

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL
WELFARE

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May 6, 2024
Start: 9:40 a.m.
Recess: 2:48 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin Brannan,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Finance

Diana I. Ayala,
Chairperson for the Committee on
General Welfare

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alexa Avilés
- Chris Banks
- Gale A. Brewer
- Selvena Brooks-Powers
- Tiffany Cabàn
- David Carr
- Farah N. Louis
- Chi A. Ossè
- Keith Powers
- Lincoln Restler
- Kevin C. Riley
- Pierina Ana Sanchez
- Yusef Salaam

COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

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

Molly Wasow Park
DSS Commissioner

Jill Berry
DSS First Deputy Commission

Rosine Ferdinand
Executive Deputy Commissioner of Finance

Ellen Levine
DSS Chief Program Performance and Financial
Management Officer

Scott French
HRA Administrator

Joslyn Carter
DHS Administrator

Patrick DiStefano
Deputy Commissioner of Finance

Valentina Vidal
Bilingual Vocational Case Manager at GMHC

Casey Schmoll
DSS/HRA, SNAP

Seleste Wilson
Human Resources Administration's Supplemental
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Shakeema North
Covenant House New York

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Jerome Nathaniel
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Tierra Labrada
Supportive Housing Network of New York

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

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Juan Diaz
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Hannah Mercuris
Center for Family Representation

Joel Berg
Hungry Free America

Amy Blumsack
Neighbors Together

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
4 the Committee on Finance joint with the Committee on
5 General Welfare, recorded on May 6, 2024 by Nazly
6 Paytuvu located in Chambers.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
8 today's New York City Council Executive Budget
9 Hearing for the Committee on General Welfare, joint
10 with the Committee on Finance. If you would like to
11 submit testimony, you may at
12 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

13 At this time, please silent all electronic
14 devices. Please silent all electronic devices. No
15 one may approach the dais during any time at this
16 hearing. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [GAVEL] Okay, thank you
18 Sergeant. Good morning and welcome to the first
19 hearing for the FY25 Executive Budget. I'm Council
20 Member Justin Brannan, I Chair the Committee on
21 Finance. I'm pleased to be joined by my Co-Chair
22 today Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair of the
23 Committee on General Welfare. We've been joined this
24 morning by Council Members Carr, Cabàn, Avilés,
25 Stevens sorry, Ung and Brewer and Louis. On Zoom,
we've got Council Members Riley and Brooks Powers.

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3 Before we get started I want to take a quick
4 moment to thank the entire Council finance division
5 staff for their efforts in preparing for these
6 hearings, especially Julia Haramis and Faria Ramone
7 for today's hearing. Committee Counsel Mike Twoomey,
8 My Senior Advisor John Yedin and all the Finance
9 Analysts who work super hard behind the scenes to
10 make all these hearings possible.

11 We're here today to begin examining the Mayor's
12 \$111.6 billion Executive Budget for FY25, which would
13 be an increase of \$2.2 billion from the Preliminary
14 Budget released earlier this year. As a reminder,
15 for this year's Executive Budget joint hearings, we
16 will take public testimony on an agencies executive
17 budget that same day. After the agencies witnesses
18 have finished, instead of holding one day at the end
19 for all public testimony.

20 If you wish to speak on the DHS or HRA Executive
21 Budget today, please fill out a witness slip with the
22 Sergeant at Arms. This March the Council began its
23 role in the city's budget process with a series of
24 hearings on the Mayor's FY25 Preliminary Budget and
25 after a month of examination, the Council put forward
a response that continued to push back on the

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3 unnecessarily blunt cuts while responsibly accounting
4 for the challenges ahead.

5 Today, we start the next stage of the process by
6 examining the Mayor's Executive Budget, beginning
7 today with the Department of Social Services covering
8 the Human Resources Administration and the Department
9 of Homeless Services and I'd like to welcome DSS
10 Commissioner Molly Wasow Park and her team. Thank
11 you for joining us today to answer our questions.

