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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE GENERAL WELFARE

December 17, 2018
Start: 12:34 p.m.
Recess: 5:07 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
- DIANA AYALA
- VANESSA L. GIBSON
- MARK GJONAJ
- BARRY S. GRODENCHIK
- BRAD S. LANDER
- ANTONIO REYNOSO
- RAFAEL SALAMANCA, JR.
- RITCHIE J. TORRES
- MARK TREYGER

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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

1
2
3 Steven Banks
4 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
5 Social Services, DSS

6
7 Jose Castillo Junior
8 Speaking on Behalf of Angela Castillo

9
10 John Shea
11 Chief Executive Officer at the New York City
12 Department of Education

13
14 Gisselle Routhier
15 Policy Director at the Coalition for the Homeless

16
17 Beth Hofmeister
18 Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid Society

19
20 Catherine Trapani
21 Executive Director of the Supportive Housing
22 Network

23
24 Laura Mascuch
25 Executive Director of the Supportive Housing
network

Sasha Alexander
Director of Membership at Sylvia Rivera Law
Project

India Rodriguez
Member of Sylvia Rivera Law Project, Leader in
The Shelter Organizing Team, Prison Advisory
Committee

Randi Levine
Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New
York

Jennifer March
Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for
Children of New York, Inc., COMMITTEE CLERK

24

25

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

Brenda Rosen
President and CEO of Breaking Ground, Chair of
The Board of Directors of the Supportive Housing
Network of New York, Board Member of Homeless
Services United

Nicole McVinua
Policy Analyst at Urban Pathways

Talia Gruber
Economic Empowerment Specialist at the New York
City Anti-Violence Project

Towaki Komatsu
Pursuing Federal Lawsuit Against New York City,
New York State Supreme Court Lawsuit

Raysa Rodriguez
Vice President of Policy and Planning of Women in
Need, WIN

Jelaine Altino
Representing the New York City Coalition of
Domestic Violence Residential Providers

Wendy O'Shields
Safety Net Activist, Founding Member, Housing
Advocate

Michelle DeMott
Chief of Staff to Mitchell Netburn at Samaritan
Daytop Village

Jim Dill
Executive Director of Housing and Services, Inc.

Trish Marsik
Chief Operating Officer for Services for the
Underserved, SUS

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Shelter system, this includes over 39,000 people in... with... families with children, individuals and families with children. The average length of stay for those in shelter continues to increase particularly for single adults. In March of 2015, the Department of Investigations released a report that revealed extremely poor conditions in city shelter... city shelters. Residents were found to be exposed to serious health and safety violations including vermin infestation, non-working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and improper or missing certificates, certificates of occupancy. DOI's investigation also found a lack of social service programs in many of these locations. Among the worst were cluster sites, they were the most poorly maintained and poorly monitored with the least amount of social services available to families. Hotels were also found with reoccurring complaints of rat and mice infestations and many building... many building and fire violations. This report frankly was not a surprise to any shelter provider and any individual who resides in shelter. The City Comptroller conducted an audit then of 101 apartments at eight

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2 random DHS family shelters the same year as the DOI
3 report and found that quote, "DHS does not have
4 sufficient controls to ensure that units within the
5 shelter facilities are adequately maintained, that
6 the needs of homeless families are assessed at a
7 timely manner or that families receive appropriate
8 services including those designed to assist them in
9 transition to permanent housing". The majority of
10 apartments inspected by the Comptroller had one or
11 more health or safety concerns including vermin
12 infestation, peeling paint, water damage, and mold on
13 bathroom ceilings. We have also heard that there are
14 HVAC issues, plumbing issues, broken elevators and
15 basic cleanliness concerns. In December of 2015, the
16 administration took an in depth look at homeless
17 services by conducting a 90-day review. From that
18 review, the city identified a series of reforms
19 including those directly pertaining to homeless
20 shelter conditions. The administration has testified
21 several times before this Committee and has made
22 announcements to the public on the progress of some
23 of these reforms including shelter security, shelter
24 inspections, the phasing out of cluster sites and
25 hotels and the plan to create 15,000 new units of

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2 supportive housing, it was also updated to the public
3 on its plan to open 90 new shelters and expand the
4 city's existing shelters over the next several years
5 to allow for the closing of all commercial hotels by
6 the end of 2023. The 2015 DOI report previously
7 mentioned calls for the creation of an interagency
8 task force. In May 2015, two months after the release
9 of the DOI report, a shelter repair squad comprised
10 of DHS, FDNY, DOB, HPD, and DOHMH was launched to
11 expedite the correction of violations at over 500
12 city shelters. In January of 2016, the shelter
13 repair... shelter repair squad 2.0 was launched to
14 systematically identify and address shelter
15 conditions that were... had been left unaddressed for
16 decades, teams from HPD, HRA and DHS focused on
17 clearing conditions in non-cluster shelters. As a
18 result, the city has reduced violations by 84 percent
19 since January of 2016 conducting more than 34,000
20 inspections in 2016 and 17. While we recognize that
21 many of these issues didn't happen overnight and have
22 built up over years and even decades, we need to
23 address the problems head on and ensure that city...
24 the city's obligations to shelter doesn't just
25 include the bare bones of a roof and walls. We have

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2 an obligation to create healthy, clean environments
3 with timely repairs and appropriate services to get
4 adults and families on the way to permeant housing. I
5 commend the administration for the work that has been
6 done so far but this is a huge undertaking that we'd
7 like to have... and we'd like to have ongoing updates
8 on. Today the Committee looks forward to learning
9 what improvements have been made at shelters in
10 recent years and what hurdles still remain.
11 Additionally, the Committee would like to hear a
12 progress since the 2015 DOI investigation including
13 the physical improvements, wrap around services and
14 health and mental health services that each shelter
15 should be providing. We'd also like to hear from
16 those of you that are here today to comment on the
17 improvements that have been made and offer any
18 suggestions that you may have for how these reforms
19 can be changed, improved or expanded upon. In
20 addition, the city... the Committee will be hearing six
21 bills; Intro 884 by Council Member Rafael Espinal in
22 relation to requiring the Department of Homeless
23 Services to report on short term notice... short notice
24 resident transfers in shelter, Intro 883 by Council
25 Member Espinal in relation to requiring the

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2 Department of Homeless Services to provide customer
3 service training, Intro 915 by Council Member Rafael
4 Salamanca in relation to requiring the Department of
5 Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration
6 to post shelter, supportive housing and cluster site
7 data, Intro 1110 by Council Member Salamanca in
8 relation to housing specialists within the Human
9 Resources Administration and Department of Homeless
10 Services and two bills that I've sponsored, Intro's
11 1232 and 1233 in relation to requiring homeless
12 shelters to post signs and distribute other material
13 relating to shelter transfer appeal process and in
14 relation to providing written notification for non-
15 emergency shelter transfers. Lastly, I just want to
16 take one moment here to acknowledge what happened to
17 Jazmine Headley at the Boerum Hill HRA office which
18 is in the district I represent, the other week and as
19 Chair of this Committee I, I feel the need to speak
20 on it today. What happened to, to Jazmine Headley is
21 appalling and unacceptable, I'm outraged by the
22 actions of HRA and NYPD officers that led to the
23 arrest of Miss Headley for simply trying to access
24 benefits to which she's entitled. There is no excuse
25 for this type of force, this incident has revealed

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2 deeper issues in our city's social services system
3 that we need to be looking at. In the weeks and
4 months to come we will be putting a lot of thought
5 into how we can respond legislatively and address
6 issues across the system but there are still some
7 immediate major concerns and major questions that we
8 need answers to such as why was Jazmine, Jazmine
9 Headley's child care benefit cut off in the first
10 place? Why were there no reasonable accommodations
11 for mothers and children at an HRA center who have to
12 wait for hours on end? Why was her wait time so long?
13 What is the existing protocol for HRA calls to 9-1-1
14 and what data is publicly available for how often 9-
15 1-1 is called for each precinct that an HRA center is
16 in? We owe it to Jazmine, to her child and to all
17 families who rely on the city's social services to
18 answer these questions honestly, forthrightly, take a
19 deep look in the mirror and critically examine why
20 our city allowed this to happen in the first place
21 under our watch, we are collectively responsible
22 here. So, I'd like to thank Commissioner Banks and
23 his team for testifying today and his dedication to
24 the New York City Shelter System. At this time, I'd
25 like to acknowledge my colleagues who are here today;

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 Council Member Diana Ayala of Manhattan and the
3 Bronx, Council Member Barry Grodenchik of Queens,
4 Council Member Adrienne Adams of Queens, Council
5 Member Rafael Salamanca of the Bronx, Council Member
6 Mark Gjonaj of the Bronx, Council Member Antonio
7 Reynoso of Brooklyn and Council Member Vanessa Gibson
8 of the Bronx. And lastly, I'd like to thank my staff
9 of the General Welfare Committee Aminta Kilawan,
10 Senior Counsel; Tonya Cyrus and Crystal Pond, Senior
11 Policy Analysts and Julia Haramis, Finance Analyst
12 for putting this hearing together. I'd also like to
13 thank my Chief of Staff Jonathan Boucher and
14 Legislative Director Elizabeth Adams as well for all
15 the work that they put into this hearing and I would
16 like to turn it over to Council Member Salamanca as
17 he has some opening remarks on his legislation, thank
18 you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Good

20 afternoon, thank you Chair Levin for holding today's
21 hearing. Let me start off by saying thank you to some
22 of the organizations that I see here today, Coalition
23 from the Homeless, the supporter of housing network
24 and others, your work is incredibly important, and I
25 appreciate the services and support you offer to the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 homeless and those who need help. Today we'll be
3 hearing testimony around my bill, Intro 195, which
4 would require DHS, DHS to submit to every Council
5 Member, community board and post on its website
6 quarterly reports on the number of shelters,
7 supportive housing including both single site
8 supportive housing and scatter site and cluster
9 sites, the total number of shelters, supportive
10 housing facilities and cluster sites be separated out
11 by Council District and community boards. I have
12 anywhere between 36 to homeless shelters in my
13 district, since my time as a district manager, I've
14 never really known this number because there has...
15 there hasn't been any reliable information provided
16 to me. I believe that communities and Council Members
17 should know what's in their districts. Now let me be
18 clear, I am not anti-shelter, I support supportive
19 housing and I want to help some of the neediest New
20 Yorkers. I am appalled at some of the nesbism, not in
21 my backyard we've heard around stalling shelters in
22 some of the city's more affluent communities. The
23 issue of homelessness and affordable housing are two
24 of the biggest issues we're facing here in this city
25 and they must be dealt with citywide. I believe that

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 each of the 51 Council Districts should be doing
3 their part to house the homeless, that means setting
4 up shelters and supportive housing units across the
5 city not just concentrated in a few communities. Let
6 me also tell you what this bill does not do, it does
7 not require specific addresses to be reported this
8 way domestic violence shelters can remain in
9 undisclosed locations for safety reasons. It is not
10 my intention to create barriers to opening shelters,
11 what I'd like to see is that the city take a
12 thoughtful approach in how it sites shelters across
13 all five boroughs. Ultimately, we both have the same
14 goal of having enough housing and shelters for the
15 homeless and I am with you on that. We will also be
16 introducing Intros 1110, 1110 which would designate
17 housing specialists within all temporary shelters and
18 to submit an annual report on housing specialists.
19 This bill will also update requirements for housing
20 specialist and DHS, transitional housing facilities
21 and would require DHS to submit an annual report on
22 housing specialists. Finding housing is incredibly
23 difficult, having the right paperwork, getting your
24 finances in order and navigating the housing process
25 can be tricky and may.. and many may give up along the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 way. These housing specialists can help connect the
3 dots for those struggling to find appropriate
4 housing. I look forward to today's conversation.
5 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
7 Council Member Salamanca. Commissioner Banks if you
8 will Aminta Kilawan, Counsel of the Committee will
9 ask you to be sworn in.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: Commissioner do you
11 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
12 but the truth in your testimony before this Committee
13 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

14 STEVEN BANKS: I do.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, you may
16 begin.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you. Good afternoon
18 Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare
19 Committee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before
20 you today to discuss the Department of Homeless
21 Services shelter system, specifically the progress
22 made over the past few years to transform the shelter
23 system as we work to help New Yorkers experiencing
24 homelessness get back on their feet with dignity. My
25 name is Steven Banks and I'm the Commissioner of the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 New York City Department of Social Services. In this
3 capacity I oversee the Human Resources Administration
4 and the Department of Homeless Services. To begin, I
5 would like to address the extremely troubling
6 incident at one of our Brooklyn client locations
7 which culminated in the arrest of an HRA client. What
8 happened at the Human Resources Administration's
9 Dekalb Center on Friday, December 7th, 2018, was
10 completely unacceptable and should never happen again
11 in New York City. On behalf of our agency and our
12 dedicated front-line staff in all five boroughs, I
13 apologize to Jazmine Headley and her one-year old son
14 and to the people of the city of New York for the
15 actions that were taken that day. As reflected in the
16 NYPD body worn camera videos, there were multiple
17 points at which this incident could have and should
18 have been defused. Last Monday, I placed two HRA
19 Peace Officers on modified duty with no client
20 contact. Consistent with their collective bargaining
21 agreement, on Friday I suspended these two officers
22 without pay for the maximum period of time and DSS
23 will file disciplinary charges against them that
24 could result in termination. Going forward, unless
25 there is an immediate safety threat, I am directing

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 that HRA peace officers shall not request the
3 intervention of the NYPD without first contacting the
4 Center Director or Deputy Director or her or his
5 designee to attempt to defuse the situation by
6 addressing a client need. Within the next 90 days, we
7 will conduct retraining sessions for all HRA peace
8 officers, with an emphasis on techniques for
9 deescalating disputes in HRA centers. Thereafter,
10 this enhanced training will be a mandatory annual
11 requirement for each officer. I intend to attend each
12 retraining sessions to speak to the HRA peace
13 officers regarding the importance of deescalating
14 disputes. DSS has directed the city's contracted
15 security services vendor to provide retraining
16 sessions for all security guards assigned to HRA
17 centers, with an emphasis on techniques for
18 deescalating disputes in HRA centers. Thereafter,
19 this training will be a mandatory annual requirement
20 for any contracted security officer assigned to an
21 HRA office. In addition to existing DSS customer
22 service staff training, DSS has requested and
23 received an OMB funding commitment to develop
24 implicit bias training for all 17,000 DSS staff
25 members to promote diversity in the workplace and

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 dignity centered client services. Building on the
3 reforms through which 85 percent of SNAP, food stamps
4 applications and recertifications are now submitted
5 online without the need for clients to come into an
6 HRA center, HRA will continue to move forward with
7 expanding online access to cash assistance clients,
8 subject to any necessary state approvals. Together
9 with the NYPD Commissioner, we will take the
10 following actions: The NYPD and DSS will develop a
11 protocol for determining appropriate instances in
12 which HRA peace officers in HRA centers should seek
13 the assistance of the NYPD. The NYPD and DSS will
14 develop a protocol to deploy an NYPD supervisor to be
15 part of the NYPD response team for such HRA
16 assistance requests. The NYPD and DSS will develop a
17 protocol for transferring control of an incident to
18 the NYPD when the NYPD arrives at an HRA center. I
19 agree with what Council Member, the Chair Levin said
20 in his opening remarks and I know we'll be talking
21 further about these... about the reforms to address
22 this situation as we go forward. Turning to the
23 shelter system, a system built up over time. I would
24 like to begin my testimony today by briefly providing
25 some historical context of the shelter system that

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 built up haphazardly over the past four decades. From
3 1994 to 2014, the shelter population in New York City
4 increased 115 percent. And between 2011 and 2014,
5 following the abrupt end of the advantage rental
6 assistance program, the DHS shelter census increased
7 by 38 percent. During this same time, New York City
8 faced increasing economic inequality as a result of
9 stagnant wages, a lack of affordable housing and an
10 increased cost of living, rents increased more than
11 18 percent while wages increased by less than five
12 percent and 150,000 rent regulated apartments were
13 lost. The resulting dramatic increase in the shelter
14 population coupled with the underinvestment created
15 real challenges as DHS and the agency's not for
16 profit partners worked to adequately ensure safe,
17 clean and secure conditions. While we know there is
18 much work to be done, the data shows that our
19 strategies to address this crisis that has built up
20 over 40 years are beginning to take hold. Prevention
21 first, evictions by City Marshals are down by 27
22 percent since 2013 through our investments in tenant
23 legal services and rent arrears payments. Addressing
24 street, street homelessness, more than 2,000
25 individuals have come in off the street and remained

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 off since we implemented HOME-STAT in 2016. Expanding
3 social services rehousing initiatives, since 2014,
4 more than 100,000 men, women, and children have moved
5 out of shelter or averted homelessness altogether
6 with our new rental assistance and other rehousing
7 programs. Transforming the approach to providing
8 shelter and services, last year the DHS shelter
9 census was flat year over year for the first time in
10 a decade, and this year it is essentially flat again
11 despite providing shelter to more than 500 Puerto
12 Rican evacuees whom the Trump Administration
13 abandoned. And we have reduced the DHS shelter
14 footprint from 648 shelter sites reported in Turning
15 the Tide in 2017 to 464 today and we have sited 29
16 new borough-based shelters with 18 already up and
17 operating. With respect to shelter conditions
18 specifically, the administration has set out to
19 address the cumulative impact of years of
20 underinvestment in shelter maintenance, security, and
21 client services. Following the 90-day review of
22 homeless services in 2016, we developed and are
23 currently implementing comprehensive reforms to
24 transform the city's approach to providing services
25 and shelter to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 A multifaceted strategy, immediate and long-term
3 efforts. In order to address both the immediate and
4 long term needs of shelter infrastructure and to
5 maximize our efforts as well... as we help homeless
6 families and individuals get back on their feet, we
7 employed a multifaceted approach through which we
8 engaged in rapid response efforts to immediately
9 address and improve conditions in shelters, while
10 simultaneously working to raise the bar and
11 strengthen the agency from top to bottom. Since the
12 90-day review in 2016, the administration has reduced
13 building violations and is working to create a safe
14 and dignified physical environment in shelter. We are
15 making progress towards this goal by: committing to
16 get out of 360 cluster sites and commercial hotel
17 locations, with a priority to exit cluster sites with
18 the worst physical infrastructure. Since January
19 2016, the city has closed more than 1,800 cluster
20 sites, including transitioning roughly 300 units at a
21 handful of cluster sites to operate as state licensed
22 Tier II non-profit shelters, representing more than
23 50 percent reduction in the cluster site program
24 citywide. The city was managing 3,658 cluster units
25 on January 1st, 2016. As of October 31st, 2018, the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 city is utilizing fewer than 1,800 cluster units as
3 shelter and continues closing cluster units at a
4 rapid pace. Earlier this month, we announced that the
5 city is concluding an agreement for the acquisition
6 and conversion of nearly 500 cluster units across 17
7 buildings into permanent affordable housing for over
8 1,000 New Yorkers in need, as part of the
9 administration's broader initiative to address
10 homelessness in New York City. Expanding the shelter
11 repair squad, a multi-agency task force to re-
12 inspect... to inspect shelters and repair building code
13 violations. As a result of more comprehensive
14 inspections, partnering with all four inspection
15 agencies; the Department of Buildings, the Department
16 of Housing and Preservation Development, the Fire
17 Department, Department of Health and Mental Health to
18 undertake coordinated inspections of all shelter
19 buildings, we have identified and remediated more
20 violations than ever before. Over the last three
21 years, the city and shelter providers have addressed
22 more than 25,000 violations. Since 2015, un-
23 remediated violations within DHS shelters have
24 reduced by 86 percent. Building and instituting a
25 system which allows the inspection agencies to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 efficiently track building code violations across all
3 shelter buildings. This system provides an expansive
4 view of the shelter system as a whole and allows DHS
5 to communicate meaningful data about the shelter
6 conditions and amenities, both internally and across
7 city and state agencies. Developing and publishing
8 the shelter repair score card; a monthly public
9 report on all un-remediated violations and conditions
10 present within DHS shelter buildings. Significantly
11 increasing investments in capital repairs and
12 significantly increasing investments in our not for
13 profit partners so that providers are more readily
14 able to address issues in their buildings. We have
15 invested 600 million dollars over ten years to expand
16 capacity and improve physical conditions at family
17 and adult shelters. These efforts are part of DHS's
18 overall strategy to raise the bar for shelter
19 performance, strengthen the agency through effective
20 policies, procedures, and data and to expand and
21 improve shelter capacity. With this framework in
22 place, we and our partners are committed to
23 delivering the best services possible for New Yorkers
24 experiencing homelessness, so they can get back on
25 their feet as quickly as possible. Getting out of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 clusters. Last year, we announced Turning the Tide,
3 the Mayor's plan to transform the city's approach to
4 providing shelter. The plan puts people and
5 communities first by ending the use of decades old
6 stopgap measures, like cluster shelter sites and
7 commercial hotel rooms, and instead opening a smaller
8 number of new borough based shelters to help families
9 and individuals stay connected to the anchors of
10 life; such as schools, jobs, health care, families
11 and houses of worship, as they get back on their
12 feet. The city's effort to get out of clusters is a
13 key component to improving the lives of New Yorkers
14 experiencing homelessness, as 2015 data showed that
15 approximately 70 percent of building violations were
16 found at cluster sites. Moreover, we have prioritized
17 closing the clusters with the worst violations to
18 address the most pressing infrastructural issues. As
19 noted above, we have exited more than 50 percent of
20 cluster units and we are on pace to end the use of
21 cluster units as shelter by our end of 2021 deadline.
22 As part of the implementation of the Turning the Tide
23 plan, the administration is proceeding with
24 initiative to convert cluster shelter units to
25 permanent housing including through imminent domain

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 if necessary, to help end the 18-year-old cluster
3 program. As the first part of this effort, we
4 announced earlier this month that the administration
5 is moving forward to finance the acquisition of 17
6 cluster buildings by trusted locally based not for
7 profit developers, who will rehabilitate the sites
8 working with the City's Department of Housing and
9 Preservation and Development and create affordable
10 housing for homeless families. The cluster buildings
11 included in this first phase of conversion to
12 permanent housing will help nearly 50 families
13 including more than 1,000 people experiencing
14 homelessness secure permanent affordable housing. We
15 expect to finalize this first phase in early 2019.
16 When these sites transition to not for profit
17 ownership, the new not for profit owners will enter
18 into regulatory agreements with HPD to ensure the
19 long-term affordability of the former cluster housing
20 for homeless families and other low-income New
21 Yorkers. At this point, homeless families residing at
22 these locations eligible for rental assistance and
23 prepared for housing permanency will be offered the
24 opportunity to remain as tenants with new rent
25 stabilized leases should they wish to remain in the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 building. Additionally, all non-cluster tenants
3 living in a cluster building at the time of purchase
4 will be able to remain in their apartments with rent
5 stabilized leases and additional protections under
6 HPD's regulatory agreement. This recent agreement is
7 a testament to the potential for success in
8 transition and cluster sites into affordable
9 permanent housing through a negotiated resolution.
10 And we are working on additional conversions. If
11 negotiations to finance the purchase of additional
12 cluster buildings for permanent housing are not
13 successful, the eminent domain tool remains on the
14 table as an option to acquire additional locations.
15 Clearing building code violations. Complementary to
16 the plan of getting out of cluster sites are our
17 efforts to ensure clients can safely access services
18 in traditional shelters by identifying and mitigating
19 building violations. The Mayor established the
20 shelter repair squad as a multiagency task force to
21 inspect shelter buildings and repair building code
22 violations. The task force is comprised of the Fire
23 Department, the Department of Buildings, the
24 Department of Housing Preservation and Development,
25 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 Department of Homeless Services. Each agency has
3 assigned teams to the shelter repair squad for both
4 inspection and repair. And through this task force,
5 skilled trades and inspection personnel are deployed
6 to address violations and accelerate critical repairs
7 at homeless shelters citywide. At least two times per
8 year, each agency will inspect facilities for code
9 violations and inform providers of the results.
10 Efforts are coordinated between the agencies to
11 maximize the efficiency of the inspections, minimize
12 the duplication of efforts across teams and agencies,
13 and reduce the burden of frequent inspections. At
14 DHS, we conduct routine site review inspections
15 called RSRI's to identify both direct violations as
16 well as conditions that may become problematic over
17 time. RSRI's assist us in identifying and mitigating
18 the most immediate safety hazards, hazards while also
19 providing an opportunity to conduct preventive
20 maintenance and minimize the number of units placed
21 off line at any given time. During the RSRI, a DHS
22 inspector is accompanied by the landlord, building
23 manager, shelter director, head of maintenance,
24 security, owner representative, case worker, and or
25 other managerial staff. If any conditions are deemed

