, more advanced

6   tools and ability to multitask are crucial for

7   certain users, including older adults and individuals

8   who may struggle with mobile navigation. We must not

9   forget that the digital divide is not just about

10 internet access, but also about digital literacy.

11 Ensuring that the portal is intuitive and use-

12 friendly is as important as providing robust security

13 features like multi-factor authentication, whether on

14 mobile or desktop. Additionally, offering the

15 platform in multiple languages will ensure that the

16 New Yorkers, regardless of background, can benefit

17 from these services. I also want to address the

18 integration of NYC 3-1-1. I know that's happening.

19 I'm glad to hear about that. And I'm just saying that

20 because the biggest issue we have is getting every

21 single home in our great city to have the internet.

22 We cannot call ourselves the greatest city in the

23 world if someone does not have the internet in their

24 home. That's critical. It will work directly with

25 MyCity. All that will work so much better. I urge the

2   City Council to prioritize both mobile and web access

3   to the NYC portal, ensuring it is accessible, secure,

4   and inclusive for all. Thank you for your leadership

5   and, of course, I think this is a great and important

6   issue.

7   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,

8   Clayton. It's good to hear from you. Thank you so

9   much.

10   Next up, we have Sara Luria from St.

11   Nicks Alliance.

12   SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

13   SARA LURIA: Hi there. Good afternoon. My

14   name is Sara Luria. Before I start, I just want to

15   say I appreciate all the discussion around privacy

16   and data sharing, especially for historically

17   marginalized folks, and thank you to the Committee

18   for continuing to do this critical work. Like I

19   mentioned, I'm the Director of Workforce Operations

20   at St. Nicks Alliance.

21   St. Nicks Alliance Workforce Development

22   Center launched a digital literacy for all initiative

23   that was fueled by the pandemic and the growing

24   importance of computer literacy to be successful in

25   education and in room for jobs and successful career

2   ladder development. As part of this effort, we

3   recognize the growing need for digital literacy for

4   all in our community. The services at St. Nicks

5   Alliance infuse digital literacy and employment

6   education, skills training, etc. We serve about

7   18,000 community members annually and the center

8   serves around 2,200. Our tech training includes data

9   analytics, IT help desk and cybersecurity. We know

10   that the MyCity platform incorporates the job and

11   benefits feature that could truly potentially benefit

12   our clients at St. Nicks Alliance, and we recognize

13   the importance of providing critical resources to

14   ensure employment opportunities for historically

15   marginalized folks, especially in North and Central

16   Brooklyn. My question is, how can the MyCity platform

17   and the committee support community-based

18   organizations who train folks in IT and tech roles to

19   sort of have more opportunities through employment,

20   specifically in the jobs and benefits feature? Thank

21   you.

22   CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sarah, thank you

23   so much. Thanks for sticking it out and for your

24   testimony. Appreciate it.

25

2   I think that wraps up the witnesses via

3   Zoom and, if we have inadvertently missed anyone who

4   has registered to testify today and has yet to have

5   been called, please use the Zoom hand function and

6   you'll be called in the order that your hand has been

7   raised.

8   Okay, no hands. Thank you everyone for

9   your testimonies today. We hope that MyCity portal

10   will indeed serve as a secure one-stop shop for City

11   services and does not become a one-stop shop for

12   sensitive data about New Yorkers.

13   The hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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Date ____October 12, 2024_____