12 HRA's projected FY25 budget of \$11.69 billion
13 represents 10.5 percent of the Administrations
14 proposed FY25 Budget in the Executive Plan. This
15 represents an increase of \$872.5 million or 7.5
16 percent from the \$10.81 billion budgeted in the
17 Administrations FY25 Preliminary Plan earlier this
18 year. The increase comes from several actions. Most
19 significantly, the \$614.9 million in additional
20 funding for the City Family Homelessness and Eviction
21 Prevention Supplement. As of March 2024, HRA has
22 1,166 vacancies relative to their budgeted headcount
23 in FY24.

24 DHS projected FY25 budget of \$3.94 billion
25 represents 3.5 percent of the Administrations
26 Proposed FY25 budget in the Executive Plan. The

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3 represents a decrease of \$23.7 million or 0.6 percent
4 from the \$3.96 billion budgeted in the
5 Administrations FY24 preliminary plan. The net
6 decrease is largely made of a \$56.2 million reduction
7 in asylum response costs. Partially offset by a \$27
8 million cost of living adjustment for Human Service
9 providers. As of March 2024, DHS has 163 vacancies
relative to their budgeted headcount in FY24.

10 In the Preliminary Budget Response, the Council
11 commended the Administration for working with us and
12 the nonprofit human service providers to implement a
13 9 percent COLA, Cost of Living Adjustment over the
14 next three years. We also called on the
15 Administration to fully fund the City FHEPS Rental
16 Assistant Voucher Program and \$615 million was added
17 in FY25 and \$540 million was baselined starting in
18 FY26.

19 While this is a big step in the right direction,
20 bringing the baseline budget more closely in line
21 with historical spending in the program, the
22 Administration is yet to provide sufficient funding
23 to support the package of legislation that the
24 Council passed to expand the City FHEPS program.
25 There are many, many topics which I, my Co-Chair and

1 our colleagues will be looking for answers on today.

2 My questioning will run towards contracting with
3 nonprofit providers, the asylum seeker PEGs and
4 response funding, and shelter time limits as well as
5 the Subway Safety Plan.
6

7 After Council finished their hearings on the
8 preliminary budget, we released a response
9 identifying \$6.15 billion in unaccounted for
10 resources for FY24 and FY25. Unfortunately, the
11 Mayor's Executive Budget recognizes barely one-third
12 of these resources leaving out income-based tax
13 revenues that are expected to make up the final
14 adopted budget anyhow. The funds that the Council
15 identified can account the expiration of federal
16 stimulus funds allowing for responsible savings
17 against under budgeted costs and unforeseen
18 challenges, as well as restoration and investments
19 into the kind of key services DHS and HRA provide
20 among others. We have what we need to deliver a
21 budget for every New Yorker and all of it needs to be
22 on the table now.

23 Before I go any further, I want to turn to my Co-
24 Chair for this hearing, Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala
25 for her opening statement.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Chair Brannan.

4 Good morning. I am Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair
5 of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for
6 joining us this morning for the Fiscal 2025 Executive
7 Budget hearing for the General Welfare Committee,
8 held jointly with the Finance Committee.

9 The city's Proposed Fiscal 2025 Executive Budget
10 totals \$111.6 billion. Of which, \$15.6 billion or 14
11 percent funds the Department of Social Services and
12 compacting the Human Services Administration and the
13 Department of Homeless Services.

14 DSS serves the most vulnerable populations in the
15 city, sheltering the homeless and improving the
16 economic wellbeing of those facing poverty. These
17 services are more vital now than ever. Given the
18 record high shelter census and the economic
19 challenges faced by low-income city residents. The
20 Council's budget response made it clear that
21 protecting housing opportunities, bolstering the
22 social safety net and serving our most vulnerable
23 residents are some of the Council's top priorities.