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 hazardous or dangerous, the inspector immediately
3 notifies those who are part of the walk through. Upon
4 receiving an email of the RSRI results, the provider
5 has 24 hours to address severe deficiencies in the
6 building's infrastructure. The RSRI report provides
7 sufficient detail to help the providers develop and
8 implement a remediation plan for the identified
9 building conditions that require attention. The
10 shelter director also submits a corrective action
11 plan to DHS, which informs next steps to address the
12 conditions identified in the RSRI at the shelter.
13 Multiple re-inspections are conducted throughout the
14 process of completing a CAP, or corrective action
15 plan, which occur prior to the next scheduled RSRI
16 inspection. In this way, when the inspectors perform
17 the next RSRI, the action plan informs the walk
18 through so that they can ensure all identified needs
19 have been addressed. This inspection system allows
20 city agencies to work with shelter providers to
21 identify building issues, immediately address
22 dangerous or hazardous conditions, prevent deeper
23 infrastructure issues, and follow through to improve
24 the conditions of each shelter. The shelter repair
25 squad is a prime example of interagency collaboration

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 to address longstanding issues across the shelter
3 system. In the first year of this program, more than
4 12,000 building violations were corrected. And
5 applying lessons learned from the first year, the
6 administration announced in 2016 the rollout of the
7 shelter repair squad 2.0. As we have reported
8 previously, the shelter repair squad conducted more
9 than 42,000 shelter inspections from 2015 to 2017,
10 reducing violations that went unaddressed for many
11 years by 86 percent. Today, many of the remaining
12 repairs involve normal wear and tear, and capital
13 projects which are funding.. which we are funding and
14 will be discussed later in this testimony. During the
15 90-day review in February of 2016, the city also
16 established a shelter hotline to enable shelter
17 residents to formally communicate issues about
18 shelter conditions. This not only provides an
19 empowering avenue through which shelter clients can
20 become involved in improving shelter conditions, but
21 it also helps us keep an ear to the ground and
22 identify potential conditions that require attention.
23 Tracking progress through the shelter repair
24 scorecard. Another critical component of the shelter
25 repair squad is the ability for the city to track all

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 shelter building violations, along with measuring the
3 progress made towards ameliorating the identified
4 issues. To drive this task, the city developed a
5 system to report on all city shelters and every
6 violation attributed to each building. Essentially,
7 this acts as a real time tracker for shelter building
8 violations, allowing the city to appropriately
9 allocate shelter repair squad staff to work with
10 providers to inspect buildings and develop and
11 implement remediation plans. As a testament to the
12 utility of this system, the framework has since been
13 adopted by the state to develop their shelter
14 management system, which allows our oversight agency
15 to more efficiently monitor building conditions by
16 tracking the status, remediation and lifecycle of
17 deficiencies and their responses by providers and
18 users. Information is aggregated from various sources
19 available to DHS to provide a central clearinghouse
20 where users retrieve information about shelters or
21 evaluate and track the status of repairs at shelters
22 for information that informs intake decisions,
23 including requests for reasonable accommodation. This
24 approach facilitates interagency collaboration in
25 improving conditions in shelters and makes it

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 possible to formulate the monthly shelter repair
3 scorecard, which publicly reports on the conditions
4 of homeless shelter facilities. The score card helps
5 define the scope of any problems by publicly listing
6 conditions at all homeless shelters in New York City
7 that do not meet applicable regulations and makes it
8 possible to track progress in dealing with them. The
9 shelter repair scorecard contains: a summary page
10 showing the total number of inspections conducted,
11 any new problems found, and violations and other
12 conditions resolved each month. A list of all shelter
13 buildings, with summaries of the conditions in each
14 building and a report card for each individual
15 shelter with the number and each type of violation
16 and progress in fixing them. This page will describe
17 the type of shelter, the total number of units and
18 the owner of the building. Financing. On a parallel
19 track to the efforts of the shelter repair squad, we
20 are doubling down in our short- and long-term
21 determination to adequately fund our not for profit
22 sector and provide our partners with efficient
23 mechanisms so that they are able to deliver the
24 services our homeless clients rely on as they get
25 back on their feet. As part of the Turning the Tide

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 plan to reduce our footprint while meeting capacity
3 needs, and improve physical conditions at family and
4 adult shelters, 600 million dollars in capital
5 funding was allocated in FY '18 over ten years to
6 help achieve this goal. This builds on over 42
7 million over four years in FY '16 for 30 new capital
8 projects at shelter facilities to address DHS shelter
9 conditions and 90 million over five years in FY '17
10 for building upgrades at facilities, including 61 new
11 capital projects. Our commitment to adequately fund
12 our not for profit sector is further exemplified in
13 the FY '19 executive budget, in which we invested an
14 unprecedented 236 million dollars to increase funding
15 for providers to both maintain and repair the
16 physical infrastructure of shelters and provide
17 social services in shelters. This increase in funding
18 is complementary to the additional 163 million
19 dollars we spend annually for health and mental
20 health services in shelter. Overall, the FY '19 to FY
21 '22 September capital budget contains more than 350
22 million dollars for capital projects. DHS manages
23 some of our projects in house, and other generally
24 larger projects are managed in partnership with the
25 Department of Design and Construction. At this

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 moment, we have 61 projects actively being designed
3 and 24 projects are in construction. DHS and DDC have
4 45 projects in the planning stage preparing for
5 design, all of which are planned to begin during this
6 fiscal year. Responding to introductions. Proposed
7 Intro Number 915. Intro 915 would amend the
8 administrative code of the city of New York, in
9 relation to requiring the department of homeless
10 services and human resources administration to post
11 shelter, supportive housing and cluster site data.
12 DSS has already made a commitment to engage in
13 efficient shelter reporting, including items such as
14 rental assistance placements, information regarding
15 the census of shelter facilities, supportive housing
16 placements, security and model budget contracts. We
17 look forward to working with the sponsors to address
18 the intent of this bill through our reform
19 initiatives and practices, including any
20 modifications that would be helpful based on
21 discussion with the sponsors. Proposed Intro Number
22 1110. Intro 1110 would amend the administrative code
23 of the city of New York, in relation to housing
24 specialists within the human services administration
25 and Department of Homeless Services. We agree that

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 having professionals available to help individuals
3 experiencing homelessness find permanent affordable
4 housing is one of many important components needed to
5 help individuals and families get back on their feet.
6 Accordingly, we would like to work with the sponsors
7 to craft legislation that is both effective and
8 operationally feasible to address an aim that share.
9 Proposed Intro Number 883. Intro 883 would amend the
10 administrative code of the city of New York in
11 relation to requiring the Department of Homeless
12 Services to provide customer services training. DHS
13 agrees that training staff is an important effort. We
14 are already working to implement a comprehensive
15 array of trainings for shelter staff and we look
16 forward to working with the sponsors to align the
17 bill with our reform initiatives that are in
18 progress. Proposed Intros 884, 1232, and 1233. These
19 three proposed bills would amend the administrative
20 code of the city of New York in relation to various
21 components of shelter transfers. As part of the 90-
22 day review, we identified reform of the shelter
23 transfer process as a priority. DHS has drafted a
24 transfer policy to reform the long-standing process.
25 While we comply with current state transfer

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 regulations that have governed transfer policy, the
3 State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance,
4 OTDA, our oversight agency, has advised us that it is
5 issuing additional regulations that would preempt any
6 local procedures that we had.. that we had planned to
7 implement. The state OTDA has advised us that these
8 regulations will be issued this month. We now know
9 it'll actually be next month. Upon the issuance of
10 these state regulations, DHS will finalize an updated
11 transfer policy. We would like to work with the
12 sponsors to align the language in the proposed
13 legislation with the OTDA requirements when they are
14 promulgated. In conclusion. Overall, the
15 administration has made comprehensive and concerted
16 efforts to address years of underinvestment in the
17 infrastructure of the shelter system with a
18 combination of immediate investments and alongside
19 top to bottom organizational improvement reforms. We
20 have taken substantial steps towards improving the
21 shelter system conditions by reducing the Giuliani
22 era cluster program by more than 50 percent. And with
23 this month's announcement that nearly 500 cluster
24 units will become permanent affordable housing in
25 early 2019, we remain on pace to end the cluster

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 program by 2021. Further, the city has stepped up its
3 efforts to use data informed strategies to identify
4 and address building code violations through the
5 shelter repair squad, including utilizing the shelter
6 repair scorecard to track the city's progress towards
7 improving the conditions in shelters. Our new
8 systems, which allow a great deal of interagency
9 collaboration, are complimented by the city's
10 increase in funding that supports our historically
11 underfunded not for profit partners to conduct
12 maintenance and repairs within their shelters. There
13 is still work to be done to address the decades of
14 disinvestments in shelter infrastructure and we
15 remain committed to helping homeless families and
16 individuals get back on their feet in a safe, secure,
17 and clean environment. Thank you again for this
18 opportunity to testify and I welcome your questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
20 Commissioner, I just have a, a few questions then I'm
21 going to turn it over to my colleagues.

22 STEVEN BANKS: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The first question is
24 just about reporting, Local Law 19 of 1999 requires
25 quarterly reporting from DHS or HRA on the breakdown

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 of families with children in shelter, single adult
3 shelters, adult families in shelters by the type of
4 shelter that it is, tier two, non-tier two,
5 assessment, general program, hotels, cluster sites
6 and so on... so on and so forth as well as identifying
7 each shelter here by type. We have this, this is the
8 last one we were able to find, it was published on
9 October 1st, 2015 so over three years ago and we
10 spoke about this briefly before the hearing. Can you
11 explain what the status is on, on DHS's compliance
12 with Local Law 19 in 1999?

13 STEVEN BANKS: I, I appreciate the option
14 to talk about this right before the hearing, I think
15 as we were reviewing with you we have got records of
16 Local Law 19 reporting that, that we were reviewing
17 with you, obviously there must be some disconnect
18 between our preparation of the reports and you... what
19 you've got and we'll work that out with you, the
20 information that's in this report is the type of
21 information for example during the executive budget
22 process that we exchanged with the council finance
23 team as part of working out the budget so we're
24 preparing the information, we've got, you know
25 documents that show us that we've been providing it,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 we'll have to sort out with you to figure out what
3 the disconnect is here but this is not information
4 that we have not been providing and we understand our
5 obligation to continue providing it.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Along the same
7 lines there's the DHS data dashboard which is online,
8 on the DHS website which also shows the last quarter
9 that's posted online as quarter two of 2016 which
10 would have been the same, same date of October of, of
11 2015, that's the last one that's, that's online so I
12 don't... is there an... a reason why that's not being...
13 and, and that's the kind of comprehensive... maybe a
14 little more user friendly than Local Law but I think
15 it gets to a lot of the same... [cross-talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...infrastructure...

18 [cross-talk]

19 STEVEN BANKS: ...as, as I said when we...
20 when we spoke right before the hearing, I'm not sure
21 what the disconnect is there we obviously have...

22 [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

24 STEVEN BANKS: ...the data, we've been
25 making it available to the council and in various

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 hearings to, to the public and if we've got an issue,
3 we're certainly going to... going to correct it because
4 it's the information we've been providing.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. You spoke about
6 the various types of shelter, obviously identifying
7 and this is something that was identified by this
8 administration early on and then identified
9 repeatedly by DOI... oh, sorry, before I get to that,
10 Council Member Brad Lander joined us as well so I
11 just want to acknowledge Brad, this was acknowledged
12 repeatedly by DOI, Comptroller, DHS itself through
13 the 90 day review of the... of especially bad
14 conditions in clusters and if you look at the shelter
15 repair scorecard which I have up here on phone, I'm
16 assuming the most egregious violators are... in fact,
17 the... well the most egregious violators are, are
18 clusters, you said that we were... out of about 1,800
19 of them, out of roughly 3,600 so about half, do we
20 have a date, affirmed date on when we think we will
21 be out of all clusters entirely and I know there's
22 the big announcement of converting to permanent
23 housing but do we have a... do we have a date on when
24 clusters will, will be a thing of the past?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Yes, yes, we do and just
3 appreciate the opportunity to provide you some
4 additional information. So, we're out 1,800 of the
5 units and there are nearly 500 additional families
6 that will receive permanent housing as a result of
7 this recent conversion. We have set out the date of,
8 of getting out of them all by the end of 2021 but as
9 we announced a year ago in addition to simply getting
10 out of them we're seeing whenever we can convert them
11 into permanent housing in the first major transaction
12 we reported early this month so the firm deadline is
13 the end of 2021 but we're, we're well on a pace to
14 achieve that and we're achieving it through as you
15 can see this month beginning to convert units into
16 permanent housing.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, we, we heard that
18 in order to be eligible for one of those converted
19 permanent units a family has to be eligible in some
20 way or be, be... determined to be eligible for rent
21 stabilized housing is what I was told, can you
22 explain a little bit of the requirements of how a
23 family could stay in the apartment if they chose to?

24 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, sure... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what... and what
3 would prohibit that?

4 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, I think as, as... when
5 we announced this last December I said that we wanted
6 to make sure that the families that were in these
7 units if they're eligible for supportive housing that
8 they would be connected to supportive housing and
9 that was one... part of the analysis, we wanted to make
10 sure that the families were eligible for one of our
11 rent assistance programs, we expect most of the
12 families to do that but equally important and, and I
13 know you know this because you've been very focused
14 on this, some of the units that the families are in
15 we needed to make sure it's the right size for the
16 family so we don't want a family of five staying in
17 a, you know one bedroom unit as their permanent
18 housing so its... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: ...it's an integral process.
21 The reason why we announced the transaction this... at
22 the stage it was a couple of weeks ago is because we
23 were... we had begun to reach out to the families to
24 make sure that we're rightsizing them to the units to
25 make sure that being in that particular location is

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 the right thing for that particular family, to make
3 sure that there aren't supportive housing needs or
4 other needs for the families. I don't know where the
5 term eligible for rent stabilized housing comes but I
6 appreciate the opportunity to spell that... [cross-
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: ...every family that remains
10 will get a rent stabilized lease and the permanent
11 tenants and these are buildings in which there are
12 permanent tenants as well... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: ...will also receive a, a
15 permanent lease, all together including the families
16 that are in the cluster units or in these buildings I
17 should say and the families that are permanent
18 tenants, there's like more than 700 households that
19 are going to end up with rent stabilized leases and
20 permanently affordable housing.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, the only barriers
22 to somebody staying in the permanent housing... be... in
23 staying in one of these converted permanent units
24 would be if they chose not to, if they otherwise were
25 qualifying for supportive housing, if it's not the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 right size for their family composition or, or
3 they're... if they're not in the... its not in the
4 neighborhood that they should be in?

5 STEVEN BANKS: That they want to be in...

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That they want to be
7 in, okay.

8 STEVEN BANKS: And also, there are some...
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If... another words I,
11 I... the question I asked is can a... if they want to
12 stay there what are the hurdles?

13 STEVEN BANKS: I think there are... there
14 is another hurdle that I wanted to mention, you've,
15 you've highlighted each of them and there's one more
16 I want to add, which is that families... there are some
17 families that need additional services in shelter and
18 it may be a better outcome for the family to be
19 connected to a tier two shelter rather than to end up
20 in a... in an apartment, they may not be... they may not
21 need supportive housing but they may, may need other
22 supportive services but I would emphasize... [cross-
23 talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well I mean, I'm,
25 I'm... I'm sorry... okay... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...if I could just finish...

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure...

4 STEVEN BANKS: This is really a case by
5 case determination, which is the reason why as I said
6 we announced the... we were beginning to reach, reach
7 to the families... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: ...so that we're very
10 transparent about what we're doing, and we'll keep
11 you advised about what the ultimate outcomes are. Our
12 goal is to enable as many families as possible to
13 remain in, in their unit or in a unit in these
14 buildings if possible.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, sorry, you
16 mentioned that if they were better served in a tier
17 two that's... a tier two is not a permanent housing
18 option and... I mean my rejoinder to that would be that
19 we should have reasonable after care wrap around
20 services available to families when they get into
21 permanent housing whether that's in a converted
22 cluster or in an affordable housing unit that will be
23 as part of a 15 percent set aside or, or a place
24 through a city PHEPS or link or, or some other
25 program, a Section 8 program but that... we should be

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 thinking forward... moving forward... and we should be
3 forward thinking about, about after... appropriate
4 after care services that we can contract with our
5 great social service providers that we rely on so
6 heavily.

7 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I think you make a
8 great point, we are therefore looking here in these
9 buildings they will be directly provided social
10 services but I think as you know there, there... the
11 one size fits all approach of the past hasn't worked
12 so well, there are a continuum of needs that our
13 clients have, the vast majority of clients that are
14 in these buildings we hope will be able to remain in
15 these buildings.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The great thing
17 about, you know our robust after care program would
18 be that it wouldn't be one size fits all and you know
19 partnering with... you know a great... a community based
20 organization that has various city contracts with
21 various agencies that are, you know working with
22 children, you know from birth to 18 and seniors and
23 workforce development and all those great things that
24 all of our not for profit partners do that could be
25 partnered as an after care for people that have left

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 the shelter system, I think, you know that would be a
3 good fit.

4 STEVEN BANKS: You must be reading my
5 mind, that's exactly what we're intending to do here.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so it should
7 pair though with, with, with these, these clusters?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Again, we want to... we want
9 to reach out to each individual family... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: ...and not make policy in a
12 broad brush when there may be individual needs that
13 are different but as a general matter, we want to
14 make sure the apartment is the right size for the
15 family... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...and that the family wants
18 to and can remain in that... in their unit.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I don't want to
20 belabor the point. We have a... I'm looking at the
21 shelter, shelter scorecard, shelter repair scorecard
22 and its... what I am seeing is the worst violators are
23 the clusters, a lot of tier two's have low level of
24 violations and I think a lot of that is, is to long
25 standing capital needs that, that they were talking

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 about to me in my very first meeting that I had with
3 shelter providers and becoming Chair five years ago,
4 six years... five years ago... six years ago was that...
5 five years ago, excuse me, I'm losing track here...

6 STEVEN BANKS: Five... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...that, that the long
8 term deferred capital repairs were causing a lot of
9 problems for a lot of shelter providers particularly
10 the tier two and so I can see why they would have
11 ongoing violations if they're related to, to capital
12 projects. I did notice a number of hotels that had a
13 surprisingly high number of open violations; one had
14 77, another had 48, you know I don't have to list all
15 of them but that's, that's disturbing, why would a
16 hotel have 77 open violations and we would still be
17 in contract with them? So, can you speak to that?

18 STEVEN BANKS: So, so let me... let me
19 speak overall to, to what you're highlighting, so
20 currently in the non-clusters there are about 1,600
21 violations in... and I know you, you've probably done
22 this, if you look at it over time you'll see some
23 number of those violations are exactly related... a
24 couple... several hundred of them are exactly related
25 to what you described, which they are long term

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 capital projects, they're not immediately hazardous,
3 they're not dangerous but they do require capital
4 work... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

6 STEVEN BANKS: ...to repair them and as you
7 can see, we've allocated a significant amount of
8 money to begin to address these, these years of as
9 you say and I say and I said in the testimony, years
10 of disinvestment. There's another series of
11 violations that you'll see and it's, it's in both
12 hotels and tier two shelters alike which is just the
13 wear and tear. We have, you know 60,000 plus people
14 in shelter but those... that's not the same 60,000
15 people on any given night and so we have a lot of
16 wear and tear in these units and part of the benefit
17 of, of what we've been doing is we've been addressing
18 the wear and tear and that hasn't been addressed for
19 many years. There are other violations in the hotels
20 and, and other... and some of the tier two's as well
21 that are not wear and tear and we're focusing on the
22 individual providers and the individual landlords to
23 address that. You... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm not here to
25 out anybody about... so, if, if anyone's interested in

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 it go to the DHS website and you can find out who has
3 the most violations but there's a range, so there are
4 some hotels that have... you know have as low as a
5 couple of... you know eight, one, two, five, seven and
6 then some have 77 or 48 so I just don't understand,
7 that's not really wear and... I mean that's not wear
8 and tear, that's, that's real... that's really
9 problematic... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: Right, as... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and you have these
12 ongoing contracts with these organizations.

13 STEVEN BANKS: As, as I said I want to be
14 careful about... I'm, I'm not disagreeing with you, I
15 want to be careful of your characterizing what I'm
16 saying though which is that there's capital repairs,
17 there's wear and tear and then I said there's a third
18 category of, of conditions that we take seriously.
19 Remember these are violations that could be building
20 wide, they could be not a particular unit that we're
21 in so we're addressing all of these issues constantly
22 every month, it's a lot... these buildings... [cross-
23 talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I would... I'm
25 sorry, just I'd like to... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...if, if I could just
3 finish Council... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: ...Member. So, these are
6 buildings that are being inspected more than any
7 other buildings in New York City and they should be
8 because... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: ...we've, we've got families
11 with children and, and adults that turn to us for
12 help in our buildings, we're inspecting them twice a
13 year with a multiagency task force and pushing the
14 owners to make corrections. I think... I think as
15 you'll see over time, we've gotten out of buildings
16 what we thought we couldn't get them corrected, there
17 are, you know several that come to mind that we've
18 gotten out of very recently because the shelter
19 repair squad report card.. inspections plus scorecard
20 didn't result in remediation. So, for example, we got
21 out of Clara's Hotel in... near Council Member
22 Treyger's district, not in but near it because we
23 felt that ultimately we couldn't get... the shelter
24 repair squad approach wasn't working, we got out of a
25 location named the Ping because we thought that the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 shelter repair... so, we're, we're actively getting out
3 of places even as we're trying to fix them up.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But if a hotel has,
5 you know dozens and dozens of violations... I mean I, I
6 could go back and try to find out how long they've
7 had their contract, how long they've been open but
8 you know presumably not 20 years, they're not like
9 tier two's that opened in the mid-90's and have had,
10 you know a decade or two of capital... so, I... so, if,
11 if a hotel has... hotels not... you know generally they
12 were built to be hotels or they were rehabbed to be
13 hotels, they converted so I just want to... I just
14 don't understand why a hotel would have 77 violations
15 because the contract probably hasn't gone on for, you
16 know 20 years and it was built to be a hotel and it's
17 not like some old rent stabilized building that was
18 built in like 1950 that's like... you know had 60, 70
19 years of, of capital deferred maintenance and such.

20 STEVEN BANKS: Look, I'm, I'm not... I'm
21 not disputing your concerns, I'm, I'm trying to make
22 it clear on the record that unlike at the time of the
23 DOI report... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...and the time of the
3 original Comptroller's report we've been actively
4 getting out of sites whether they're clusters or
5 commercial hotels, we've been actively getting out of
6 sites where we have found that enforcement and
7 inspections have not gotten the results, we want...
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: The flip side of it is the
11 trauma of moving lots of people out of a location and
12 finding another place to put them so we're... [cross-
13 talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...balancing both making
16 sure that the conditions meet the standards by
17 aggressively inspecting and getting out of locations
18 that we think we can't achieve results and I'll
19 certainly look at the site that you're referencing..
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...and we can talk as we
23 always do... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There's a few..
25 [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...offline to see... [cross-
3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: ...what we can do in...
6 [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: ...any particular sites that
9 are of concern to you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Also, a concern is,
11 you know two years ago there were two little sisters
12 who were killed by a malfunctioning radiator at a
13 cluster site in the Bronx, it was very tragic and I
14 think... I think about those... that family a lot. I
15 think that we announced as a city that we were going
16 to discontinue our contracts with that provider, I,
17 I'm looking up just now on that report card, I think
18 that I saw their name still there as a provider of
19 cluster with a lot of violations attached to those
20 buildings... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: They are... they are not a...
22 they are not a provider of clusters, the reference
23 that you have is the sites still have their name
24 attached to it because they're... we, we, we got out of
25 their buildings, they're not a cluster provider. I

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 was in that apartment with Council Member Salamanca
3 and the Mayor if you... whether you have... I have
4 children and whether you have children or not you
5 couldn't possibly not be utterly heartbroken by that...
6 [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: ...BEDCO is not a cluster
9 provider, the sites are still referenced to... [cross-
10 talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I see... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...the fact that they were
13 there... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...that was a horrible
16 situation in that building, the city had been renting
17 two units in that building as clusters and there were
18 nearly 40 total apartments in that building... [cross-
19 talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: ...but we removed the
22 families right away from that building and ended,
23 ended the, the, the use of, of BEDCO so I want to...
24 [cross-talk]

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...assure you... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, the reference on
4 the... on the scorecard is... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: Is to the site not to the
6 provider.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, fair enough.
8 I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues, Council
9 Member Barry Grodenchik for questions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Mr.
11 Chair...

12 STEVEN BANKS: Just, just to be clear,
13 we're talking about clusters, these are cluster sites
14 that you're... that you're referring to... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct, yes... [cross-
16 talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...so the reference is to
18 the cluster site not to the... not the... not BEDCO still
19 being the provider there.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, I was referring
21 to the cluster sites, yes.

22 STEVEN BANKS: Okay, I just wanted to
23 make sure I was answering the question correctly.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
25 its always good to see you Commissioner...

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Good to see you too.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And I

4 appreciate the work you're doing but I would be less
5 than honest if I told you that, you know I, I just
6 feel like we're on a treadmill and I know you're
7 working hard and it just is very disappointing to me
8 that the numbers are not going down and I, I realize
9 there are any number of issues but we have just way
10 too many people living in our shelter systems, its
11 not healthy for them, it's certainly not healthy for
12 the 22,000 young people. My question for you and you
13 and I have talked about this before, assemblyman
14 Hevesi and... pushed forward in Albany and I will
15 continue to support him, home stability support and I
16 wonder if you could talk about that and what it might
17 mean for the people living in the shelter system in
18 New York City and how that might help them?

19 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you very much for

20 that question because the home stability support
21 initiative its now co-sponsored with Senator Krueger
22 in the Senate and with Assembly Member Hevesi in the
23 assembly, that would make a tremendous difference.
24 Just to be clear for the record what it would do, it
25 would set rental assistance at the... in, in

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 relationship to the federal fair market rent set by
3 the Department of Housing and Urban Development and
4 it would provide state reimbursement to New York City
5 for its programs. The recently streamlined rental
6 assistance programs we are running those with city
7 dollars, so it would provide we believe a more
8 comprehensive approach than we're able to provide as
9 a city and of equal importance it would provide a
10 portable benefit so that New Yorkers could use that
11 rental assistance any place in New York... in New York
12 State. I think as you know we have clients that are
13 seeking to pursue other opportunities in the state
14 and that we can only give them one time... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I may be one
16 of them soon but go ahead...

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...we can only give them one
18 time... a one time up front, a year's worth of rent,
19 rent payment, we cannot pay ongoing rent, the home
20 stability support initiative would create a portable
21 benefit so that if someone wished to relocate where
22 family might be or where other opportunities might be
23 they could do that, we have lots of clients that want
24 to do that, they're not being forced to do it but we
25 do have clients that are interested in doing it. So,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 in terms of rent level, reimbursement and portability
3 in New York State it would make a dramatic difference
4 across the state in terms of homelessness hence the
5 reason why we have supported the Hevesi legislation,
6 we are in regular contact with him and I know that
7 the Chair of this Committee feels very strongly about
8 this initiative and we think it's a very important
9 effort that both the Council and the administration
10 can work on together.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I, I

12 appreciate that very much, I have been a supporter
13 since even before I talked to the assemblyman, I read
14 about it, I think it was in the Daily News and we'll
15 be meeting on that shortly, I'm delighted that
16 without getting political that Senator Krueger in a
17 few days will be the Senate Finance Chair and I hope
18 that will go a long way towards passing this
19 legislation and providing real teeth for people who
20 are struggling to find affordable housing. I have
21 seen anecdotally and otherwise on the subways, I'm a
22 regular subway user as many of my colleagues are,
23 it's just been a tremendous uptick especially on the
24 lines I, I ride the NEF from Queens into Lower
25 Manhattan several times a week and a number of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 homeless people or apparently homeless, I don't want
3 to categorize people just in case but I, I just
4 wanted to know what you're doing, what your agency is
5 doing in... to talk to these people, I know that you
6 have outreach programs and if you could talk about
7 that for a little bit.

8 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, thank you for that
9 question as well. I've, I referenced it earlier in
10 the testimony, I just want to return to it that since
11 we implemented the HOME-STAT program we've been able
12 to bring two... more than 2,000 people in off the
13 street who have remained off the street and I
14 emphasize that second part, have remained off the
15 street. Too often the metric is bring somebody off
16 the street and then if they go back they're back on
17 the street, we're very focused on successful outcomes
18 that help people transform their circumstances so
19 more than 2,000 people since 2016 we've been able to
20 bring off who've remained off the street either in
21 transitional programs or in permanent housing we...
22 where we originally brought them. We contract with
23 BRC, a reputable excellent provider to be doing
24 outreach on the subway so I know they're very focused
25 on the E train and... as well as the A train, I know

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 your colleague who represents the area in Jamaica
3 raised this with me, I was out there with them to see
4 if we could work together with the MTA and with the
5 NYPD, there's a tremendous amount of corporation, I
6 know the NYPD, which is Chief Delatorre has been very
7 focused in working with BRC and we're going to
8 continue what we do every day and every night 24
9 hours a day seven days a week, 365 days a year try to
10 make contact with people and bring them in. It takes
11 an average of five months, once we have made contact
12 with somebody who's willing to accept our services to
13 actually be able to convince them to make that leap.
14 I think as you know from all the work you've done
15 that, you know the people on the subways and on the
16 streets have fallen through every social safety net
17 we have, they're caught up in that same economic... the
18 same economic forces that Chairperson Levin and I
19 talked about and you wrote... raised in terms of the
20 gap between rents and income, I mean in a... in a world
21 in which for a decade plus rents went up nearly 19
22 percent and income less than five percent, these are
23 individuals caught up in that economic force... those
24 economic circumstances plus mental health challenges
25 that they have but we have teams that are licensed to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 assess individuals under the mental hygiene law
3 standards to see if they're a danger to themselves or
4 others, various of our teams provide medical
5 services, we are doing anything to try to bring
6 people in, I guess I have to make a pitch. There was
7 recently a case in which really illustrated the work
8 that we do every day of the week, which is... it sort
9 of takes a village to bring somebody in from the
10 street. There was someone who had been a rapper a
11 number of years ago and actually cut a record, had
12 gone to college and then had a break down, ended up
13 on the streets and it was by a social worker in a
14 hospital working with our team connected him to his
15 childhood friends and they made the difference to
16 help us penetrate to bring him off the streets, he's
17 living in supportive housing now but it's a... it's a...
18 its an important message for all New Yorkers. If
19 you've got family, if you've got friends, if you know
20 somebody on the street reach out to us and we will
21 work with you, maybe you can be part of the support
22 system to help us bring somebody back in.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
24 Commissioner, thank you Mr. Chairman.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
3 Member Grodenchik. So, just... colleagues I just want
4 to let you know that we'll be doing five minutes for
5 questions and then... you didn't go too far over Barry...
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-
8 talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...but we will... we'll
10 do second rounds if we need to, it's fine. So, next
11 up Council Member Salamanca.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you
13 Chair Levin, Commissioner its great to see you.
14 Commissioner my... today introduced bill 9, 915 which
15 would require DHS and HRA to report quarterly to
16 community boards and community boards and online and
17 council members and online to report on a quarterly
18 basis how many shelters they have broken down by
19 singles, family, you know all transitional housing
20 and also to give a breakdown of supportive housing,
21 you know buildings throughout that district and
22 cluster sites, is this... does... do you currently have
23 this data broken down, can you go, go and request
24 this from your office and they can come back within
25 the hour and provide you with this data?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: So, some of... so, some of
3 the data we do have and we... and we have been
4 providing it to Council Members and community boards
5 as we open sites, some other data we don't have
6 totally in our control. For example, supportive
7 housing there is state supportive housing projects
8 that we, we don't have visibility into but I want to
9 just say as I've said to you privately and many times
10 before, I appreciate your initiative here and I think
11 we've worked out a lot of different legislative
12 challenges in the past and I'm, I'm looking at
13 Council Member Torres who had some complicated bill
14 negotiations not so long ago when we came to a great
15 resolution, I want to work with you to get to a place
16 where you can achieve the goals that you want with
17 the bill and we can do something that's feasible for
18 us, that's meaningful for the communities.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright, is
20 it... is it fair to say that there are certain
21 community boards or council districts which are doing
22 more than their fair share when it comes to siting of
23 transitional housing?

24 STEVEN BANKS: If, if I may answer that
25 question a slightly different way, I think one of the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 important pieces of turning the tide is to look at it
3 from a client's perspective of where can we reconnect
4 people to in terms of the anchors of their lives; so
5 schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship, family
6 and friends, those are important anchors of all of
7 our lives and for too long the shelter system
8 operated where you'd be like in another borough and
9 your, your child was going to school someplace else
10 so we're very focused and I think this actually is
11 complimentary to what you want you want to accomplish
12 on making sure that people have the opportunity to be
13 housed as close as possible to those connections and
14 the shelter system isn't developed that way, its
15 developed in which certain communities there's no way
16 if you become homeless there can you be rehoused
17 there and in other communities there are more
18 opportunities than, than are needed in a particular
19 district, so we're trying to right size need and
20 rehousing all around the city and I think that is a
21 consistency between what you're trying to accomplish,
22 I think you've seen we've opened shelters in
23 community boards and propose to site them in areas
24 where there've never been shelters before and we
25 think that's important to give clients the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 opportunity to be... to be sheltered as close as
3 possible to important connections.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you. I
5 recently introduced a 15 percent homeless set aside
6 bill which would... which the Mayor is totally not in
7 favor of, however we are in a homeless crisis and I
8 think that the Mayor and his administration are
9 totally blinded on the issue, Commissioner is the
10 administration giving you the support that you need
11 to address homelessness, is the Mayor really aware
12 that there are 63... over 63,000 individuals that are
13 sleeping in a shelter bed, 23,000 of them are
14 children, when was the last time you had a one on one
15 conversation with the Mayor on this topic?

16 STEVEN BANKS: We talk all the time, I
17 know there's a lot of reports that such conversations
18 don't happen, we meet on a regular basis. I believe t
19 that probably some records have been released some
20 time about how often we talk but I can assure you its
21 frequently. I also want to say that there are tools
22 that the Mayor has given me that no social services
23 Commissioner in New York City has ever had before.
24 Let's just go, go through them: prevention, universal
25 access to counsel, reducing evictions by 27 percent

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 already, this is the tool that no social services
3 Commissioner had before I've got it now. The rent
4 arrears payment that I've been authorized to, to
5 make, a level never, never been done before by a
6 social services Commissioner, the programs that we're
7 using that I talked about with Council Member
8 Grodenchik about bringing people in off the streets,
9 the tripling of the investments for safe haven beds
10 which is a critical tool to bring people in from the
11 streets. The rental assistance and other programs
12 that I've been given to rehouse more than 100,000
13 people as a social services Commissioner through our
14 programs and then the ability to close, close down
15 more than 180 shelter locations over the last year
16 and begin to site new shelters so I've been given a
17 lot of tools that no other social services
18 Commissioner has had to try to address this very,
19 very troubling situation.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Alright.

21 Alright, thank you Mr. Chair, I'll come back around
22 for round two with respect to time.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

24 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member

3 Reynoso, he's no longer here... also we've been joined
4 by the way by Council Member Mark Treyger, Keith
5 Powers and Ritchie Torres, next Council Member Diane
6 Ayala.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon Commissioner, I'm actually really excited
9 to be here because I think that there's a lot of
10 conversation to be had around this issue. You know
11 when I was five years old had a fire in my building
12 and we were displaced and I ended up in a shelter
13 just a few blocks from where I lived and that was
14 very beneficial to my family because it allowed my
15 mother to keep her children in the.. in the local
16 schools, it allowed us to stay next to... near family
17 and around our support system so I am very much in
18 favor of keeping families in their community. I think
19 that we could be helpful, more helpful to you if
20 there was a more transparent process by which we're
21 doing this. So, instead of coming and, and, and
22 placing a shelter for the sake of keeping families if
23 we understood holistically what that means, what is
24 the impact to this community, how many shelters do we
25 have, how many are we transitioning out, how are...

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 what is the, the plan for ensuring that communities
3 are coming... that families are coming back to their
4 communities, that, that would really help me so just...
5 you know just something that, you know hopefully you
6 can, you know keep in mind. I wonder however in terms
7 of the voucher system process, is there a tracking
8 mechanism that DHS uses to determine how many
9 vouchers are going out and how many are being denied
10 and if so, is there... is DHS then also reporting these
11 landlords for declining the use of these vouchers
12 which is in clear violation of the law?

13 STEVEN BANKS: First of all thank you for
14 your comment about shelter setting, overall you've
15 been a great partner, I should say this for the sake
16 of everybody doesn't mean you always say hey, I agree
17 with you and I think that's an important part of a
18 relationship, you've been a good partner in terms of
19 the things we're trying to accomplish for you in your
20 district and you've also pushed back when you thought
21 that something that I was proposing wasn't going to
22 work and I... that's a... I appreciate having that kind
23 of working relationship with you. In terms of the
24 vouchers we, we set up a source of income
25 discrimination unit at HRA and have already sued two

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 landlords in significant cases that we think could
3 affect other landlord behavior, we set up that unit
4 because we see what you see on the ground which is
5 despite the fact that there's a Local Law that makes
6 it illegal to discriminate on the basis of source of
7 income, too many of our clients were reporting back
8 to us that there is such discrimination and I went to
9 too many Town Halls, I spoke with too many focus
10 group of clients and that's why we set up the unit to
11 bring cases and we're hopeful that the precedence
12 that would be established in those cases will have an
13 impact on any additional landlords who continue to
14 violate the law and we're ready to bring other cases
15 as well... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: How, how old is
17 the unit, I didn't... I didn't... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: I, I sorry... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: ...how old is... how
20 long have you had that unit... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: We set it up over the last
22 year and we've brought two significant cases already
23 and we're ready to bring more cases.

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Do you... do you know how many cases have come before that unit, how many complaints have you received?

STEVEN BANKS: The... I'm, I'm, I'm not being articulate on this, the cases are impact cases that we've brought based upon individual complaints so we wanted to evaluate the individual complaints to see which, which matters would, would, would enable us to have the greatest impact on the market and so that's why we were given the authority to bring affirmative cases, there were also complaints that are made to the Human Rights Commission as well by individual clients. What we have done is we've distributed a number to make it clear and we can make it available again to all Council Members to suggest that clients call our hotline and then we can evaluate whether or not we might be able to bring an affirmative lawsuit against the landlord that could benefit other families.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Are the case workers providing this information to the clients directly?

STEVEN BANKS: We've, we've created a flier to be distributed and we, we constantly put it

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 out there, we'll... we're, we're... you know we're
3 certainly going to do it again to make sure that
4 people are calling us so that we can take action.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I mean I think
6 it's beneficial because I mean it allows you to act
7 in real... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: Agreed... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: ...time... [cross-
10 talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: Agreed... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: In regard to fair
13 share, is there an analysis that DHS currently uses
14 to place, to site a shelter? I bring it up because I
15 have three cases in... you know in mind, 125th Street
16 and Lexington Avenue was undergoing a very serious
17 synthetic marijuana issue a couple of years ago,
18 there were a lot of complications that were happening
19 there because we were inundated with methadone
20 clinics, we have, you know the M35 which is the only
21 way in and out of Wards Island so you have a 1,000
22 men that were coming onto 116th Street but this
23 shelter specifically was on 124th Street for men with
24 mental health issues and every single time that they
25 opened their door they were exposed to all types of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 things that I'm sure was not conducive to their
3 mental health, wellbeing and I wonder if anybody is
4 reporting that and reassessing the placement of these
5 specific sites because when you site a shelter for
6 families and you site a, a safe haven or a shelter
7 for men with mental health issues there are very
8 specific needs that need to be addressed and so I
9 wonder if the city and... has an analysis of what is in
10 that community... I'll give you another example, 146th
11 Street, give me one second Mr. Chair, 146th Street in
12 the Bronx have a safe haven which you know I, I
13 appreciate, I know that we need them right directly
14 across the street from a church that also houses a
15 daycare, the community... that, that whole block is
16 littered with needles because obviously the safe
17 haven is occupied by primarily active drug users, did
18 anybody at some point highlight that there was a day
19 care right across the street and then maybe for this
20 particular type of shelter setting this was not an
21 appropriate location?

22 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I think as, as, as
23 you know we look at the new shelters that we're
24 siting with an eye towards what are the surrounding
25 services and what benefits can we give to clients and

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 what... how do we be a good neighbor when we site
3 shelters. I think one of the challenges of the opioid
4 crisis is that its not all associated with our
5 clients but there are issues in the communities, I
6 know there are needle exchanges in, in some of the
7 areas by what you're describing and I do agree with
8 you that we have to make sure that we have the
9 maximum amount of coordination to avoid the kinds of
10 problems that you're highlighting.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I just wanted to
12 add that I, I would never imply that it was solely
13 coming from the... the safe haven but I will say that I
14 know for, for sure that 90 percent of it was because
15 I staked that community like I literally sat there at
16 least once a week... [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: ...at different
19 times of the day throughout the whole summer and the
20 amount of active drug use that I was seeing people
21 were literally injecting themselves right in the
22 middle of the street, right across the street from
23 the daycare center, many of the parents witnessed it,
24 many of the families witnessed it and then it
25 trickled into the public park so that now my

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 community residents could no longer use that public
3 park and I had to police it because there was no way
4 that we could allow children to continue to be in an
5 environment where people were actively injecting
6 themselves and so we want to be helpful on both
7 fronts and my committee... you know I... this is what I
8 do and I, I struggle with that and I understand but I
9 think that the city is doing a disservice to these
10 communities by not really thoroughly assessing when a
11 prime, you know piece of real estate becomes
12 available you shouldn't just take it and decide well
13 this is a... you know I'm going to put it here because
14 this is the only place I have left, there has to be
15 a, a better analysis of, of where you're putting...
16 [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah... no, I... and again I
18 appreciate your partnership on this, you're, you're
19 focusing us, we got the NYPD involved they raised a
20 lot of issues and I... and I appreciate your focus on
21 it. I think one of the things that I want to
22 highlight again is I sent a letter out to every
23 community board and every council member last year at
24 the one year mark of the Turn of the Tide saying
25 here's what we've accomplished in the year, we could

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 use help to identify other sites, some members who
3 are here and members who are not here have been
4 tremendously helpful in helping us identify sites
5 using exactly the lens that you just described and I
6 appreciate that kind of help because it makes for
7 better, better services for our clients and for
8 everybody else.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
10 Member Ayala, Council Member Mark Gjonaj.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair.
12 Good to see you again Commissioner. I just want to
13 elaborate a bit on my colleagues' question when it
14 comes to the breakdown of supportive housing units
15 and why you can't give an answer but yet we have a
16 fair share reporting that clearly identifies the
17 number of supportive housing units by borough?

18 STEVEN BANKS: Right, the issue is... as,
19 as I said to Council Member Salamanca there are
20 supportive housing units that are state run that I
21 don't have visibility into.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I don't think
23 it's that difficult to get the answers between the
24 city and the state to figure out the number of
25 supportive housing units, our own reporting in 2017

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 shows the borough of the Bronx is inundated compared
3 to the rest of the city. We have 41 percent more
4 supportive housing units than Brooklyn, 99 percent
5 more than Queens, 100 percent more than Staten Island
6 and 13 percent more than Manhattan, that came out of
7 the New York City...

8 STEVEN BANKS: Right, just to... and, and
9 we know to... going back to your Albany times and my
10 time at Legal Aid I just want to make sure it's clear
11 for the record, supportive housing is permanent
12 affordable housing and permanent affordable housing I
13 know is what this Committee and the Council wants the
14 government to be doing and I, I think it's very
15 important to focus on it as affordable housing as
16 opposed to shelters for homeless people and so I
17 don't want... I want to make sure for anybody
18 listening, I know you know... I know you know this I
19 just want to make sure for the record for anybody
20 listening that supportive housing is permanent
21 affordable housing and the shelters that we're
22 siting, the 90 new shelters, 29 of which are already
23 sited, 19 up and... 18 up and operating that's
24 replacing 360 shelters and so I want to make sure we
25 have apples to oranges here.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Alright but not
3 even cluster sites is information that we're given,
4 this is about transparency and wanting to know what
5 exists by borough, by Council district, by community
6 board shouldn't be as difficult as going to the
7 dentist for god's sake and pulling a tooth... [cross-
8 talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: Right... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...it's about
11 information...

12 STEVEN BANKS: Right, of course I would
13 just say much of that information is actually in the
14 fair share documents that I sent to, to Council
15 Members specifying how many sites are in the.. are in
16 the district and most of the.. and particularly the
17 recent fair share documents that I've been submitting
18 say for example there are X number of clusters and
19 they're all going to close by the end of the year in
20 this particular district or there are X number of
21 commercial hotels that are going to close so I, I
22 share your concern about transparency and that's why
23 we've been doing it that way.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Commissioner, the
25 voucher program, can you illustrate for us what the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 breakdown is for a studio apartment, a one bedroom
3 and a two bedroom?

4 STEVEN BANKS: So... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: The rental
6 assistant dollar amounts?

7 STEVEN BANKS: Right, so I want to make
8 sure that I get the amounts right so I'm going to use
9 approximate numbers... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Uh-huh... [cross-
11 talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...because I'm under oath
13 and I want to make sure I get the right amount. So,
14 typically for a family of four we're able to pay just
15 north of 1,500 dollars...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: For a two bedroom
17 or is that for a... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: Again... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...one bedroom
20 because... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: ...family of four... oh,
22 typically for a... for a family of an adult and a child
23 we're able to provide north of 1,200 dollars and
24 these are amounts that are set through or, or aligned
25 with the amounts that were set through the Tehada

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 litigation, we wanted to make sure that the city
3 rental assistance voucher levels were consistent with
4 the state FHEPS levels but I want to just go back to
5 Council Member Grodenchik's questions, this is why
6 the housing stability support legislation is so
7 important because it would align the rental
8 assistance levels to the Department of... the Federal
9 Department of Housing Urban Development FMR levels
10 and I know that that's why Hevesi and Senator Krueger
11 are supporting that and we are too... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And isn't that
13 problem that one size fits all is the real issue and
14 that's why those families are out there with vouchers
15 can't find apartments because a 1,500-dollar
16 apartment in New York City limits you to the borough
17 and neighborhoods, you're not going to get Park Slope
18 with 1,500 dollars for a two bedroom apartment I
19 would imagine.

20 STEVEN BANKS: We, we, we... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yeah... [cross-
22 talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...we're very focused on not
24 so much whether you can live in Park Slope or not but
25 whether or not the amount of money we give you is

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 something that is sustainable in the city budget and
3 wouldn't it be better for the Krueger, Hevesi
4 legislation to pass which would give appropriate
5 reimbursement to the city for what we're already...
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But even there
8 the rental assistance program is one size fits all
9 and that will be a limit based on the number of
10 bedrooms as far as the voucher dollar amount is
11 associated to, you're not going to get a one bedroom
12 in Rochester for the same amount in New York City and
13 you're certainly not going to pay the same amount in
14 the borough of the Bronx as you would in Park Slope
15 is my argument, that markets determined market rate
16 and if we don't come up with a voucher system or a
17 rental assistance program which looks into the
18 markets themselves to determine what the voucher
19 should be... so, if you're a homeless person that's
20 lived your whole life in Brooklyn Park Slopes giving
21 you a 1,500 dollar voucher for a two bedroom, saying
22 you know its best that you stay in a community where
23 your house of worship is, where your children go to
24 that school, here's what we can do for you does not
25 work and I'm just going... because I know time is of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 concern, that's also the problem with our supportive
3 housing and shelters, you're paying the same income
4 to these developers and operators citywide. So, if
5 I'm getting the same income as an operator of a
6 shelter what's going to be the determining factor on
7 where I build my shelter, land acquisition and
8 construction cost and guess where both of those are
9 the lowest, in the beautiful borough of the Bronx
10 hence the inundation that's going to continue because
11 of the lower property values and construction cost
12 compared to many parts of the city and we're not
13 getting ahead of it. We're allowing this to continue
14 and we're not serving the people that need the
15 service and keeping them in their communities and
16 we're allowing boroughs to... I compliment and applaud
17 my Council... my colleague for breaking it down by
18 council district but the problem is a whole borough
19 view because what happens in his back yard is my
20 front yard and it impacts us all because it's the
21 same infrastructure from health care, the limited HAC
22 hospitals that we have serve the entire borough, same
23 for the police department and Board of Ed and we
24 don't have the safety nets and the resources that are
25 needed to be supportive of these very needy families.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Well I think you're right
3 about the importance of a citywide approach which
4 again is what the Turn the Tide plan is aimed at
5 doing, if you look at the first 29 shelters that
6 we've sited there have been shelters sited in
7 communities that never had shelters before and stay
8 tuned as we proceed, we've been very clear for
9 example when we closed all the commercial hotels in
10 Queens that we're going to need to fill a gap of need
11 for the numbers of people who have become homeless
12 from Queens and similarly with Staten Island so, if
13 you'll look, look at the first 29 that we've done and
14 we have more to do.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: We have a lot
16 more to do but I think we're... we grabbed the bull by
17 the tail and not the horns and I guess to get ahead
18 of this and prevent the numbers from getting worse
19 when it comes to our homeless families, keeping
20 families in their current home should be the
21 objective, this is triage, stop the bleeding and I, I
22 am... I implore you to look at the tree built which
23 operates similar to the SCRIE and the DRIE, families
24 earning under 50,000 dollars a year should not be
25 facing any renewal lease increases, it should be

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 credited to the landlord, on their real estate taxes
3 securing that at least the rent is not going to
4 increase for these very vulnerable families so they
5 don't find themselves homeless and displaced. It
6 would be wise money spent.

7 STEVEN BANKS: We'll, we'll certainly
8 look at that bill.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: As we have for a
10 number of years but it's not going anywhere because
11 there's no inclination from this administration to
12 really do what needs to be done and that is keeping
13 people in their homes and protecting the most
14 vulnerable, families making less than 50,000 dollars
15 a year, if it works for our seniors, it works for our
16 disabled, its good enough for the working families
17 out there that are suffering day in and day out.

18 STEVEN BANKS: Well just for the record I
19 want to make it clear though there's been a
20 tremendous investment in preventing homelessness
21 that's why evictions by Marshals are down 27 percent
22 because of provision of legal services and the
23 provision of rent arrears but you're absolutely right
24 an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Sorry Chairman

3 just wanted a response. I understand that but this is
4 capping rents, its making sure that the rent doesn't
5 become more unaffordable for these families for the
6 next... you... the projection I was given for five years
7 based on the models that we currently have and the
8 RGB increases since their inception it would cost New
9 York City 300 million dollars over five years, that
10 would prevent a tremendous amount of families from
11 losing their homes, that would be grabbing the bull
12 by the horns, controlling the bleeding so then we can
13 perform the triage and make sure that we have
14 permanent housing solutions for those that need it.

15 STEVEN BANKS: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
17 Member Gjonaj, Council Member Keith Powers.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I can't follow up
19 with that. Thank you for... thank you for your
20 testimony. I, I want... I wanted to ask some things
21 about conditions, but I wanted to ask first when you
22 talk about source of income... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...and
25 discrimination I had actually, I don't, maybe 12

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 years ago, worked on a bill in Albany to increase
3 source, source of income discrimination protections
4 for tenants, the city actually at that time I believe
5 advocated and it was vetoed, again advocated because
6 it wasn't consistent with New York City law, it... are
7 there other areas in... right now that you believe that
8 there could be protections around source of income
9 whether its size, size of buildings, other forms of
10 income that are not being... that are not currently
11 protected?

12 STEVEN BANKS: That's an excellent
13 question, I think that our perspective is making sure
14 the existing law is, is enforced and that's why we
15 set up the unit at HRA to supplement what the human
16 rights commission does. I had forgotten that you were
17 involved in the other bill but perhaps... let's, let's
18 look... I would... let's sit down and look at it together
19 to see what might... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Sure... [cross-
21 talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...be a good thing, what,
23 what we might be able to do to, to move this further.
24 As I said earlier, I heard from too many clients
25 directly at Town Halls, I know you're going to have

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 one this week and, and in other settings that people
3 have raised to me this problem which is why we set up
4 the unit but it's, it's a significant concern to me.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay, thank you.

6 The... just on the topic, the... you know the concern
7 that I think one might have as we're siting is that
8 we have a... an obvious need, 63,000 folks and probably
9 a few more than that who are experiencing
10 homelessness at I guess any given moment and the
11 annual numbers are higher but that the siting of
12 those will... I mean as we talk about where the best...
13 as... how... working with folks to try to identify the
14 best places to keep them connected to their
15 community, work or whatever the other conditions we
16 want to do, the... you know that... essentially as I
17 understand it the provider comes up with a lease and
18 find... identifies a site brings it to the city, the
19 city then evaluates, can... but I want to just get a
20 clearer sense of the process that is used for
21 identifying the sites that you are opening as the 29
22 that you've done and the ones going forward in terms
23 of understanding how those are identifies, how many
24 maybe have been brought to the city and have been
25 rejected based on concerns around they don't meet the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 mission, safety conditions, how many have been closed
3 based for those same reasons and then I think there's
4 a question that has come up for... many times in
5 different instances which is the idea to do a lease
6 with a provider versus outright buying sites based on
7 the cost consideration to the city and, and I think
8 that you know a lot of folks ask, have asked me and
9 others about this entire process of picking and
10 siting because it doesn't... in my experience doesn't
11 actually include saying are there other available
12 sites that might meet the same goal in the
13 neighborhood or in the community, I don't... I do
14 believe we all have to take on our share and... but I
15 don't think there's a process by which there is... we
16 can bring them to you but I don't think there's sort
17 of like discussion around, okay we have other
18 available sites here as well, might be more beds,
19 might be more... meet the mission more... so I hope you
20 could walk us through that process and then maybe
21 give us some data on how, how this process works and
22 what have been the ones that have been turned away
23 for condition concerns?

24 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, no I'm happy to do
25 that. I, I want to just tell a story before I give

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 you a direct answer but I also want to thank you and
3 I think frankly the New York Times acknowledges your
4 leadership on, on exactly this issue so you're
5 somebody that puts your principles where, where,
6 where you're... where you are and I really appreciate
7 that but let me give you an, an example that's a good
8 example. So, I can talk about Council Member Cohen
9 because he's not here. So, Council Member Cohen, you
10 know had said that there were some of the same
11 concerns that you just raised about how siting
12 happens and he came to us with a site that we could
13 get up right away that was a great site and it's a
14 good example of what can be done. We've had other and
15 I don't want to embarrass everybody, we've had other
16 interactions with Council Member Torres for example
17 where we've really talked through hey there's a
18 particular provider that makes sense in this
19 community and they want to do something in this
20 community, does that make sense to you and so to me
21 these are examples and yourself included and others
22 here where there's been a back and forth that has
23 made this siting process not perfect but a much
24 better one in many respects and so again that was the
25 spirit in which I sent this letter last year and

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 I'll... you know something I'll do again but sort of
3 updating people on where we're at and asking for
4 sites because if people have sites that we can get up
5 quickly this is a great thing. The system... the, the
6 process works very simply, after we released the, the
7 Turn the Tide report we called the providers in for a
8 large meeting, we showed them where shelters were
9 located, we showed them where clients came from and
10 where we needed to have shelter and we made it very
11 clear that as part of this new approach to shelter,
12 it wasn't going to be haphazard anymore, we were
13 going to site shelters where it would meet a client
14 need and since that time the providers have been out
15 there bringing proposals to us, proposals to us may
16 not make it through the process for a number of
17 different reasons. One issue is that they lose site
18 control, there are a number of sites that we thought
19 would have worked out but they're... you know we're all
20 living in the world of real estate in New York City
21 and the provider loses the site to somebody else so
22 that is a, a common issue. The other is it's not
23 open, its not going to be open in a, a timeframe that
24 makes any sense to us because of the immediate need,
25 we... you know we forget sometimes in these principle

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 conversations that at the end of the day we've got an
3 obligation to shelter people that come to us every
4 night even as we're trying to turn around the system
5 we still got to provide shelter every night which is
6 how we're using commercial hotels as a bridge as we
7 get out of clusters and bring the new shelters on but
8 I think typically the shelter is being proposed to us
9 through an open ended RFP process, sealed bid by a
10 not for profit and we're evaluating it for does it
11 meet the, the terms of the... of the RFP, is it
12 consistent with the Turning the Tide principles and,
13 and sometimes in that process they're losing site
14 control or sometimes in that process its going to
15 take too long. We've had other instances where, you
16 know people come to us with sites, elected officials
17 and we're sending them back, hey there are providers
18 and I think we've had a great... several examples of
19 those, I don't want to... mean to put Council Member
20 Torres on the spot, where there have been providers
21 that are really important locally and the same thing
22 with Council Member Salamanca who have, have come to
23 us ultimately by being connected to a site in that
24 area and that makes a lot of sense for clients, I
25 think it makes a lot of sense for the communities.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 So, we welcome that type of iteral process but as
3 that is going on, we have an obligation to provide
4 shelter every night, we have an obligation to get out
5 of clusters and we have an obligation to get
6 ourselves out of... out of hotels.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Just to ask a
8 follow up and I'm sorry to use more of my time. Can
9 you talk about... the one question that comes... I get
10 this question all the time, is the decision to
11 purchase at a certain amount... I mean, sorry, lease at
12 a certain amount from an owner versus buying the
13 building at cost and I understand the way you can do
14 that is different but just to, to... just... because I
15 get that question often, why not just take custody of
16 it and make it housing that could still be available
17 to, to folks as well and the second question I have
18 is if... and I can say this for my district for... I, I
19 think for sure, if sites are available and are not
20 being competed for in Midtown Manhattan that raises a
21 question I think of very desirable spots and so that
22 raises a concern when we talk about conditions and
23 safety if they are not being purchased by somebody in
24 a very speculative market in Midtown Manhattan about
25 what, what that represents to the condition of the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 building or just you know the size or what, whatever
3 else it might be and I was wondering if you could,
4 not to put you on the spot in, in a bad way but I, I
5 would be curious to hear what the response is.

6 STEVEN BANKS: No, I appreciate the
7 opportunity to respond, you must be talking about
8 58th Street to, to pick a, a site..

9 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Exact... you may..
10 [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: Hypothetically... [cross-
12 talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: ...may perhaps,
14 yeah... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: May perhaps. And, and
16 again, I think... I, I appreciate what you are
17 recognized by the New York Times for doing in that
18 situation but at 58th Street I can assure you, look
19 we're... our values... we're not going to put employed
20 homeless men in a building that's not safe to be in,
21 this building was inspected by the fire department,
22 inspected by the Department of Buildings, ultimately
23 they're the regulators and they're... you know this
24 building was audited by the, the Department of
25 Buildings was audited, audited the multiple times,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 there was a lot of oversight that got us to the
3 position where this is a building that's going to be
4 appropriate to use for, for employed single men in
5 that area because ultimately we want it be safe but
6 then its not our decision only, it's the regulator..
7 the, the enforcement agencies that play a role here
8 and, you know that's a building that was safe to be
9 occupied before it was a shelter and its going to be
10 even safer to occupy once it's a shelter because we
11 have put in a number of upgrades to make it an even..
12 a better place than it was before it was... before its
13 going to be a shelter, obviously there's litigation,
14 we've been very successful across the city with
15 litigation and we will obviously be hopeful that
16 outcome will, will, will be favorable as well at that
17 location. In terms of purchasing, I mean there are..
18 there are not for profits that have been very
19 entrepreneurial, BRC is a good example in Council
20 Member Cabrera's district, they've got a shelter that
21 combines permanent housing on one side of the lot
22 and, and shelter on the other side and it's a
23 terrific place again for a... for, for employed men..
24 homeless men who are being sheltered there and
25 they've... and they bought the property and there are

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 other not for profits that are doing the same, I know
3 WIN has done that as well and that's a model that
4 we're very supportive of and we're going to keep
5 working with the not for profits to, to help support
6 them in those initiatives because we think as is
7 implicit in your question that that's a very viable
8 way to proceed here.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
10 Member Powers, Council Member Ritchie Torres.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Commissioner
12 always great to see you... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: Good to see you too...
14 [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...running both DHS
16 and HRA is a herculean challenge so you have my
17 respect.

18 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And gratitude. I
20 have a few questions on a number of topics, what's
21 the trajectory of opioid overdoses in the shelter
22 system?

23 STEVEN BANKS: I want to say the last
24 report reported on is about 175, I want to be careful
25 because I'm under oath but in that neighborhood those

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 are the number I think of, of, of Naloxone
3 administrations that we reported on I believe in the
4 last report to the Council if I've got the number
5 slightly wrong its in the report... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I don't know it
7 off... is it trending up, down, is it stagnant...

8 STEVEN BANKS: I mean I think we'll,
9 we'll have our, our full report out next month on
10 fatalities...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay...

12 STEVEN BANKS: The Health Department
13 report, I would expect that this will continue to be
14 a challenge as it is across the country and also
15 across the country in, in... among people who are
16 homeless who are in, in the streets and, and, and in
17 shelter, I think. Your legislation and I've said a
18 number of different times, I think it was helpful in
19 terms of focusing also on the importance of training
20 both clients as well as staff and ever save is a save
21 that, that you, you helped us do and I really
22 appreciate that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Does fentanyl
24 remain the driver of these overdoses?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, yeah, continues to
3 be a big driver.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I don't have the
5 article in front of me but a few months ago there was
6 an article about the abuse of shelter residents at
7 the hands of some of these private security firms..
8 [cross-talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: Yes... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...and I'm
11 wondering if, if DHS conducted its own investigation,
12 what were the results of that investigation and
13 whether there's been enhanced oversight or background
14 checks on, on those private security firms?

15 STEVEN BANKS: There, there are some
16 enhanced steps we're, we're taking for oversight that
17 I'll probably talk about in my... I guess my... the next
18 time I'll probably see you is my preliminary budget
19 hearing... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Okay... [cross-
21 talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...but I think that you are..
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Does that include
25 background checks or...

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: I want to be careful how I
3 answer it but it... I think it'll address... of concerns
4 that you had raised to me about the private security
5 companies... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Yeah... [cross-
7 talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: ...but we should certainly
9 talk offline before then to make sure I'm, I'm on the
10 right track for where you want to go.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And also I guess
12 what are your thoughts on the... when I saw the data
13 about the, the distribution of contracts among
14 private security firms it seems like there were two
15 players in the industry that had a disproportionate
16 share of the contracts, there was something of a
17 duopoly, what are your thoughts on that, the
18 concentration of contracts and so few firms?

19 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I mean I think this
20 is a challenge in terms of the procurement process
21 and who... and what the market is but I, I, I... you
22 asked me this question at a... at a... at a previous
23 hearing and, and my thoughts I think are still the
24 same which is there's a procurement process but
25 there's clearly a concern there as well.

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I've come across articles indicating that there are shelters with, with one means of egress on the surface that would seem to be a, a clear fire hazard so... I, I mean how do we... how do we ensure the safety of residents in shelters that only have a single means of egress?

STEVEN BANKS: Again you must be talking about 58th Street, I know Council Member Powers left, again this is a building that's been thoroughly inspected by the Department of Buildings and the Fire Department, we upgraded a number of the systems there to meet what the Fire Department and the Department of Buildings said we should do, we can't open it without their approval, I can assure... I mean I don't know if this is reassuring or not, you, you, you know me I'm not going to put people in a building where they're going to be at risk and you know I think the other reality is that there are... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Is that the norm in your shelters or do your shelters... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: No... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...typically have more than one means of egress?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Typically more than one
3 means of egress but I also want to say there are
4 thousands of buildings in New York City that have
5 only one means of egress, this particular building on
6 58th Street is going to be... its going to meet all...
7 any safety requirements that the Fire Department and...
8 the... and the Department of Buildings tell us we
9 should put in place to open it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Setting aside 58th
11 Street which is... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: Yep... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...a big
14 politically charged case, would you oppose... if, if
15 there were a Local Law... if there were a proposed
16 Local Law mandating that every shelter has a... more
17 than one means of egress is that a policy that you
18 would oppose or support or...

19 STEVEN BANKS: I'd be concerned that it
20 would be used in the way that its being used on 58th
21 Street to block us from opening a shelter for
22 homeless employed men who need that facility, before
23 we opened it... proposed to open it as a shelter it had
24 only means of egress and it was used totally in
25 compliance with the law as a... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: But, but I guess
3 that would be unfair because there are... there are
4 legitimate policy purposes that could always be
5 perverted as a pretext.

6 STEVEN BANKS: That's, that's a concern...
7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: You know and,
9 and... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: That's the concern I'm
11 actually... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: And like you I
13 have no use for NIMBYistic... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: You... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...opposition to
16 shelter siting and I think I've shown that... [cross-
17 talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: You, you have more than
19 shown that in your approach so I'm just raising an
20 issue in, in response to your question about a
21 concern about going that direction.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I guess I'll
23 squeeze in a few more. Speaking of Turning... have we
24 turned the tide in favor of fair share, right, there
25 were a number of community districts and council

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 districts that have no shelters at all, have we
3 increased the number of community and council
4 districts that...

5 STEVEN BANKS: We're... we are making
6 progress and we have more to be done...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So, what's that
8 progress specifically?

9 STEVEN BANKS: You know we got shelters
10 sited in parts of... you know we got a shelter sited in
11 the Riverdale community board where there never had
12 been a shelter... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: But you told me
14 that last time, has there been... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: We have shelters that are
16 sited to open in Queens now in certain communities
17 that had never had shelters before and we're going to
18 continue that. Let me give you a fuller accounting
19 and I also think when we get to the two-year
20 anniversary of Turning the Tide which is February
21 28th I'll look forward to having a conversation with
22 you about the roadmap of how it... how it now looks
23 compared to how it looked last year.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Because you, you
25 made some very important... good points. Do you keep

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 track of the number of people who have been
3 transitioned from shelter to permanent housing or...

4 STEVEN BANKS: We do, I should have
5 answered your... I can answer your question somewhat
6 more fully; College Point, Queens, Ditmas Park,
7 Brooklyn, Ozone Park, Queens are areas that there had
8 not been shelters previously and those are
9 communities that there have been additional siting's
10 in and there will be more coming.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Alright, do you
12 keep track of the number of people who have been
13 transitioned from shelter to... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: We do... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: ...permanent
16 housing... what's, what's that number?

17 STEVEN BANKS: 101,000 people have gotten
18 our rental assistance or re-housing, almost all of
19 those are moving out of shelter, there's some,
20 roughly 10,000 or so that are prevention oriented
21 interventions we had to avoid people coming in but as
22 I said earlier in the testimony it's a... it's a... that
23 type of rental assistance and re-housing tool is
24 something that no Commissioner had before me and
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 we're going to continue to move forward with even
3 more people relocated.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: The return rate
5 of people who are returning to shelter is very low,
6 it's in the MMR for the people that are being..
7 getting the subsidized housing that we're providing,
8 I guess how are we... because that seems like a high
9 number but when one considers the ubiquity of source
10 of income discrimination, the scarcity of deeply
11 affordable housing I imagine the people you are
12 transitioning to permanently affordable housing have
13 some of the lowest median incomes in the city, how
14 are you able to overcome those barriers?

15 STEVEN BANKS: I mean we're subsidizing
16 the gap between rents and income that doesn't mean
17 there aren't still barriers, I mean in my... beginning
18 of the testimony I said that there... you know rents
19 went up almost 19 percent and incomes up less than
20 five percent over this last period of time and we
21 lost 150,000 rent regulated apartments, we're
22 operating in that environment and I appreciate the
23 question which I took a little bit as a compliment
24 that we've been able to get a lot of people connected
25 to housing through the different tools we've got, we

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 want to connect even more people to housing with the
3 tools we've, we've been given.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: My time has
5 expired, thank you Commissioner.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
7 Council Member Torres, Council Member Adrienne Adams.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you Mr.
9 Chair, good afternoon Mr. Banks, good to see you.

10 STEVEN BANKS: Good to see you too.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you. Well
12 I'll just do a side bar before I begin my questions.
13 I just wanted to.. wanted to say that had it not been
14 for the viral video that was taken by another HRA
15 client I dare say that we would have no knowledge, I
16 don't believe that your staff would have informed you
17 of the magnitude of the situation and I will also say
18 that we do appreciate the fact that you have taken
19 swift action when it pertains to that situation.

20 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you, it's still
21 utterly heartbreaking.. [cross-talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Horrible.. [cross-
23 talk]

24 STEVEN BANKS: ...and never should happen
25 again.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Horrible. Okay,
3 all roads for me lead to southeast Queens as you
4 know, we feel like the Bronx, thank you very much
5 Council Member Salamanca for your bills actually,
6 thank you. Council Member Torres just addressed some
7 issues of fair share which is where I was going as
8 well, we've seen some movement in, in the equity
9 needle being moved a little bit lately, you just
10 referenced College Park and Ozone Park, I, I just
11 want to know and if you don't have it your staff can
12 get back to me later. The current number of hotels
13 being used to shelter the homeless in southeast
14 Queens community boards 10, 12, and 13, do we have a
15 number?

16 STEVEN BANKS: Let me get you that number
17 but I know when, when we met together two summers
18 ago, I think it... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yep... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: ...was... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...two summers ago.

22 STEVEN BANKS: That we talked about how
23 to avoid continued usage in the particular district
24 we're in... [cross-talk]

25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh... [cross-
3 talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...and I think you would
5 agree we've kept that commitment because what I had
6 said at the time even before we had the Turn the Tide
7 is that there are about twice as many people housed
8 in the district as needed to be connected to the
9 district and we'll get you further information but I,
10 just for the record, wanted to acknowledge what I
11 thought was a very good conversation even before you
12 were in your current position... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Right... [cross-
14 talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...you were very much
16 focused on this issue and I... and I appreciated the
17 partnership on that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you, thank
19 you. I, I would really like to know those current
20 numbers... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: Yep, we'll give you...
22 [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...when you... [cross-
24 talk]

25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...current numbers... [cross-
3 talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...get them... thank
5 you, alright. Again, and as it pertains to community
6 boards 10, 12, and 13, do we know how many hotels
7 came online this year, in 2018?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Again, for those specific
9 areas I want to... I want to get you that information
10 but very much focused on the conversation we had two
11 years ago, I believe... we have... we have really been
12 very consistent with what we had committed to do in
13 that area.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh, we have
15 seen some movement as far as moveouts and I think I,
16 I mentioned that, I don't know if I mentioned it in
17 the past that I know at least one of my constituents
18 wanted to stay where she was and came to us for help
19 and we told her no, we really, really need to see
20 this move out happen and why, so we have seen that
21 happen... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...as well so...
24 [cross-talk]

25 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I want to note
3 that. In building my relationships with my principals
4 in my district, we have a very large number needless
5 to say of children who are homeless living in
6 shelters and I, I'd just like to know are there new
7 initiatives that you're looking at for children in
8 shelter to provide additional educational and mental
9 support?

10 STEVEN BANKS: I mean I think the most
11 important imitative we have for children in shelter
12 is the... is the thrive initiative to add social
13 workers in a one to 25 ratio to really deal with the
14 trauma that children have gone through from losing
15 their home, I mean if we think of ourselves as
16 children, our own children, the experience of having
17 stability and losing a roof over your head has an
18 impact on, on children and that's why that... the
19 thrive initiative is so important to us. I think a
20 second initiative that's very important to us is... and
21 I think it was covered in the Daily News and, and
22 elsewhere we implemented something called a school
23 proximity project which is to try to right size where
24 people are placed to connect them to... as close as
25 possible to the... to schools, we are now... have 75.5

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 percent of our families with children who don't have
3 domestic violence safety concerns, 75.5 percent of
4 those families are housed in the borough of the
5 youngest child's school and we're going to keep
6 driving that number up as we site and open more of
7 the Turn the Tide shelters but again it seems to me
8 that the, the support through the social workers and
9 educational stability are two of the most critical
10 things that we can do for children.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: And this will be
12 my last question I think [sneeze] bless you... the
13 instances around nutrition and concerns around
14 nutrition and programs around nutrition, does your
15 organize... does, does the agency pay specific
16 attention to nutrition as it pertains to children in
17 shelter?

18 STEVEN BANKS: By the way just for the
19 record there are... we'll, we'll get you the exact
20 number but there are approximately 25 commercial
21 hotels in that southeast Queens area. I'm going to
22 answer your question but I wanted to make a larger
23 point, I, I think I've said this when, when we were
24 at the borough board maybe earlier in the year, about
25 a year ago maybe it was, the... one of the issues is

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 once we take down all the hotels in Queens there will
3 be a gap of a couple of thousand beds that we'll need
4 to replace with, with shelters because again we're
5 trying to right size the shelter system to have need
6 from a borough be aligned with the ability to offer
7 the opportunity to be sheltered in a borough and so
8 Queens had the... you know 50 percent plus of the
9 hotel... commercial hotels, the Bronx had 70 percent of
10 the clusters so one of the issues we're going to have
11 in southeast Queens and all over the borough as we
12 right size as we close commercial hotels we may have
13 to provide other opportunities for people to be
14 sheltered in a... in a better way but we'll give you
15 more granular information that's sort of a top line
16 in terms of that number of commercial hotels. Back to
17 nutrition, I mean it's one of the reasons why I think
18 that Turning the Tide shelters are so important
19 because they're going to provide us with the ability
20 to have cooking facilities for families to be able to
21 regain stability as much as possible in a family type
22 setting as opposed to the way in which the shelter
23 system has developed over, over a period of time
24 where that wasn't an important value.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Okay, thank you.

3 My final question is going to be, and I think you,
4 you probably hit on it a little bit just now. My
5 focus is still on equity in the borough... [cross-talk]

6 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...obviously, there
8 are several buildings going up in my district and
9 neighboring district, a lot surrounding affordable
10 housing but some questionable as of right buildings
11 are being built as we speak and are almost fully
12 built, I would like to have a commitment from DHS
13 that these will not be homeless shelters that they
14 will be affordable housing if possible, I know that
15 I'm asking a lot and that's probably not even in your
16 purview but I would like to put that on your radar to
17 make it clear that in the interest of equity in
18 southeast Queens pertaining to sheltering and move
19 outs of hotels that the properties, the buildings
20 that are going up in southeast Queens particularly
21 district 28 not be... not be used... not be contracted by
22 DHS or with DHS for further sheltering purposes.

23 STEVEN BANKS: So, I don't know which
24 sites you're referring to, let's have a conversation
25 about it but I also want to level set too that as we

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 close every one of those 25 hotels and as I think I,
3 I have said at other hearings and I said at this
4 hearing there's a mismatch between the numbers of
5 people housed in your part of the borough and the
6 numbers of people in the borough who need to be
7 housed in that area and obviously its not one to one
8 but there's a mismatch and we're going to need to do
9 some replacement so I don't know if any of those
10 buildings, how any of those buildings relate to it
11 that you referenced but why don't we sit down and
12 have a conversation and see what they are and, and
13 talk through what the options are frankly.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I'd like that,
15 again this is in the interest of fair share and we
16 all know that when it comes to southeast Queens fair
17 share takes a holiday. Thanks very much.

18 STEVEN BANKS: We're, we're working hard
19 to put fair share back to work.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
21 Member Adams, Council Member Mark Treyger.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you Chair
23 for holding this very important hearing, welcome
24 Commissioner. I have... I'll begin with a, a local
25 question and begin to.. more of a DOE citywide

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 question. I'm, I'm actually very proud of how Coney
3 Island my residents have responded to the proposed
4 WIN shelter on, on Neptune Avenue, I think we've had
5 very substantive and thoughtful discussions around it
6 and I do want to, you know thank your office and also
7 Christine Quinn and WIN for being very responsive
8 about the process. I do have one follow up question
9 that really has not been yet kind of resolved with
10 regards to the site itself, its history, I know that
11 WIN had conducted some sort of a site history
12 investigation about it, it used to be an old dye
13 factory, it was also used as a... it was a, a health
14 clinic by Coney Island hospital that was damaged by
15 superstorm Sandy, the hospital system said it was not
16 safe to rebuild there so residents, you raised just
17 valid question for the safety of the folks who are..
18 who will be coming in, are you familiar with the site
19 history, are you confident in its safety that it will
20 provide... it will be a safe structure and, and there's
21 nothing... no contaminants that will harm the people
22 there?

23 STEVEN BANKS: I am confident, I know,
24 you know neither Chris Quinn or WIN or... nor we would
25 want to proceed with something where there's a real..

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 a real rise and, and again I want to acknowledge your
3 comment at the outset that it... I think it has been a,
4 a... its never an easy process but I appreciate your,
5 your highlighting the, the sort of positive forward
6 progress that we're making to get to a place where
7 people can understand that it's going to open... its
8 going to be a good thing for the clients and
9 ultimately will be a good... a good thing for the
10 district to give children from that area of Brooklyn
11 the opportunity to be housed there so again I
12 appreciate your, your help in what I know has been a
13 difficult process.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Just I, I would
15 just appreciate if your office can just try to get
16 back to the local community board just about the, the
17 site... the site history just to make sure that, you
18 know it's safe for the families there and that, that,
19 that's really our, our main concern. I have some DOE
20 related questions with regards to coordination and
21 communication with DHS. With, with regards to
22 students requesting a transfer to a, a, a shelter
23 closer to their school, what is the process for
24 requesting a transfer to a shelter closer to a
25 child's school?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: I'm going to answer that I
3 just wanted to give you a little bit more detail that
4 Deputy Commissioner Bray gave me because she's got a
5 lot of good information. So, we've completed phases
6 one and two of the EAS and all have determined to be
7 safe and, and we... I believe we either shared or will
8 be sharing the documents with the community, I think
9 we have shared them, but we'll make sure that you...
10 that you can see them as well. The process for
11 requesting a transfer is actually active from us and
12 that's why I referenced earlier the school proximity
13 project. As we transform the shelter system we're
14 creating some capacity ability to move people around
15 that didn't exist previously and so over the summer
16 we identified families with children who were going
17 to be commuting a long distance to get to school and
18 we very much offered each of them an opportunity to
19 move to the borough where the youngest child was in
20 school and I think some of these were highlighted in,
21 in, in the Daily News series on, on children in, in
22 shelter and children who are unstably housed but not
23 in shelter and so we've been... we've been ourselves
24 identifying families that we think are commuting for
25 too far a distance and so we did the proximity

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 project in the summer leading up to the opening of
3 school and we're going to be... we're going to continue
4 that during the school year to try to move as many
5 families as possible to be as close to the school
6 that that want to be. Families can request them, it
7 had been difficult in the past to grant them, but we
8 had a very good track record of what we just did over
9 the summer before the start of school and we're going
10 to be doing it again. I think it's also important to
11 see the number we're at now point in time so 75.5
12 percent of the families with children who don't have
13 DV safety concerns are now in the borough of their
14 youngest child's school, we still got obviously, you
15 know 25 percent to go but you can see I think with
16 building better capacity and better siting's, closer
17 to... in communities where we maybe never have had
18 settings before I think we can meet what your concern
19 and my concern is which is not disrupting kid's
20 education.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right but how
22 does DHS let the families know about the process and
23 know about their rights with regards because you, you
24 mentioned that the families can request it, sometimes
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 they're not aware of, of these particular rights and,
3 and what's available to them?

4 STEVEN BANKS: Understood, I mean the
5 family has the right to either keep the child in
6 their existing school and get transportation to go or
7 to re-register their, their child in, in a new
8 school. As part of the school proximity project we've
9 been reaching out to the families individually at... on
10 a proactive basis asking them if they want to move.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And how many
12 approved transfers have we had so far this school
13 year?

14 STEVEN BANKS: I'd have to get back to
15 you with that number because its gone up since the
16 time we did the proximity project over the summer so,
17 I'll get back to you with the... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I, I would
19 appreciate that and, and just in closing I recently
20 had a discussion with Chris Caruso... is that a number
21 you have? Okay, I recently had a discussion with the
22 DOE with regards to... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: I just... the... I apologize
24 Council Member... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah... [cross-
3 talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...the note was not a number
5 it was just making sure that I reiterate the
6 following point that anytime a new family with
7 children site opens we offer all families with
8 children the chance to transfer there who live in
9 that community board so there's sort of two
10 iterations going on, one is our overall school
11 proximity project of trying to link people to
12 existing sites but anytime a new site opens we, we
13 want to offer children... like for example, the one we
14 opened in Crown Heights about a year ago was the
15 first families with children shelter of that nature
16 in that area and we offered people the opportunity to
17 move there, just recently had a shelter that opened
18 in Rockaway, same thing giving the opportunity to
19 families to move there so I apologize I cut you off.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Sure, and but I
21 would like for you guys to get back to me... [cross-
22 talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: Our numbers... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...with regards to
25 the numbers... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: ...we will... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Just I, I
4 recently met with Chris Caruso from the DOE... [cross-
5 talk]

6 STEVEN BANKS: Yes... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...where they are
8 transferring the support for students in temporary
9 housing over to his office... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: Yep... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...in community
12 schools, I remain concerned and I'm sharing this with
13 you as I shared with him about our capacity to
14 appropriately and adequately respond to the needs of
15 our most, most vulnerable families and I'll explain
16 by saying that when I mentioned to you... when I asked
17 you before about how does DHS let students know
18 about... and actually I... and I was also joined by Chair
19 Levin who, who was excellent at that briefing but
20 whether or not we, we know if we're asking the right
21 questions, if we're informing folks of, of their
22 rights, I am a big believer in licensed social
23 workers, I think guidance counselors should be placed
24 and working at... in the shelters as well to assist
25 these families, these are very sensitive, delicate,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 technical cases and at times historically we've seen
3 that the personnel that we put in front of these
4 families... again I... and I applaud every person that
5 works for the city of New York but you, you know
6 there's an expression, there are things you don't
7 know that you don't know and you don't even know it
8 yet and I just want to make sure that we are putting
9 people who are licensed and credentialed in front of
10 the most vulnerable families, the initial point of
11 contact is so critical to let them know about their
12 rights, what... how to navigate bureaucracy, how to
13 fight bureaucracy and I am not sensing or hearing
14 that we are placing licensed social workers or
15 guidance counselors in these... whether it's a shelter
16 or, or more of our schools to better respond to their
17 needs so I'd like for you... for you to respond to that
18 and I think the Chair for his time.

19 STEVEN BANKS: Okay, I, I take your point
20 and I also like your old, old expression, which I
21 think is very important to always keep in mind. I
22 know the Chancellors very focused on this, he and I
23 have spoken about it a number of times, we have a
24 joint sort of DOE, DHS and HRA working group and
25 we're focused on how to make improvements, I think

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 we're all cognizant of, of some of the historical
3 challenges here but I think there's a real commitment
4 between the DOE and our agency to, to make some
5 significant progress. We couldn't have done the
6 proximity project without their help ultimately some
7 of, you know their staff could be even more
8 persuasive than our staff sometimes and so its real
9 collaborative with the DOE to make this happen.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
11 Member Treyger, Council Member Salamanca for a second
12 round.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Council Member
14 in the interest of time I'll forego my questions,
15 yeah and I'll, I'll meet with the Commissioner on the
16 side. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
18 Member Salamanca. Commissioner I just have a couple
19 last questions just on the topic of transfers, we
20 didn't touch on that too much today. You mentioned in
21 your testimony that you have submitted or crafted a,
22 a, a transfer plan and submitted to OTDA, can you
23 explain a little just what the process is or why OTDA
24 has to sign off on your transfer plan?

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, I... that wasn't quite
3 what I said but I can understand why, why you might,
4 might have thought that... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

6 STEVEN BANKS: The operative rule is 48
7 hours' notice for a non-emergency transfer. At the 90
8 day... during the 90 review I met with Picture the
9 Homeless, I met with other groups that talk... I met
10 with the Coalition of the Homeless, VOCAL, other
11 groups and the Safety Net Activists to talk to me
12 about some of the challenges and some of the things
13 that they wanted to know more about, you know
14 emergency transfers versus administrative transfers
15 and so we, we set about making some changes in our
16 approach but subsequently we don't... we don't need
17 approval for making those changes but subsequently we
18 have now learned that the state is going to as part
19 of a larger shelter regulations to changes cover
20 transfers and we want to make sure that what we're...
21 what they're... what we're, we're going to do is going
22 to be consistent with their regulation and depending
23 on what their regulation says there may be some
24 issues about what the two pieces of legislation say.
25 So, I haven't seen the regulations from the state,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 they have not been issued yet and when we see them we
3 want to compare them to what we were planning to do
4 and plan... compare them to what your... what you would
5 like to legislate and then sit down and work with you
6 about any issues that may rise because of that.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. How many
8 transfers occur quarterly or monthly, however you
9 want to break it down?

10 STEVEN BANKS: I, I was afraid you were
11 going to ask me that question, it's probably the one
12 question I didn't prepare for, but I will get, get
13 you that information.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. We'd, we'd like
15 that kind of broken down by the type of... whether it's
16 a single adult, adult family or family with children.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, we'll, we'll get you
18 that information.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay and then do we
20 have a break down of how many transfers percentage
21 wise how many transfers are administrative versus
22 emergency and just to be clear what's the... what's the
23 definition of those two things and... emergency versus
24 administrative?
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: I mean we'll, we'll...

3 [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Or administrative
5 emergency?

6 STEVEN BANKS: We'll, we'll get you that
7 but by way of example if, you know we have to close a
8 shelter because of safety reasons like... I don't know
9 national grid for example tells us that there's a
10 problem with the gas... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...there was an example of
13 that... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...that was publicized...
16 [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Fair enough, right...
18 [cross-talk]

19 STEVEN BANKS: ...that other... another
20 instance we had space in families with children
21 shelters and we need to close a hotel that was for
22 families with children to make it available for
23 single men in the middle of the winter, I mean those
24 are examples, health and safety related issues.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Obviously we've
3 heard complaints, there's been articles written about
4 people that feel as if transfers that have been used
5 as a form of retaliation, they have complained about
6 conditions, they've complained about treatment,
7 they've complained about, you know just various
8 aspects of, of their, their shelter facility or
9 programming and, and then they were moved or they
10 received a transfer, can you say unequivocally that
11 that never happens?

12 STEVEN BANKS: It certainly should not
13 happen, but I can say as I said before I, I did focus
14 groups with people from Picture the Homeless, people
15 from... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: Coalition of the Homeless,
18 people from Safety Activist and VOCAL who gave me
19 examples of things that were of concern to me and
20 other leadership at the agency and that's why we were
21 going to make some changes... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...you know I think... there
24 shouldn't be retaliation for requests, I think how we
25 were going to approach this would have addressed the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 concerns that clients had, let's see what the state
3 regulation says and take it from there. I think the
4 other issue that I just want to make sure we all have
5 out in front of us, this is a complicated situation
6 in which somebody says X is a problem in my room and
7 X is actually a safety issue, for the resident its
8 going to feel like they're being transferred if
9 there's no other place... in, in retaliation if
10 there's... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...no other place they could
13 stay in that... in that building but we... our approach
14 was to avoid any second guessing of what the
15 situations were and to be able to have a, a
16 transparent transfer policy so people understand
17 what's happening, we'll see... again we'll see what the
18 state regulation says and see what we can do with
19 what we're intending to do.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean that's... [cross-
21 talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...and sit down with you
23 too... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...what our legislation
25 gets at is making sure that there's a very clear

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 transparent written record as to why a transfer
3 happens, as of now I don't believe that there... people
4 are given a very... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: No, there are... there is
6 notification that's provided but obviously... [cross-
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That, that... [cross-
9 talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: ...we felt... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...what the cause is
12 and, and in a clear way so... because I think what
13 we're hearing now is its hard to appeal it because
14 there's nothing in there in the administrative
15 transfer that specifies why you've been transferred
16 and so if you want to appeal it it's hard to say that
17 it would... that the agency was in the wrong if you
18 don't know why, why the agency is saying they did it.

19 STEVEN BANKS: Under, understood but some
20 of these are for example... and again... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: They could be, yeah,
22 yeah, they could be for a good cause it's just we
23 don't know.

24 STEVEN BANKS: Right but I think... [cross-
25 talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean... [cross-talk]

3 STEVEN BANKS: ...for, for example I heard
4 a lot of things in the focus groups I did with the
5 clients that, that raised concerns with me so
6 therefore I'm not... I'm not disputing your... the, the
7 substance of your question which is, is... are, are
8 there mistakes that are made, some transfers that
9 occur for example are... you know when we're closing
10 some of the cluster units, I know there were disputes
11 about that. I get that there are other problems apart
12 from that kind of thing and that's why we wanted to
13 make some reforms... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If there's a... [cross-
15 talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: ...and that's why you want
17 to legislate and we're... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, there's a...
19 [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: ...trying to fix... [cross-
21 talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...good reason why a
23 transfer is happening... [cross-talk]

24 STEVEN BANKS: People should know...
25 [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...everyone ought to
3 know about... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...about it... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...it... [cross-talk]

6 STEVEN BANKS: ...people should know about
7 it, I agree with that... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And is there a
9 process to appeal it?

10 STEVEN BANKS: There is a process to
11 appeal it, I can tell you however as... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It goes to ECB or
13 that's a... at, at HRA or at DHS?

14 STEVEN BANKS: You, you could request a
15 fair hearing, but I can tell you that I litigated and
16 lost in the second department, the question of
17 whether or not you get a pretransfer hearing or a
18 post transfer hearing. The... I'm sorry... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, sorry... [cross-
20 talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: ...the first part... [cross-
22 talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm sorry it's at
24 OATH, is it OATH...

25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: No, it's a state
3 administrative hearing.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

5 STEVEN BANKS: But it's a post transfer
6 hearing because of the... prior to the ruling in that
7 case.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, there's no
9 injunctive relief or anything like that?

10 STEVEN BANKS: As I said the, the...
11 [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: ...process is defined by a,
14 a court case.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep.

16 STEVEN: But let's... again I, I don't
17 know what the state of regulations are going to say...
18 [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: When are we expecting
20 those state regulations?

21 STEVEN BANKS: I thought this month but
22 as it turns out its going to be next month.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, we should
24 sit down and talk about that, Council Member... [cross-
25 talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 STEVEN BANKS: Happy to... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...Espinal couldn't be
4 here today but obviously he's interested in the
5 matter...

6 STEVEN BANKS: Yep, happy to do that with
7 both of you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. And then I do
9 want to ask about... in your testimony you spoke about
10 capital needs a little bit and I just do want to ask
11 you about, about that if you'd just give me one
12 second here... what, what is the average span of time
13 to complete capital... large capital projects, these
14 are in tier two's for example that, that could be the
15 source of long term violations, average span of time
16 or a minimum and maximum time, is there a preference
17 for, for urgent needs like roof repairs or plumbing,
18 things that are, you know directly impacting clients
19 daily experience?

20 STEVEN BANKS: Yes, I mean I can give you
21 sort of a top line of it. So, for example there's 130
22 renovation projects, as I said there's 61 that are in
23 design, 24 in construction, 45 that are in the
24 planning stage. This is pretty expedited for these...
25 this kind of capital project development, you know of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 those... for example of the 24 that are in
3 construction, you know eight of them are already 76
4 to 100 percent done that are being managed by, by, by
5 our agency and DDC. So, we're root... moving pretty
6 rapidly, we've got a pretty focused tracking system
7 on getting these done and the kinds of problems that
8 you are focusing on are obviously the priority ones
9 for us to address whatever sort of in an urgent
10 matter. On the other hand, you know you take the
11 Bellevue building that's got a façade problem that's
12 been there for a long period of time... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: ...and we're working to fix
15 it and meanwhile addressing inside the building to
16 make sure the façade problem isn't causing any
17 challenges in the building.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. And then lastly
19 going from capital needs to human needs, we've heard
20 from advocates in advance of this hearing that in...
21 shelter conditions need to also include things like
22 social workers, housing specialists that are able to
23 affectively do their job under the new requirements,
24 under city FHEPS, you know across the board, training
25 for staff including trauma informed care and de-

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 escalation obviously which is important, expanded
3 opioid treatment in shelters with community providers
4 so those are all things that as we're talking about
5 conditions in shelters we need to also be thinking
6 of, of that as well and I know you do but we want to
7 make sure that we keep a... you know a, a pretty
8 vigilant eye on these things.

9 STEVEN BANKS: Well again I think that's
10 a good question to ask, it's, it's the reason why,
11 you know we've invested about a quarter of a billion
12 dollars in the not for profits because of all those
13 years of disinvestment but it's not just
14 disinvestment on the physical repairs, that
15 investment includes the kinds of things that you're
16 talking about in terms of, you know staffing and,
17 and, and so forth so I think we're, we're on... you and
18 I are on the same wavelength about the importance of
19 both physical infrastructure and, and human, human
20 needs.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you
22 Commissioner very much for your time, I appreciate
23 it... [cross-talk]

24 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you for... [cross-
25 talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you... [cross-
3 talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...for your time as well and
5 for the work that both you and the Committee and
6 Council Member Salamanca in particular are doing.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, thank you. So,
8 we have 23 people that are signed up to testify so
9 we'll keep a clock going for three minutes. The first
10 panel Jose Castillo, Laura Mascuch, Catherine
11 Trapani, and Giselle Routhier and Beth Hofmeister.

12 [off mic dialogue]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, whoever wants
14 to begin.

15 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Good afternoon, my
16 name is Jose Castillo Junior. I'm speaking today for
17 Angela Castillo, she couldn't be here today. She...

18 [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If you can get a
20 little closer to the microphone that'd be great,
21 thanks.

22 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: I'm here today to
23 speak on behalf of Angela Castillo, she was the
24 subject of a New York Times report on May 10th, 2017
25 which highlighted what she believed to be retaliation

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 against her for making several complaints about the
3 issues that she had at her shelter. There are two
4 specific issues that occurred, one that originally
5 happened around a year earlier where she just asked
6 to have some repairs done like electrical outlet and
7 a toilet really was two of the main concerns she had,
8 in response to that she received an email from DHS
9 directly which said we have processed a transfer for
10 you. Immediately she responded as the article
11 highlighted where she said no, I don't want to
12 transfer I just want to have some issues resolved,
13 what's the appeal process? After that, that, that was
14 on a weekend actually, on Monday she was notified
15 around that time that she would be transferred, there
16 was no appeal process or rights given to her or any
17 notice provided before any of this. She called me, I...
18 and I said look, I don't know what to do, we reached
19 out to Espinal's office, he was instrumental in
20 helping calm us down a little bit, figured out what
21 options there were, we realized there really wasn't
22 any one to give us any answers. So, that, that week
23 she moved before the Supreme Court in Kings County
24 for a temporary restraining order which the judge
25 granted, stopping the transfer, allowing them to kind

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 of bring a discussion to the table. After that she
3 was able to stay, there was a settlement that was
4 agreed where she can stay instead of being
5 transferred. Again, there are other... there are four
6 children involved as well, we're talking about a ten-
7 year-old, two, two five-year olds at the time and now
8 she has a, a little 18-month-old. So, it would
9 immediately displace the family, didn't know where
10 she was going so luckily the judge issued a temporary
11 restraining order, settlement occurred and then
12 everything seemed to be fine. A couple of months
13 later, I think the Commissioner actually mentioned
14 the, the, the national grid issue, there was a second
15 issue. She was told that she would be temporarily
16 moved because of a national grid issue, she was told
17 it was temporary, everything was documented as
18 temporary but when she got to the facility at CAMBA
19 they said oh no, this is a permanent transfer, you're
20 not going back and that completely threw her off and
21 so what she did was she re-brought the action based
22 on a stipulation which says she's supposed to stay
23 there because it was supposed to be a temporary
24 transfer. A long story short, that also settled, she
25 went back. Unfortunately, its almost as if you have

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 to go to court and navigate this entire system that..
3 it's not really friendly for a family... a single
4 mother with four children that was... that put a lot of
5 pressure on her. So, that's... I'm here to share her
6 story.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And... sorry, if you
8 don't mind me asking, her... well how is she doing now?

9 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: She's doing okay
10 but she's... its funny you say that because December
11 7th, this last Friday she was caught off guard and
12 this is... also ties into the other part of the
13 legislation which talks about the customer service
14 training where... it seems like from a top down, we
15 reached out to high levels of DHS individuals, none
16 of them responded and the response... or the response
17 that you get is... was completely... it was... it was... it
18 was overkill, it was really, really in a... in a sense
19 taken aback to, to... some of the language that was
20 used and... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

22 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: ...of course all
23 that she, she can provide but I think today... on
24 December she was threatened with another transfer
25 because I guess that's the way you, you resolve

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 issues is when you have a concern you're... and she
3 sent an email on Friday, December 7th, thank you for
4 asking that question... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

6 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: ...which asked the
7 people, hey, I want a DHS conference now because I
8 don't want to be threatened again with another
9 transfer, in response they ignored that and they set
10 an internal conference and so I guess she's going to
11 deal with that and she's going to hope that she can
12 move out, right now she's working to try to get a
13 voucher, she's been trying to do that for a long
14 time...

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How... if you don't
16 mind me asking, how long has she been...

17 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Since 2014 I
18 believe... 2014, 2015 so it's been a while.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Then she should... I
20 mean she's supposed to be getting a voucher after 90
21 days.

22 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Well she was... at
23 one point she was working and fortunately there were
24 so many turnovers with the housing specialist and
25 with the facility I think if I'm not mistaken this

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 was a BEDCO run facility now its run by another
3 facility... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

5 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: ...company so there
6 was a lot of turnover and, and every time someone new
7 comes in its like no one knows what to do, no one...
8 they all... they're getting up to speed... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, she's been in
10 shelter for three of four years?

11 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Yes...

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Four years?

13 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With no... with no
15 voucher?

16 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: With no voucher,
17 well at one point she was working, right now... she was
18 told that she may qualify for a PHEPS so they're
19 trying to see if that is a possibility, a PHEPS
20 voucher which is one where... based on her
21 circumstances she may qualify for it, hopefully she
22 does and we'll see what happens with that.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, please convey to
24 her that she's inspired legislation that's been put
25 forward today, we appreciate you testifying on her

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 behalf and she is bringing her story to light on
3 behalf of many others who this has happened to who's
4 stories, you know has not come to public attention
5 but she's doing this on behalf of a lot of other
6 people and you have my commitment that I'm... I'll...
7 happy to work with, with you or her on ensuring that
8 her... I mean to me it's inexcusable that she does not
9 have a, a voucher yet or a, a path forward into
10 permanent housing after three or four years... four
11 years and that's the responsibility of the city, of
12 DHS, HRA and the social services agencies to make
13 sure that she's on that path and so to me it's, its
14 very frustrating to hear this and please convey our
15 regards to her.

16 JOSE CASTILLO JUNIOR: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

18 GISSELLE ROUTHIER: Hi, my name is
19 Gisselle Routhier, I'm the Policy Director at the
20 Coalition for the Homeless. We've submitted joint
21 testimony with Legal Aid, but I'll get it started. I
22 do want to top this off by mentioning that we hit a
23 new record for the number of people sleeping in
24 shelters as of October. Particular disturbing among
25 single adults we've now surpassed 17,000 single

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 adults sleeping in shelters each night as of August
3 and it shows no sign of abating at this point and
4 over the past three months the number of homeless
5 single adults has reached a new record high 21 times.

6 So, within this context we appreciate this hearing
7 looking at a comprehensive examination into shelter
8 conditions and upkeep. As the court appointed
9 independent monitors of the single adult shelter
10 system and the city appointed independent monitors of
11 the family shelter system, we gather a steady stream
12 of information about shelter conditions through in
13 person visits, joint inspections and resident
14 complaints. The most common issues we encounter fall
15 into a few broad categories and I'm going to talk
16 about a few of them now. The first one is large scale
17 capital needs. So, I want to thank you for, for
18 brining that up with the Commissioner. Many capital
19 needs that we've seen have been in the pipeline for
20 years and years and are still not completed. Not all
21 of the specifics are clear in the line and break down
22 in that OMB capital commitment plan but we're aware
23 of a few capital needs that are, are extremely urgent
24 and that we see in our... the daily work that we do. A
25 lot of these we're... are with respect to lease... leaks,

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 roof... particularly with roofs and plumbing, HVAC,
3 HVAC issues particularly with cooling and ventilation
4 in the summer and heating in the winter as well as
5 elevator breakdowns and we think those deserve
6 immediate attention. We also... so we urge the city to
7 speed up progress on addressing those outstanding
8 physical plan issues. The other main issue is
9 reaching maintenance so, particularly with respect to
10 weekends and evenings just general cleaning and
11 maintenance of facilities is a huge thing that sparks
12 complaints to us. I'll particularly note that
13 bathroom cleanliness is an ongoing issue, every time
14 we go out either in the evenings or on the weekends
15 it's something that we almost always encounter and I
16 think that speaks to the need for additional staff
17 and, and regular cleaning particularly at sites that
18 help... house a large number of people who are using a
19 lot of bathrooms and need that regular cleaning but I
20 also wanted to, to talk a little bit about the well-
21 founded concerns about just the general lack of
22 dignity that many people experience and feel when
23 they're living in the shelter system. We know that
24 shelters are not homes but some of the daily
25 conditions and practices serve to make the experience

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 of homelessness even more traumatic and dehumanizing
3 for individuals and families so as some such
4 practices as many of you may have heard of before
5 include requiring individuals to request toilet paper
6 every time they need to use the restroom, being
7 provided with low quality food, not enough food,
8 being denied second portions of food, and not being
9 provided with adequate laundry services, these are
10 just some examples of just daily conditions that
11 could be improved with respect to the dignity of, of
12 individuals living in shelters. And lastly, I just
13 want to emphasize more than anything that we cannot
14 continue to accept record homelessness in an ever-
15 expanding shelter system as an ongoing reality. We've
16 worked together with partner organizations many of
17 whom are here today and council members including
18 those on this committee, faith leaders and other New
19 Yorkers to push for the Mayor to build more housing
20 for homeless New Yorkers and we will continue to do
21 that, and we want to thank Council Member Levin and
22 Council Member Salamanca for being such strong
23 supporters of that.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 BETH HOFMEISTER: As Gisselle stated I'm
3 Beth Hofmeister, I'm from the Legal Aid Society and
4 we submitted joint testimony be... with the Coalition
5 for the Homeless and I'm here to talk a little bit
6 more specifically about each of the bills. We thank
7 you all... you both and everyone else who was here
8 earlier for your leadership in these issues in
9 general and other related legislation that you both
10 have put forward since you've been Council Members.
11 In regard to Intro 915 regarding the quarterly
12 reports, I think we've spoken about this offline, but
13 we are concerned about some of the unintended
14 consequences of the bills and we want to continue to
15 work with you on finessing the language to make sure
16 that we get it just right. As you know those are
17 primarily around how the information about where the
18 shelters are reported specifically the details around
19 the community boards and districts where they're
20 located. As an... as a person... an objective person I
21 completely understand why Council Members would want
22 to have that information and I don't think, you know
23 the people who are in this room are very thoughtful
24 and understand why that would be necessary and
25 helpful for the purposes of supporting the

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 communities. I think the unintended consequences of
3 that or when its public information who else has
4 access to that information and what their motivations
5 are for dealing with that. I think the stigmatizing
6 of homeless populations some of which was even
7 alluded to here at times when... in the way that
8 people were talking about, you know what its like for
9 our clients and our community members to go through
10 this experience is a very real thing and I think
11 there can be some unintended risks that happen when
12 certain people can get a hold of that information and
13 want to use it for the purposes of targeting certain
14 communities, we've seen that happen in various
15 communities unfortunately over the past couple of
16 years and I think that it... because sometimes
17 unintentionally we found it unintentionally prevent
18 the opening of new shelters. I think there are ways
19 that we can all work together to get over these
20 barriers but I, I want to make sure that we just
21 touch on them as, as the impossible issues. Similarly
22 in Intro 1110 just the... regarding the reporting
23 requirements because H... DV shelters and locations
24 where individuals with HIV/AIDS are living are... you
25 know those very strong confidentiality concerns even

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 as someone who advocates on behalf of people in
3 domestic violence shelter I don't know where those
4 shelters are, its very important that they stay
5 extremely confidential and any risk that we have of
6 opening up the locations of, of those facilities is..
7 could really put those clients and those people at
8 risk so we just want to make sure that those are
9 being taken into consideration within the larger
10 context of those bills. Regarding transfers,
11 obviously.. and I wish he hadn't left because we would
12 be happy to work with him on the issues that Miss
13 Castillo is facing but 1232, 1233 and 884, those
14 related to shelter transfers. We really can
15 underscore that as with anything related to the
16 extremely tight capacity that's... when shelters are
17 very tight the breakdown in all systems begins to
18 happen and that is also seen with transfers. So, its..
19 continues to be important to focus on affordable
20 housing and focus on getting people into things like,
21 you know permanent housing, supportive housing which
22 just to reiterate is different than shelter. Again,
23 to make sure that people can... there can be a little
24 bit of room to negotiate when people actually need to
25 transfer because they're requesting it or when... as

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 Commissioner Banks was talking about, they literally
3 don't have room for a certain population, they have
4 to shut down a whole shelter to transfer it over,
5 those things wouldn't have to happen as much. Thank
6 you again for the opportunity to testify.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Beth. Just
8 very quickly, is somebody from the administration
9 here?

10 BETH HOFMEISTER: I didn't think so.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Anyone from the
12 administration? Okay.

13 BETH HOFMEISTER: If we have his contact
14 information, we're happy to follow up.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay..

16 BETH HOFMEISTER: The man who testified.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

18 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Okay. Good afternoon
19 Council Member Levin, Council Member Salamanca. My
20 name is Catherine Trapani, I am the Executive
21 Director of Homeless Services United. I'm going to,
22 you know briefly go through, I've submitted more
23 detailed written testimony but I think that the scope
24 of today's hearing is really focusing on the
25 wellbeing of folks that are living in shelter and

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 there are two things that, that we can do to make
3 sure that, that things improve and that we're, we're
4 staying the course with the promised reform and that
5 is actually delivering the promised funds to improve
6 conditions in shelter. Commissioner Banks spoke
7 extensively about the capital commitment and other
8 dollars for services and so on. So, lets make sure
9 that that money actually gets out the door and in the
10 hands of providers to implement so that's the first
11 thing that you could do to make a tremendous
12 difference in, in the way people experience shelter
13 services. And then the other thing that you can do is
14 to do everything that you can to put up enough new
15 both shelter and permanent housing to ease the
16 capacity crisis, you know we've talked a little bit
17 about transfers, we've talked a lot about conditions.
18 I think that you wouldn't need to transfer people
19 quite so much if the first placement was the best
20 placement and the only way to do that is to make sure
21 that there's sufficient shelter capacity citywide so
22 to make sure that when someone is presenting at
23 intake with their kids that they're really is a
24 vacancy in the... in the area where their children are
25 already enrolled in school for example. Other kinds

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 of transfers that I know people experience as
3 retaliatory related to conditions in the shelter. If
4 the provider in that shelter doesn't have the
5 resources to cure the condition that makes the client
6 want the transfer the only way to actually help that
7 person is to move them and that... no one is happy when
8 that happens, right and so I, I think we really need
9 to focus on, on the dollars and cents that can make
10 all of the reforms that Commissioner Banks spoke
11 about real and operational on the ground. The last
12 report HSU got was that there were over 400 contract
13 amendments still pending somewhere in the
14 registration process that was holding up necessary
15 funding to restore services and, and repairs. So, so
16 that is hugely important. I'm going to speak
17 specifically with respect to easing the capacity
18 crisis and, and siting new shelters. I echo the
19 concerns that Beth just shared about the unintended
20 consequences of Intro 915, I completely get that the
21 intent is actually quite the opposite, it's to spur
22 development in, in districts that don't have
23 sufficient shelter capacity but I think that, you
24 know when information is deployed and put in the
25 wrong hands sometimes the opposite can happen so we'd

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 love to work with you on how to finesse that. With
3 respect to the bills on transfers I think that the
4 information and the transparency to clients would go
5 a long way to improving their experience but again,
6 you know if you really want to get at the issue let's
7 make it so that transfers aren't necessary as often
8 in the first place and then also work of course with
9 the city and state on evolving regulations to make
10 sure that any Local Law that we do put into place
11 actually strengthens the regulation rather than
12 perhaps conflicts. And if I may just really quickly
13 say thank you for Intro 1110 that would invest
14 additional services and housing specialists in
15 shelters, we certainly need as Council Member Levin
16 you noted earlier in this hearing conditions aren't
17 just about bricks and mortar but are really about
18 services so the intent of 1110 I think is really
19 great but I, I share the reporting concerns that,
20 that Beth pointed out about shelter locations. And
21 finally, with respect to the customer service
22 training on Intro 883 we absolutely support new
23 training. I actually just last Friday did a training
24 on customer service in shelter, I would love to be
25 able to do more of that. For us it's a... it's a

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 resource issue and we're happy to share our
3 curriculum with the council and brainstorm ways to
4 make sure that more enhanced training can be deployed
5 system wide. So, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

7 LAURA MASCUCH: Good afternoon Chair
8 Levin and Council Member Salamanca. My name is Laura
9 Mascuch and I'm the Executive Director of the
10 Supportive Housing Network of New York and on behalf
11 of the Network I appreciate this opportunity to talk
12 about Intro 915. As you know we're a membership
13 organization representing over 200 non-profits
14 throughout the state that own and operate supportive
15 housing. Supportive housing is permanent affordable
16 housing that is... with embedded social services to
17 help address and reintegrate individuals and families
18 and youth back into the community who have special
19 interest social issues such as mental health,
20 substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and really rely on the
21 supportive housing to leave chronic homelessness. So,
22 we're very grateful for the city's NYC 15/15
23 commitment to create 15,000 new units and are very
24 thrilled with the Council's budget addition this past
25 year to move up that production from 500 to 700 units

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 to accelerate the plan. As you know Intro 915
3 specifically requires DSS to report on the number of
4 congregate and scattered sites, supportive units in
5 each council district and community district and
6 while we appreciate and understand the importance of
7 the transparency, we believe that reporting
8 supportive housing in this context will in effect
9 hinder development. This, this Intro 915 can be used
10 to buttress the notion that supportive housing is a
11 negative asset in communities and 30 years of
12 experience and developing and running supportive
13 housing speaks to the contrary as do numerous
14 studies. Not only does supportive housing accomplish
15 the social good of ending homelessness amongst the
16 most vulnerable of New Yorkers who are otherwise
17 cycling the streets, shelters, psychiatric
18 institutions, and hospital beds; supportive housing
19 residences also create deeply affordable housing for
20 the community as most residents set aside 40 percent
21 of the units and supportive housing development also
22 creates jobs with both construction and for the
23 individuals who work in those buildings. Based on the
24 Networks extensive experience assisting our members
25 with supportive housing development we are afraid

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 that 915 would impede that development. The reporting
3 requirement will result in communities and council
4 districts shutting their doors to additional
5 residences, stakeholders that have supportive housing
6 in their districts will look at numbers out of
7 context and declare a moratorium on new supportive
8 housing. In our 30-year history this has occurred as
9 certain community boards have refused to hear
10 proposals on residences and slowed or stopped
11 development in those areas and opposition to
12 supportive housing often stems from stigma,
13 misinformation and fear however once a supportive
14 housing residence opens the communities fears almost
15 always disappear as the residents blend into the
16 fabric of the neighborhood. And I would just like to
17 encourage, we gave you a one pager to maybe take a
18 more positive approach in... that LA is taking with
19 everyone in LA where each Council Member has pledged
20 to take a chunk of that goal and to work to ensure
21 that units are developed in their district and this
22 is through really education, forums, identifying
23 sites within the community and working with faith
24 based organizations and we really want to see in this
25 legislation if it is to move forward what is the real

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 incentive for communities to take supportive housing
3 as the answer to chronic homelessness. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much to
5 this entire panel. Laura to your last point I see
6 Brenda Rosen is here from Breaking Ground and we...
7 really excited to be doing a large scale breaking
8 ground project at 90 Sands Street in my district
9 which will be about 300 units of supportive and 200
10 units of permanently affordable, the former Jehovah
11 witness dormitory building... [cross-talk]

12 LAURA MASCUCH: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and we did a tour of
14 the building a couple of... a couple of months ago and
15 looked out over basically looked... like looked out
16 towards City Hall and you couldn't... there's... I don't
17 think there's any better views in, in New York City
18 than from, from the top of this building and I'm
19 excited that it will be for supportive housing and..
20 [cross-talk]

21 LAURA MASCUCH: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...we got to work with
23 the community to make sure that it... that its welcomed
24 and that their concerns are addressed but we at the
25 Council supported it with capital dollars so I want

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 to thank the Speaker, Speaker Corey Johnson for doing
3 that and, and we're excited about it and, and so, you
4 know hope that, that every district is, is fortunate
5 enough to have such an investment in, in long term
6 permanent affordable and supportive housing.. [cross-
7 talk]

8 LAURA MASCUCH: Right.. [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, I'm going
10 to turn it over to my colleague Rafael Salamanca.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you
12 Chair Levin. First I want to thank you all for
13 testifying, I, I really respect the work that you all
14 do and as, as you know in the last couple of months
15 I've been focusing on how to figure out how to get
16 individuals who are ready for independent living how
17 to get them into permanent housing and that's,
18 that's, that's important to me but also as a... as a...
19 as a former community board two member I understand
20 that there are certain communities such as the one
21 that I represent that are doing more than their fair
22 share when we're talking about homelessness and
23 homeless shelters in their districts and there are
24 more affluent communities with their representatives
25 who may come here and speak about how we're going to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 reduce the number of homeless families or homeless
3 individuals but are not doing their part in their
4 communities and I feel that this report, this
5 reporting mechanism will highlight that and you know
6 will, will take that argument from them. something
7 that I want to point out, Intro 915 and, and 1110
8 there is no intent at all to include addresses in...
9 when reporting and I... and especially domestic
10 violence, I, I understand the sensitivity of that, I
11 know I have a few domestic violence shelters in my...
12 in my district and I don't know where they're at, you
13 know but they do come meet with me to, to, to seek
14 support which we do when we allocate the funding. So,
15 that's just something that I do want to point out.
16 And then finally, normally when a non-for profit is
17 going to come in and build in a... in a... in a community
18 they normally seek the support of a... of the local
19 community board and the local member, they actually
20 ask for a lot of support, they make a presentation at
21 that local community board and if we're... and when
22 they are talking about supportive housing such as... I
23 know that Breaking Ground is here and I don't know if
24 they're going to speak, you know when, when I first
25 got elected the... maybe two years ago I approved one

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 of the biggest projects in my district, where over
3 180 units were for, for, for supportive housing which
4 Breaking Ground will be the landlord and Community
5 Life will be the provider... [cross-talk]

6 LAURA MASCUCH: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...I mean this
8 project went through intense scrutiny, it went to the
9 community board, it had many hearings here, we had a
10 big ground breaking, everyone in the community knows
11 that there's going to be supportive housing in that
12 building, it was advertised and, and I, I, I do not
13 see the stigma there, actually I think it's a
14 benefit for the community not to mention that that
15 project 100 percent of it will be affordable, mixed
16 income and so therefore I just feel and, and we can
17 continue to have conversations, I feel that
18 communities should know what's in their districts. We
19 can have conversations about addresses, I think that
20 maybe that's a different conversation, there's a
21 sensitivity with... to that and there's a stigma to
22 that but I can understand that but every non for
23 profit that wants to build in a community goes to the
24 local community board and they seek a letter of
25 support. The only circumstances are when we're

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 talking about domestic violence so I think the
3 community board knows where it's at and its only
4 appropriate if communities know how many of these
5 programs they have in their communities when we're,
6 we're having conversations about fair share. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
9 to this panel and I look forward to working with you,
10 I know the... obviously we have covered a range of
11 issues today so all of them deserve their... you know
12 their own time and so we look forward to working with
13 you throughout the, the rest of... maybe not for the
14 rest of this year because we're almost at the holiday
15 break but, but obviously in the... in the next year on,
16 on all these issues because we can and we should be
17 doing better than, than we are today so thank you.
18 Thanks. Next up Jennifer March... Jennifer March from
19 Citizens Community for Children; Randi Levine,
20 Advocates for Children; Sasha Alexander, Silvia
21 Rivera, Law Project; India Rodriguez, Silvia Rivera
22 Law Project and Brenda Rosen from Breaking Ground.
23 Whoever wants to begin.

24 [off mic dialogue]

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 SASHA ALEXANDER: Hi you all, good
3 afternoon, members of the General Welfare Committee.
4 Thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Sasha
5 Alexander, I've been before you many times to testify
6 on behalf of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project [clears
7 throat] excuse me... and specifically our communities
8 of trans and gender non-conforming folks who are low
9 and no income in New York City particularly trans and
10 gender non-conforming people of color so we've had a
11 shelter organizing team that's formed as a result of
12 the alarming safety issues many of which some of the
13 introductions you created I actually addressed so we
14 were very excited to see that. We also know though
15 that TGNC people are, are disproportionately treated
16 with discrimination and harassment and violence in
17 the shelter system and so our... on our own we've been
18 creating our own know your rights materials and
19 releasing those to the community and what we've found
20 is that... you know as community based organizations we
21 shouldn't even have to be the ones releasing this
22 information to the community that... this can... this
23 information should be posted and made available so
24 again we appreciate a lot of the introductions that
25 you all have made and so in terms of 883 we're... we

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 were excited to see that trading would occur and, and
3 the amount of which however we felt that twice enough
4 was not enough and India will expand upon that. We
5 also felt that in terms of 884, providing a monthly
6 report to the Speaker on transfers was great however
7 we didn't know if there was also the ability to do
8 the same with grievances or if that's already
9 happening and if we report this issue to City Council
10 on those. We feel like grievances and transfers are
11 really related and a lot of times there's issues that
12 our members have filed grievances for that haven't
13 been addressed and as people already testified,
14 they're retaliated against as a result. I know folks
15 raised issues with 915 in terms of listings, I think...
16 we do feel like that information has not been
17 accessible enough to the community members who need
18 it and actually we were wondering if that was going
19 to happen if something could be in print as a lot of
20 our community members don't have access to a
21 computer, there's not computers on sites in the
22 shelter system and that would guarantee more people
23 would be able to see it. In terms of 110... or I'm
24 sorry, 1110, we felt like this was one of the most
25 helpful tools in terms of requiring reporting on

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 housing specialists and goals and time tables but we
3 weren't sure, will the Commissioner really have the
4 capacity to assess all of these and provide adequate
5 support because the burden is really falling on our
6 community members to do the research, to do the
7 advocacy and to do their own monitoring or... on our
8 organizations. In terms of 1232, a lot of our members
9 were disappointed to know that this didn't already
10 exist and you know in terms of posting signage we
11 feel like it's critical in all languages for our
12 folks and we do want to point out that many of our
13 members have disabilities including vision and that
14 accommodations should be made to make sure the
15 information that is being shared visually is shared
16 verbally with folks who might need that. We also
17 appreciated the specificity of what will be posted
18 and wanted to share that we were shocked that
19 information on grievance forms would not be included,
20 they're supposed to be available in every shelter,
21 there's been a major issue with grievance forms not
22 being available in the shelter and finally just to,
23 to speak about 1233, we felt this was also critical
24 in terms of a lot of people in our community having
25 transfers used against them and or being transferred

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 because of the safety issues we face and feeling that
3 as other folks have said there's some very kind of
4 cruel and unusual treatment in that transfer process
5 in terms of how the... what the person knows about
6 where they're going, there's supports to actually get
7 to the site and so again I just want to thank you all
8 for your time today and if you want to speak more
9 with our shelter organizing team or about how this is
10 impacting trans and gender non-conforming communities
11 we really want to speak with you so thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Sasha.

13 Sorry, before the next... I just want to be clear, is
14 there... is there anybody here representing the
15 administration or communicating back to the
16 administration? Anybody at all? Okay, yeah, okay,
17 thank you. Go ahead.

18 INDIA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon members
19 of the City Council, my name is India Rodriguez. My
20 gender pronoun is she, her, ayah and I'm an active
21 member of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project and one of
22 the leaders in the shelter organizing team, the
23 prison advisory committee. I'm a transgender HIV
24 activist currently residing in East New York. As per
25 Intro 883 I feel two trainings per year would not be

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 sufficient to address the complex needs of folks
3 within the shelter setting that either have long
4 standing mental health or histories of trauma
5 particularly when inefficiencies arise coping or
6 navigating within a shelter setting. I feel that
7 qualified licensed staff need to be in place to work
8 closely with clients as well as staff in the shelter
9 setting to thoroughly implement a trauma informed
10 approach and maintain professionalism and
11 proficiency. As per Intro 1110, I'm in support of
12 this... I'm in support of this particularly because I
13 am a member of... I am a member and a client of Housing
14 Works and as a person that struggles with HIV and
15 stuff, I presently live in a scatter site apartment.
16 Part of my lease agreement was that there was a case
17 management component to my lease agreement and part
18 of that component was to assist me in navigating and
19 accessing and you know giving me resources and the
20 help that I needed and the support that I needed to
21 be able to eventually transition out of transitional
22 housing into permanent housing unfortunately that has
23 been nonexistent at all, at all. The only time she
24 comes around... the, the, the housing developer comes
25 around is when there's an audit and her, her folders

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 need to look a particular kind of way which is sad
3 and very frustrating, you know I go to school, I have
4 a partner that has developmental delays, I'm his
5 guardian, I'm the only one... sole provider for my... for
6 my partner and it just like magnifies my situation,
7 you know I've been here already two years, I'm at the
8 end of my lease agreement and the only response I'm
9 getting from these staff members is that listen
10 you're at the end of your lease agreement
11 unfortunately you have to move out and you need to go
12 to HRA and tell them that you need an emergency
13 placement in our SRO. Part of the reason why I'm HIV
14 positive, many, many years ago before they
15 implemented all these changes where now you could go
16 into a housing based on gender identity was because
17 that, that was nonexistent, I was thrust into a
18 shelter on Wards Island subsequently I was raped and
19 that's why I'm HIV positive now. So, going into a
20 shelter setting is a big trigger for me, you know
21 it's very traumatic for me, you know so I've been
22 doing all the footwork, I've been doing as much as
23 possible but you know the looming threat of the
24 possibility of being homeless is there, you know and
25 implementing this would be very helpful because it

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 actually gives... there's oversight and holds people
3 accountable in these positions to do their job
4 basically. So, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

6 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the
7 opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi
8 Levine and I'm Policy Director of Advocates for
9 Children of New York. Advocates for Children focuses
10 on providing students with a high-quality education
11 with a particular focus on students from low income
12 backgrounds. We're proud to house the New York State
13 Technical and Education Assistance Center for
14 Homeless Students which works on several thousands of
15 cases each year regarding the educational needs of
16 students in temporary housing in New York. I agree
17 with my colleagues who earlier talked about the
18 importance of maintaining school stability and
19 whenever possible placing families in shelter in the
20 same community as their children's school. Given the
21 number of families, however, who are being placed in
22 a different borough from the school of their youngest
23 children it's also important to have a transparent
24 process for transferring to a shelter closer to
25 school. While there is currently a process for DHS to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 approve shelter transfers for reasons related to
3 children's education, the availability of such
4 transfers and the process to request one is not well
5 publicized. As a result, families and even shelter
6 staff often do not know about the availability of
7 transfers for school related reasons or how to
8 request such a transfer. We have seen the positive
9 impact of school-based shelter transfers. For
10 example, we requested a shelter transfer for a family
11 whose children attended a school in Brooklyn but had
12 been placed in a shelter in the Bronx, the bus picked
13 up the children at 5:10 in the morning and did not
14 drop them off until 6:30 in the evening. The long
15 commute was taking a toll on the children. After we
16 reached out to DHS, DHS granted a transfer to a
17 shelter in Brooklyn vastly reducing the children's
18 commute and making it possible for them to stay in
19 their original school. We have another case example
20 in our testimony as well in our written testimony.
21 However, these families did not know that they could
22 ask for a shelter transfer until they were connected
23 with Advocates for Children. While DHS may not be
24 able to transfer every child, who would benefit from
25 being closer to school, its important for families to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 know that shelter transfers for school related
3 reasons are possible and to know the process. We
4 appreciate that Intro 1232 would require shelters to
5 post signs with information for families about
6 shelter transfers. We recommend that the Council
7 amend this bill to include the process for requesting
8 transfers for school related reasons on these signs.
9 And our written testimony has included recommended
10 language to add to Intro 1232 for this purpose. Our
11 testimony also makes a number of additional
12 recommendations to help students and children living
13 in shelters. To go through a few of them; the city
14 should increase the number of bridging the gap social
15 workers from 69 to 100 and baseline the funding. The
16 city should launch an education support center at
17 PATH and ensure that Department of Education staff
18 meet with every family applying to shelter to discuss
19 their educational options, where their children are
20 going to go to school and how to get there. The city
21 should amend its child care plan to make all children
22 living in shelter eligible for subsidized child care
23 so that no child living in shelter is left out of
24 early learn programs. And our written testimony
25 contains several additional recommendations for

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 ensuring that children and students living in
3 shelters can access the child care and educational
4 supports they need to be successful and to stop this
5 cycle of poverty and homelessness. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

7 JENNIFER MARCH: My name is Jennifer
8 March, I'm the Executive Director of Citizens'
9 Committee for Children and in the interest of time
10 because many of my colleagues have really.. my
11 testimony would echo many of the things that Randi
12 and previous colleagues have said. I'm going to focus
13 exclusively on, on two specific things. In terms of
14 Intro 884 and 915 I would preface my remarks by
15 saying that Citizens' Committee for Children over 25
16 years has built the largest municipal database on
17 children and families in the country so we do believe
18 in the power of data and we're looking forward to
19 working with you to ensure the data is collected in a
20 way that helps us not only understand the needs of
21 who are risk of homelessness and homeless but what is
22 happening in the system overall. I'm relieved that
23 Council Member Salamanca has said that identifying
24 information on location wouldn't be included in the
25 bill. I think that that will help and I would urge

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 the Council to focus as well on other... in addition
3 other data collection efforts on demographics and
4 program information that would help us assess how the
5 city is making progress both at preventing families
6 from coming into the shelter system, addressing their
7 needs while in shelter and ensuring that they're not
8 only in purpose built shelters but achieve safe,
9 stable, permanent housing. I've listed a couple of
10 ideas in the testimony but there are two in
11 particular that I'll raise right now. First is that
12 DHS has the capacity to produce for us a demographic
13 profile of who homeless families are to identify age,
14 race, gender of the adult household head, his or her
15 education level and work status as well as the number
16 and age range of children in, in the household. This
17 type of information would actually help us understand
18 whether or not the shelter system has the capacity to
19 support children and families while in shelter and
20 also more importantly once they move to permanent
21 housing ensure that we're connecting that family to
22 essential community supports. As well we would
23 encourage exploration of collecting information on
24 the percent of young children in shelter that are
25 enrolled in early education, after school and summer

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 programs, there's a wide network of supports
3 available for children and families in this city and
4 unfortunately often times our homeless families are
5 not aided sufficiently to connect to the things that
6 exist that reduce social isolation and promote
7 wellbeing. And then lastly, I would say we have to
8 also focus on the urgent need to improve the
9 conditions in hotels. I know that we don't want
10 hotels to be a permanent option but there might be in
11 fact time limited, cost effective things that we
12 could do to ensure that families in hotels have
13 access have laundry, nutritious food, recreational
14 facilities and transportation. Again, to reduce their
15 social isolation and really acknowledge that these
16 are human beings living in rooms they must move from
17 every 30 days and its really just incredibly
18 problematic. And then last but not least, I look
19 forward to working with the City Council and our
20 colleagues to make sure that Council plays an
21 essential role to help New Yorkers embrace who in
22 fact is homeless, these are young mothers with young
23 children and they desperately want to regain
24 stability and benefit from a safe home and to be part
25 of a community and on that note in addition to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 supporting Council Member Salamanca's bill to
3 increase set asides as well as Hevesi bill to
4 establish a permanent rent, rent subsidy. I would
5 encourage us to all work together to make sure that
6 we could have resources at the state or local level
7 to embed a community-based service coordinator in
8 communities in multi service organizations that
9 currently serve families and children to make sure
10 while in shelter and once permanent housing is
11 achieved that we're connecting families to the things
12 that support wellbeing. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
14 for that testimony, I look forward to working with
15 you as well moving forward with this.

16 BRENDA ROSEN: Good afternoon, thank you
17 Chairman Levin and Council Member Salamanca, nice to
18 see you both. My name is Brenda Rosen, I'm President
19 and CEO of Breaking Ground, New York City's largest
20 developer and operator of supportive housing for low
21 income and chronically homeless New Yorkers. I also
22 serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the
23 Supportive Housing Network of New York and as a board
24 member of Homeless Services United so we're grateful
25 for the opportunity to testify before the Committee

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 on General Welfare regarding Intro 915. Breaking
3 Ground currently operates over 20 buildings, more
4 than 4,000 units of permanent and transitional
5 housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens
6 and has a development pipeline of more than 1,000
7 housing units over the next five years. We also
8 manage the street outreach program, Street to Home in
9 Brooklyn, Queens and Midtown Manhattan, which
10 connects the most entrenched long-term homeless
11 individuals with housing and other critical services.
12 Breaking Ground operates programs and housing,
13 housing in the council districts of almost every
14 member of this Committee. Your commitment, your
15 partnership makes our work and our crucial... and
16 crucially our success possible. Together over the
17 last 28 years, with your support, we have helped over
18 14,000 people escape homelessness including veterans,
19 seniors, artists, youth aging out of foster care,
20 those living with addiction and chronic illness and
21 many more. The city... the city is facing a serious
22 homelessness and affordable housing crisis. To reach
23 our shared goals of bringing people off the streets
24 and into housing, we need to strengthen every part of
25 the continuum of services, services, including street

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 outreach, emergency shelters, transitional housing
3 and permanent supportive and affordable housing. The
4 ability to deliver this continuum of services from
5 street to home, relies heavily on community support.
6 To get there we have had to overcome countless
7 misconceptions and loads of opposition over the
8 years. However, through strong collaboration with key
9 community stakeholders, such as East Brooklyn
10 Congregations and South Bronx Churches, along with
11 you and your colleagues across the city, we have been
12 able to increase community engagement and education
13 and overcome community fears. Communities that once
14 feared us, now see us as strong assets. But, still
15 there's a lot of work to do. Most people still don't
16 understand the need for or the extraordinary benefits
17 of supportive housing. The proposed Intro 915 bill
18 has the potential to set us backwards. This bill
19 treats supportive housing as different and distinct
20 from other types of permanent affordable housing,
21 which only, only serve to further stigmatize it as
22 undesirable and perpetuate the fears we've all worked
23 so hard to change. Two goals of the 15/15 plan, to
24 create 15,000 new units of supportive housing, were
25 to streamline development and improve community

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 engagement for new housing. This bill does not
3 address those aims, instead creates a new reporting
4 requirement that would seem to label supportive
5 housing as a negative for communities across New York
6 City. This will inevitably slow or halt the
7 production of new supportive housing units along with
8 much needed affordable housing in community boards
9 and council districts across the city. Rather, our
10 focus should be on educating the community on the
11 benefits of supporting housing. Supportive housing is
12 a proven positive, ending chronically homeless...
13 chronic homelessness, adding affordable housing to
14 the community, improving property values, reducing
15 crime and creating jobs. Breaking Ground and our
16 partners in the supportive housing sector often
17 include community assets, such as storefronts that
18 are home to new retail or community-based
19 organizations, meeting spaces that can be used by
20 community members and local precincts, community
21 gardens and public plazas that increase green space
22 and community focused programming that engages with
23 the neighborhoods in... around our residences.
24 Requiring reporting of unit counts without other
25 context, will lead some community boards and council

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 districts to call for delays or even a freeze in the
3 siting of shelters and supportive housing. It's
4 happened before, and we fear it will happen again and
5 that cannot come at a worse time. Last year the
6 Council requested that we accelerated... that the
7 funding be accelerated to produce new supportive
8 units, from 500 to 700 per year. We applaud that
9 goal. To achieve it, it will need new partnerships
10 between communities and supportive housing developers
11 and we have seen such partnerships succeed time and
12 time again. This bill, however, will make our work
13 with communities more difficult. So, we urge the
14 Council to encourage more collaboration between
15 communities and supportive housing developers so that
16 project siting and construction can happen faster.
17 Doing so will build momentum to help move people out
18 of shelters and off the streets to permanent homes,
19 paired with onsite services that they need to remain
20 stable in housing. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Council
22 Member Salamanca.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you Mr.
24 Chair. Again, I want to thank you all for coming and
25 testifying. I want to congratulate you guys on, you

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 know really telling your story. Just to tell you a
3 little bit about the work that I'm doing in my
4 Council District when it comes to LGBT working in
5 partnership with Council Member Ritchie Torres, we
6 allocated half a million dollars to destination for
7 tomorrow to provide a safe space for the LGBT
8 community and not too long ago, about a year ago I
9 approved the project of 1490 Southern Boulevard which
10 is the SARA program, 30 percent of those units.. SARA
11 is for senior housing, 30 percent of those units are
12 for homeless seniors which there will be a not for
13 profit there and the other 70 percent would be for
14 seniors making 60 percent of the AMI or below but
15 what's interesting about that, that project is that
16 we have a community set aside and with the LGBT
17 network will be moving in there in my district. So,
18 there's just two, two projects that we worked on
19 recently really to, to ensure that we have a safe
20 space for the LGBT community. And then, you know just
21 to go back to my comments, the bill 915 and 1110 does
22 not require that addresses of, of where supportive
23 housing or these homeless shelters are, it... that,
24 that reporting, that mechanism, that, that
25 information was not required there and then in going

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 back to Breaking Ground, you know we do great work
3 together, I've seen the work you've done in my
4 community, we met not too long ago and I go back to
5 that project Las Anthral where it's over... a little
6 under 1,000 units and you went to multiple layers to
7 get community support, the community knows that that
8 project is there and you've gotten full support from
9 that community. The whole basis of this bill is just
10 to inform the community of what's in their community
11 and allow us who are oversaturated with shelters to,
12 to go to our colleagues and say you need to do your
13 part other than sit here and talk about we're going
14 to decrease homelessness, well you can do your part
15 by opening up your doors in your communities. Thank
16 you, Mr. Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
18 Member Salamanca. I want to thank this panel for all
19 the good work that you do, and I look forward to
20 continuing to work with all of you so that we can do
21 a better job. Thanks. The next panel Talia Gruber,
22 Towaki Komatsu, Raysa Rodriguez, Nicole McVinua and
23 Barry Campbell.

24 [off mic dialogue]
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, whoever wants
3 to begin.

4 NICOLE MCVINUA: Good afternoon Chair
5 Levin and Council Member Salamanca. My name is Nicole
6 McVinua and I am the Policy Analyst at Urban
7 Pathways. On behalf of the organization thank you for
8 the opportunity to testify on Intro 915 today. Urban
9 Pathways is a nonprofit that provides services to
10 chronically homeless individuals through a unique
11 combination of street outreach, safe havens, extended
12 stay residences, permanent supportive housing and
13 employment programs. Our programs engage homeless
14 adults to come inside, and to succeed and thrive as
15 they move forward. We want to expand our capacity to
16 serve the... to serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers
17 and in order to do so we need to open additional
18 program sites. The most difficult aspect of this
19 process is siting locations and gaining approval from
20 the local community. We recognize that Intro 915 has
21 good intentions of encouraging siting in districts
22 where supportive housing is lacking. However, we
23 share the fears of HSU, Breaking Ground, the Network
24 and others that its intended effect will actually be...
25 that the opposite will occur of its actual intended

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 effect. Those who view the numbers out of context are
3 likely to use them as a bolstering reason to resist
4 supportive housing and homeless services in their
5 community. this could lead to a chilling effect on
6 siting, making it impossible to find locations to
7 build critically needed supportive housing and safe
8 havens. The council has shown unwavering support of
9 supportive housing through the NYC 15/15 commitment,
10 we thank you for the support and we do not want to
11 see an inability to site hinder the Council's
12 accelerated timeline of 700 units a year. Further,
13 reporting out on the number of these different types
14 of housing sites together could increase
15 misunderstandings about these different models. For
16 instance, with the city's commitment to close cluster
17 sites, we want to see these numbers going down while
18 simultaneously we want to see the number of
19 supportive housing units going up. Reporting these
20 numbers out together could easily cause confusion
21 around what constitutes a good or a bad number or
22 what models we want to see increasing or decreasing
23 in districts and this could again lead to increased
24 resistance of supportive housing is accidentally
25 equated with cluster sites. As an alternative to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 reporting numbers of supportive housing already in
3 each district, we would like to draw the committee's
4 attention to the successful pledge campaign in the
5 city of Los Angeles, another major city with a
6 growing homelessness crisis as Laura alluded to
7 earlier. LA has committed to building 10,000 units of
8 supportive housing and in order to meet this goal,
9 each of the city's Council Members has committed to
10 building a proportion of units in their district as
11 has created a spirit of everyone working together
12 towards a common goal and taking part in meeting the
13 city's needs. We believe this is an effective example
14 of how districts can come together to encourage more
15 supportive housing throughout the city rather than
16 pointing fingers. In closing, Urban Pathways opposes
17 Intro 915 for its negative potential impact on
18 siting. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
19 today.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Make sure the red
21 light is on.

22 TALIA GRUBER: Oh, we got it, great. Good
23 afternoon and thank you to the Committee on General
24 Welfare for holding this hearing. My name is Talia
25 Gruber, I'm the Economic Empowerment Specialist at

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 the New York City Anti-Violence Project. I work on
3 financial stability with LGBTQ survivors of violence
4 many of whom have interacted with the DHS system and
5 I'm here to comment on several of the bills under
6 discussion to reflect some of the concerns shared by
7 my clients. Intro 883 as was discussed is a well-
8 intentioned bill that needs to be expanded to make it
9 effective. It is crucial that DHS be comprehensive in
10 outlining what these customer service trainings must
11 address and who will be providing them. Many of our
12 transgender and gender non-conforming clients have
13 been harassed, mis-gendered and outed as transgender
14 by security guards and staff in shelter. We have seen
15 several incidents this year where our clients,
16 particularly those who are transgender, women of
17 color, are denied entry by staff into shelters that
18 match their gender identity and when they react in
19 justified enmity, staff members have called the
20 police to have them removed from the premises. What
21 happened to Jasmine Healey was not an isolated
22 incident, it happens to our communities constantly.
23 Culturally competent trainings for staff members
24 needs to take into account the specific needs of
25 LGBTQ communities, especially of TGNC people of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 color. DHS needs to include trainings on de-
3 escalation that specifically highlight conflict
4 resolution strategies that do not include calling the
5 police. When our clients have the police called on
6 them for matters that could easily be addressed
7 interpersonally, or when our clients have no choice
8 but to leave shelter because of negative interactions
9 with staff members that go unaddressed, our clients
10 are denied the basic human right to shelter. This
11 issue extends far beyond customer service training
12 and requires DHS to implement clear methods of
13 evaluation and accountability measures for shelter
14 staff. In regard to Intro 884 and 1232, problems as
15 many folks have stated here with transfers in
16 shelters extends far beyond issues with reporting and
17 appeals. At AVP, we continue to see clients who
18 require high levels of advocacy from us in order to
19 have their emergency transfer request taken seriously
20 and in a timely manner. We have had numerous clients
21 this year who were being harassed in shelter because
22 of their gender identity and were subsequently denied
23 valid and time sensitive emergency transfers putting
24 them at further risk of harm. Further, many of our
25 clients who are survivors of intimate partner

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 violence often reside in homeless shelter when
3 there's no space in DV shelter. As a result, their
4 abusive partners are more easily able to locate them
5 and when there is no knowledge, which there is not
6 about how to get timely safety transfers or when DHS
7 staff do not address these transfers swiftly, these
8 clients are often forced to leave shelter or face
9 increased risk of harm. It is crucial that safety
10 transfers are evaluated in a more culturally
11 competent and timely manner and that information
12 about how to successfully request a transfer be more
13 clearly available to shelter residents. Thank you for
14 the work that you've done to implement necessary
15 changes to the homeless shelter system.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

17 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi, I'm Towaki Komatsu,
18 I've testified to you previously. To begin my
19 testimony, I'll play an audio recording for you.
20 Earlier today there was Steven Banks of HRA
21 testifying to you yet again falsely, under oath. I
22 sent you an email while sitting in the chair to point
23 out to you what specifically he testified falsely
24 about. So, let's have everyone in this room hear what
25 Steven Banks had to say to me on December 14th in

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 Brooklyn of last year. [audio recording playing] So,
3 that's one audio recording I want to play for your
4 benefit... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry, if you could
6 just summarize what that... I don't... I didn't hear it..

7 TOWAKI KOMATSU: So, the Mayor had a
8 public Town Hall meeting on December 20... sorry,
9 December 14th last year, I confronted Mr. Banks
10 lawfully about the fact that I was assaulted in an
11 Urban Pathways building because Urban Pathways
12 subjected me to an illegal bait and switch with
13 regards to a lease agreement, a binding lease
14 agreement that I signed on February 16th in HRA's
15 office at 33 Beaver Street. They forged my signature
16 in a totally fraudulent lease agreement, they didn't
17 allow me to reside in the specific apartment I signed
18 that lease agreement for. I thereafter was assaulted,
19 I got more than 15 punches to my left temple that I
20 told you about previously in other meetings, I got a
21 concussion from that, that concussion it prevented me
22 from interviewing effectively for a job that would
23 have paid me 450 bucks a day. I now have a federal
24 lawsuit against the city as well as the New York
25 State Supreme Court lawsuit. So, I've testified in

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 your meetings, I talked to Mr. Deutsch, Chaim Deutsch
3 about the fact that repairs aren't being made, people
4 in the building where I reside for military veterans
5 don't have a valid lease agreement. So, if Mr. Banks
6 said today that he doesn't people in buildings where
7 there's a risk, if I got 15 punches to my left temple
8 how exactly did, he testify truthfully. Also Nicole
9 Bramstedt she testified to you on April 24th about
10 how Urban Pathways doubled... doubles up people in
11 apartments and that causes roommate conflict, she's
12 now a member of the New York City Council so if she
13 admitted to you in a public hearing that she's
14 putting people in situations where they're subject to
15 potential harm why was she hired by the, the City
16 Council. So, here's my last recording for you. Sorry,
17 just give me one sec... [audio recording playing] That
18 was an audio recording that I recorded from... of
19 someone who works in the building where I reside, he
20 works for Urban Pathways, that recording was recorded
21 on December 12th. So, if I'm sitting in this chair on
22 December 17th, I told Mr. Deutsch that previously
23 during an earlier public hearing. I also testified to
24 Ritchie Torres who's a total fraudster, I testified
25 to him... to his face in March, he told me that he

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 would have HPD make repairs, I told, told... I'm sorry,
3 I talked to Mr. Banks yet again on August 22nd, he
4 told me that based on the complaints that I... the
5 people have been making, repairs have been made.
6 There's black mold in, in, in an apartment on the
7 first floor of the building so one of the things
8 about NYCHA they talked about how there's lead in
9 buildings, there's black mold. So, if I'm reporting
10 violations on behalf of other tenants' things are
11 getting fixed and like I pointed out to you
12 previously tax payers are paying for this building,
13 where the hell is the oversight?

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Missed... the purpose
15 of this hearing is to... I mean certainly around
16 shelter conditions is, is a... is, is something so we...
17 certainly we can follow up on, on... [cross-talk]

18 TOWAKI KOMATSU: And just to let... [cross-
19 talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...those, those...
21 [cross-talk]

22 TOWAKI KOMATSU: ...you know with regards
23 to my testimony today, it really wasn't for you, it's
24 for Federal Judge Lorna Schofield that I have this
25

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 federal lawsuit filed with who's going to... who is
3 assigned to that case... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure... [cross-talk]

5 TOWAKI KOMATSU: ...so since this public
6 hearing is recorded on video, this video recording is
7 going to be submitted to federal court.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

9 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you.

11 RAYSA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon, thank
12 you Chair Levin, how are you? My name is Raysa
13 Rodriguez, I'm Vice President of Policy and Planning
14 at WIN. WIN is the largest provider of family shelter
15 and supportive housing in New York City. Each year we
16 serve about 2,700 families in New York City and what
17 I find most telling and I'd like to share and start
18 with is that about 60 percent of our clients are
19 actually children. I won't share with you the
20 numbers, I know you know the numbers inside out but
21 we've been doing a lot of work from a policy
22 standpoint figuring out what we like to push, right
23 and work with our partners and we've been looking at
24 what families and children need based on our data,
25 right and when it comes to what families and children

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 need while they're in shelter, we have a good sense
3 of what they need. We, we need adequate tier two
4 capacity that is rich in services and trauma informed
5 care and beyond that in order to really ensure
6 housing stability we need an adequate supply of
7 affordable housing, right. And so, with partners
8 we've been looking at ways to strategically reduce
9 the number of barriers and roadblocks to those two
10 things which we know are incredibly in short supply
11 and so we're here to share and echo a lot of the
12 concerns that our partners have shared today about
13 Intro 915, 915 because while it is good intentioned,
14 we believe it does have a potential for increased
15 confusion, right. We share Salamanca's concerns and
16 values around fair share, we believe every community
17 in New York City has a responsibility for all of our
18 kids not just homeless kids, right, but we do think
19 that the reporting structure in this bill can lead to
20 increased confusion. I can tell you that in my role
21 part of what I do is kind of go out to communities
22 where we're opening up shelters and begin to build
23 bridges with community members, right and I can't
24 tell you the amount of confusion that there is around
25 who the homeless... who homeless families are, right.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 What... how do we begin to demystify what it means to
3 be homeless and begin to reduce a lot of the fears
4 that exist at a community level and I think that the
5 reporting bill or the bill as it stands can lead to
6 only more confusion. So, we welcome the opportunity
7 to really think of more effective ways to increase
8 transparency and to really have a more effective
9 reporting structure. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much. I
11 want to thank this panel very much for your testimony
12 and for calling to light very important issues and
13 we'll continue to work with, with all of you in the
14 coming year, we still have a lot of work to do so
15 thank you. Next panel Peter Malvan, Wendy O'Shields,
16 Jim Dill, Michelle DeMott and Jelaine Altino.

17 JELAINE ALTINO: Good afternoon.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon.

19 JELAINE ALTINO: My name is Jelaine
20 Altino, I am representing the New York City Coalition
21 of Domestic Violence Residential Providers. It is a
22 pleasure to be here today to offer comments on Intro
23 1110. We are grateful to Council Member Salamanca and
24 the supporting Council Members of this bill for
25 proposing a creative and strategic plan to begin to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 address the housing crisis that exists in New York
3 City. We recommend... we commend the acknowledgement of
4 such a service gap for the homeless population as
5 described in the bill and would also like to
6 highlight the unique circumstances unique to our
7 system when discussing homelessness and domestic
8 violence. For years affordable permanent housing has
9 plagued clients residing in shelter, we understand
10 that this is a priority for many families in shelter
11 but for many others healing from their trauma
12 involves more than just securing permanent housing.
13 For a victim of domestic violence, the dedicated DV
14 shelters are places where survivors seek safety,
15 comfort and healing. Our shelters provide supportive
16 services utilizing client centered and trauma
17 informed approaches. The staffing at our agencies
18 undergo extensive training to ensure that the
19 services delivered to the families are of the highest
20 quality, aligned with the values embedded in said
21 practices. Currently many shelters do have dedicated
22 housing specialists on site, if having a housing
23 specialist in all temporary shelters were the
24 intended mechanism to carry out the goal of this bill
25 then we would ask that the bill provide an

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 opportunity for HRA to fund housing specialists that
3 would be employed by the agency in all DV shelters as
4 opposed to having housing specialists designated by
5 HRA operate within shelters. This would allow such
6 staff to work within the mission of the agency while
7 still addressing the service gap which has been
8 raised by this bill. The Coalition feels that this
9 consistency of service delivery by staff employed by
10 the individual agencies would ensure that housing
11 specialists are trained to the agency standards and
12 also... and would also streamline the coordination of
13 care. We additionally ask for further clarification
14 on the requirement for training in quote, "proper
15 case management techniques" close quote. The
16 Coalition believes that any training needs to be
17 grounded in a thorough understanding of DV and
18 trauma. Though having a housing specialist at all of
19 the temporary shelters is an important piece to
20 combat the issues related to the housing crisis, the
21 regard to DV victims, the concern that may not all
22 lie in whether there is a housing specialist at a
23 shelter but rather the barriers that exist for our
24 clients in securing affordable permanent housing.
25 These barriers include but are not limited to finding

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 housing in a safe borough designated by HRA, through
3 information gathered from the client's initial
4 assessment; the real estate market in New York City;
5 the less than adequate voucher amounts available for
6 families to sustain housing; the unethical,
7 discriminatory landlord practices associated with the
8 stigma of being a D.. a victim of domestic violence;
9 and the cumbersome process a victim must endure and
10 comply with, while conducting their search and
11 piecing their lives together. These are just a few of
12 the barriers that limit our clients search and makes
13 for a longer process to secure an affordable
14 apartment. We also ask the Committee to consider the
15 largest reason for a lack of move outs into permanent
16 housing, which is the lack of affordable, affordable
17 housing as said earlier. Through this bill, the city
18 has a real opportunity to introduce a well thought
19 out approach to combatting the intersections of
20 homelessness and DV. We look forward to working with
21 the City during this hearing and hope by doing so, we
22 can promote the solidarity necessary to bring these
23 concerns to light and improve efficacy. We thank you
24 for your consideration and the opportunity to testify
25 today.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

3 WENDY O'SHIELDS: My name is Wendy

4 O'Shields and I'm Safety Net Activist, Founder Member

5 and a Housing Advocate. I'd like to call your

6 attention to some pressing matters concerning the

7 Department of Homeless Services. The City of New York

8 Department of Homeless Services emergency shelters

9 are funded by the United States HUD McKinney Vento

10 dollars and are thereby contractually bound to

11 enforce HUD McKinney Vento definitions policies and

12 procedures at. HUD McKinney Vento homeless assistance

13 act rapid rehousing to... rapid rehousing is done..

14 designed for US shelters to house homeless single

15 adults, couples, adult families and families with

16 minor children with the Housing First model. The HUD

17 housing first model has independent, permanent

18 housing and supportive housing components, each

19 shelter residents should be assessed for the type of

20 housing they are eligible. Homeless residents that do

21 not require services should not be illegally

22 relegated to supportive housing with no need present.

23 New York City DHS, the funding you receive from HUD

24 McKinney Vento for emergency shelters are not to be

25 used for transitional housing, cease referring to

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 your DHS shelters that you receive this funding as
3 tradition... as traditional housing... transitional...
4 excuse me, transitional shelters, they are emergency
5 shelters. NYC enforced the New York State Callahan
6 Consent to create et al. with extreme oversight to
7 the shelter standards. A sleeping room, in a single
8 occupancy... in single occupancy sleeping rooms, a
9 minimum of 80 square feet per resident shall be
10 provided. Number two, in sleeping rooms for two or
11 more residents, a minimum of 60 square feet per
12 resident shall be provided. Number three, a minimum
13 of three feet which is included in the per resident
14 minimum shall be maintained between beds for aisles.
15 Number four, partitioned sleeping areas from the
16 areas shall be ceiling high and smoke tight. NYC
17 enforce the use of the Department of Homeless
18 Services involuntary transfer which has rights and
19 protections for the DHS shelter residents in lieu of
20 the DHS administrative transfer which has none.
21 Eliminate the HUD McKinney Vento reset, DHS
22 administrative transfer which occurs approximately
23 every 24 months for each DHS single adult resident.
24 Once the resident is transferred their McKinney Vento
25 24-month clock begins again. The Department of

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 Homeless Services agency... an agency's culture of
3 violence denial degradation of human right... of human
4 beings is the DHS structure. This city agency thrives
5 on abusing those they have... that they have in their
6 care, the most vulnerable group of homeless residents
7 are single adult women. Many, many immediate reforms
8 are needed at the Department of Homeless Services to
9 restore dignity of residents and to begin independent
10 or supportive housing realities. Thank you.

11 MICHELLE DEMOTT: Good afternoon Chair

12 Levin. My name is Michelle DeMott and I am the Chief
13 of Staff to Mitchell Netburn at Samaritan Daytop
14 Village. On behalf of our organization, I appreciate
15 the opportunity to testify before you on Intro 915.
16 Samaritan Daytop Village is a comprehensive health
17 and human services agency with over 50 programs
18 across ten counties including New York City. We offer
19 a rich array of programs including treatment for
20 substance use disorder and behavioral health,
21 transitional and supportive permanent housing and
22 innovative services for veterans, homeless
23 individuals, women, children, youth, seniors and
24 families. Samaritan Daytop Village is one of the over
25 200 nonprofit operators of supportive housing

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 represented, represented by the supportive housing
3 network of New York. as you heard in the earlier
4 testimony, there are thousands of vulnerable New
5 Yorkers who rely on supportive housing. Additionally,
6 there are tens of thousands more in our New York City
7 shelters unable to find affordable housing, with
8 extensive lengths of stay in those shelters, awaiting
9 the availability of additional units of supportive
10 permanent housing. There is an affordable housing
11 crisis in New York City and we are appreciative of
12 the city's commitment to create 15,000 new units of
13 supportive housing over the next 15 years in New York
14 City, 15/15. We are even more appreciative of the
15 Council's recognition of the need and its request to
16 accelerate the production of supportive housing
17 units. As you are aware, Intro 915 requires that the
18 Department of Social Services submit to every Council
19 Member and community board and post on its website,
20 quarterly reports on the number of shelters and
21 supportive housing units. But the Council have or may
22 not be aware of is its unintended consequences of the
23 bill. While we understand the need for transparency
24 in government and the importance of tracking data, we
25 believe that for practical purposes it will in fact

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 hinder the development of the very units the Council
3 has requested to accelerate. The bill could be
4 construed to support the premise that supportive
5 housing is a negative something to be reported on and
6 contained. What we have seen at Samaritan Daytop
7 Village when siting our shelter locations has been
8 community opposition, fear and creates stigma and
9 NIMBY over and over again based on misinformation. We
10 have faced protests in community residents who have
11 angrily stated that violence and drug use has gone up
12 in their communities as a result of the homeless.
13 Residents have stated they feared for their elders
14 and their children with the placements of shelters in
15 their communities. The reporting required will likely
16 result in these communities and council districts
17 shutting their doors to additional residences
18 hindering the development of the additionally needed
19 housing. Having operated supportive housing units,
20 Samaritan Daytop Village has seen firsthand that it
21 is in fact a positive asset to communities.
22 Supportive housing accomplishes ending homelessness
23 for many of the individuals we serve in shelter.
24 Additionally, it has proven to increase property
25 values, create jobs both during construction and

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 permanently once the building is built, and it
3 creates affordable housing. The Council has indicated
4 its full support for the quick development of
5 supportive housing in order to address New York
6 City's affordable housing crisis. The Council should
7 avoid any measure that would hinder said development.
8 Community opposition in finding sites has
9 traditionally been the most difficult part of the
10 development process. Why make it unintentionally
11 worse? As a member of the Supportive Housing Network
12 of New York, we support their proposal to the Council
13 to follow an alternative approach based on an effort
14 put forth in Los Angeles, another city combating a
15 similar homelessness crisis. Formerly homeless
16 individuals and families have faced diversity and
17 stigma at every door, supportive housing provides
18 affordable housing for formally homeless people with
19 special needs. Why would we want to continue to
20 reinforce the stigma? Supportive housing is not only
21 effective for ending chronic homelessness, but it
22 helps to maintain long term housing stability by
23 providing ongoing supportive services. I would
24 respectfully ask, on behalf of Samaritan Daytop
25 Village, that this Committee oppose Intro 915. Allow

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 us to continue to be on the forefront... on the front
3 lines in partnership with you and your communities
4 serving the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Thank you
5 for this opportunity to provide this testimony.

6 JIM DILL: I thank the Chair and the
7 Committee for the opportunity to be heard this
8 afternoon. I'm Jim Dill, Executive Director of
9 Housing and Services, Inc. We have three supportive
10 housing projects in Manhattan and a 100 unit
11 scattered site program in Upper Manhattan and in the
12 Bronx. We've been operating supportive housing since
13 1988. We have two major concerns about possible
14 unintended consequences of Intro 915. First, it puts
15 supportive housing, the solution to homelessness on
16 the same report as the perceived problem, shelters
17 and cluster sites. People are going to look at the
18 report, their going to see the shelters and the
19 cluster sites and think we're part of the problem too
20 and not part of the solution. Second, the potential
21 stigmatizing of our tenants, this one really worries
22 us. The proposed bill may effectively recast our
23 resident's tenancy into just some kind of
24 continuation of their former homelessness. Some of
25 our special need's tenants have been with us for more

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 than 20 years but the proposed bill keeps their
3 housing on the report. I have to ask, when does it
4 end? Our tenants are always going to be forever
5 defined by the rock bottom period in their lives.
6 Forty percent of our tenants don't even need to be
7 homeless by just residing our projects are they going
8 to be thrown into the perceived problem too? Here's
9 who they are by project, in Manhattan CB six, up to
10 80 disabled vets with military service ranging from
11 Vietnam to Iraq. In CB nine up to 36 predominately
12 African American or Hispanic retired senior citizens.
13 In CB seven up to 22 predominately retired seniors
14 who have resided in their neighborhood for 20... over
15 23 years. These folks deserve to be honored and to be
16 cared for and should not be set up to be feared and
17 stigmatized. Overall, there's a lot for us to be
18 optimistic about, New York streamlining of how
19 supportive housing can be produced has opened many
20 new opportunities. IRS income averaging now allows
21 households with incomes up to 80 percent of AMI to be
22 eligible for a 60/40 project. We can now envision
23 projects that speak to community... specific community
24 housing needs such as seniors or young families and
25 all kinds of intergenerational housing combinations.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 We want to do 60/40, so for every six supportive
3 housing units that get delayed so do four affordable
4 units. Times are exciting, but the barriers are still
5 high. We think the unintended consequences of the
6 proposed bill to create another barrier at the time
7 when New Yorkers urgently need fewer barriers to
8 housing. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
10 to this panel and thank you for all the great work
11 that you're all doing, thank you. Next panel Trish
12 Marsik, Services for the Underserved; Olga Rodriguez-
13 Vidal, Safe Horizon; and last was unsigned, I don't
14 know if...

15 [off mic dialogue]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, oh, oh okay. Okay
17 and that will be the last panel. It's just you.

18 TRISH MARIK: It's okay, I've done this
19 before. Good afternoon Chair Levin. Thank you for
20 hearing my testimony today on this very important
21 issue. My name is Trish Marsik and I am the Chief
22 Operating Officer for Services for the Underserved
23 commonly referred to as SUS. SUS is a 40 year old
24 human services organization that annually provides
25 over 200 million dollars in services to 37,000 of our

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 city's most vulnerable citizens, this includes
3 individuals in recovery for mental illness,
4 individuals with developmental disabilities,
5 veterans, women and children who have experienced
6 domestic violence, people who have lost their homes
7 and individuals and families who have been
8 disadvantaged by poverty. On any given night in 2018,
9 SUS provided housing and shelter to more than 4,500
10 of these New Yorkers. Last year, over 600 individuals
11 moved from our shelters, treatment residences and
12 transitional housing into permanent homes of their
13 own. And 92 percent of SUS's permanent housing
14 residents maintained stable housing. SUS has a
15 successful track record of serving the residents of
16 41 of our city's 59 community boards. And with three
17 other partners, we recently were awarded the
18 opportunity to develop 2,400 units of supportive and
19 affordable housing in central Brooklyn. The bill
20 being proposed, requiring that the Department of
21 Social Services submit to every Council Member and
22 community board and post on its website quarterly
23 reports on the number of shelters, supportive housing
24 and cluster sites will have serious and perhaps
25 unintended consequences for providers such as SUS as

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 well as for the communities we seek to serve and for
3 whom these services may be much needed. While it may
4 highlight which communities may be shouldering a
5 disproportionate number of such facilities, it will
6 not prompt those communities with less representation
7 of these facilities to take on any greater
8 responsibility. As my colleagues have highlighted,
9 the bill may have unintended... may unintentionally
10 present supportive housing in a negative light rather
11 than as a positive response to a need, a vehicle for
12 ending chronic homelessness; a means by which
13 affordable housing is brought to communities; and a
14 source for creating much needed jobs. Requiring that
15 supportive housing be reported to communities,
16 singles out this housing type as being in need of
17 scrutiny and oversight unlike other forms of
18 permanent affordable housing. This serves only to
19 perpetuate the myth and stigma surrounding supportive
20 housing that leads to unfounded fear and a lack of
21 embrace by communities. And we are grateful for this
22 Council's support in opening these facilities in
23 those places where we have them. we note that last
24 year, the Council requested acceleration of
25 production of new supportive housing from 500 to 700

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

2 units per year, in acknowledgement that the need is
3 that pressing. With this proposed bill, community
4 boards and council districts may declare a systemic
5 moratorium rather than the individualized support we
6 consistently get on supportive housing until they can
7 be assured that all communities will carry their
8 share of this responsibility. However, no provision
9 has been made in this bill to help encourage
10 supportive housing in neighborhoods that may not have
11 much of it. SUS looks forward to working with the
12 Council to build more, much needed supportive housing
13 across New York City. We are happy to discuss ways to
14 encourage more of it in all neighborhoods. Thank you
15 again for this opportunity.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so very
17 much, I appreciate your testimony. I want to thank
18 you for all the good work that you guys do at SUS and
19 keep it up and look forward to working with you in
20 the new year.

21 TRISH MARIK: Good to see you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: See you as well. I
23 want to thank all of the panelists, I want to thank
24 the... Commissioner Banks and his staff as well as my
25 colleagues, all staff members of the General Welfare

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COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

Committee and my staff as well and, and Sergeants at
Arms for, for being here and now at 5:07 this hearing
is adjourned. Happy holidays everybody.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

January 14, 2019