24 I was glad to see that the Administration added
25 over a half a billion dollars to the City FHEPS
Rental Assistance program, as well as the citywide

1 funding for COLA for contracted human service
2 workers. However, I am also disappointed to see that
3 the Executive Plan did not add funding for the
4 majority of the Council's priorities that were laid
5 out in the budget response, including the Community
6 Food Connection program, a restoration to last year's
7 PEGs on shelter provider contracts, baselined funding
8 for the legislatively required prevailing wage
9 increase for DHS shelter security, an expansion of
10 Fair Fairs to individuals making up to 200 percent of
11 the federal poverty level. To increase the baseline
12 for cash assistance and HASA Emergency Housing to
13 align with recent actual spending. To support the
14 Council's bill to expand the City FHEPS program. To
15 improve client services increased staffing and
16 upgrade systemic systems for public benefit program
17 administration. To improve the streamline and
18 streamline the path intake process for families with
19 children and to fully fund the Right to Counsel
20 program, so that all eligible individuals can receive
21 legal assistance.

22
23 I am particularly concerned about the lack of
24 additional funding for the Community Food Connections
25 program, which drops from \$57.1 million this fiscal

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3 year to \$25 million in Fiscal Year 2025 and then \$21
4 million in the out years. At a time of record high
5 demand, we cannot abandon the hundreds of community-
6 based providers who operate the city's soup kitchens
7 and food pantries, which feed our city's most
8 vulnerable population.

9 I also remain concerned about the administrations
10 use of the shelter time limits for asylum seekers.
11 While it is true that the city must ensure that it is
12 being fiscally prudent with municipal dollars and
13 that we should continue to explore ways to decrease
14 the overall cost of the asylum seeker response, the
15 best way to do that is by investing in long term
16 housing solutions such as City FHEPS, not by forcing
17 an already vulnerable population onto the streets.

18 I would like to thank the General Welfare
19 Committee staff for their work in putting this
20 hearing together today, Phariha Rahman Finance
21 Analyst, Julia Haramis Unit Head, Penina Rosenberg
22 Policy Analyst, Aminta Kilawan Senior Counsel. I
23 would also like to thank my Deputy Chief of Staff,
24 well, my Chief of Staff Elsie Encarnacion and now,
25 Commissioner Park, our Counsel will swear you in.

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3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you affirm
4 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
5 the truth before this Committee and to respond
6 honestly to Council Member questions? Commissioner
7 Park?

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I do.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy Commissioner
10 Berry?

11 JILL BERRY: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Executive Deputy Commissioner
13 Ferdinand?

14 ROSINE FERDINAND: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ellen Levine?

16 ELLEN LEVINE: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Scott French?

18 SCOTT FRENCH: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Joslyn Carter?

20 JOSLYN CARTER: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, let me just
23 say this testimony looks really long, so if you can
24 summarize as much as possible, that would be great.

25 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Absolutely. Good morning
Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan and Members of

1 the Committee. My name is Molly Wasow Park,
2 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
3 Social Services. DSS is made up of both the Human
4 Resources Administration, HRA, and the Department of
5 Homeless Services, DHS, so accordingly, I am also
6 joined by my colleagues, DHS Administrator Joslyn
7 Carter and HRA Administrator Scott French, as well as
8 DSS First Deputy Commission Jill Berry, DSS Chief
9 Program Performance and Financial Management Officer
10 Ellen Levine, Executive Deputy Commissioner of
11 Finance Rosine Ferdinand and Deputy Commissioner of
12 Finance Patrick DiStefano. Collectively, we
13 represent the approximately 14,000 hardworking staff
14 who dedicate their lives to supporting low-income New
15 Yorkers.
16

17 First, let me provide an audio description of
18 myself for attendees who are blind or low vision. I
19 am a middle-aged White woman with brown curly hair.
20 I'm wearing a black suit, burgundy top, and silver
21 jewelry.

22 The first slide and all slides introducing a new
23 section include a New York cityscape and a blue box
24 with White text indicating the title. This slide
25 also includes a blue and white DSS, HRA, DHS logo in

1 the upper left-hand corner. The title is Fiscal Year
2 2025 Executive Budget testimony with my name and
3 today's date. Most other slides in this testimony
4 have a light blue ribbon at the bottom that includes
5 the DSS, HRA, DHS logo in various shades of blue.

6 The next slide shows a Venn diagram indicating
7 the overlap between DSS, HRA, and DHS. Under the
8 leadership of Mayor Adams, the DSS, HRA, DHS
9 consolidated management structure aims to provide a
10 seamless and integrated continuum of client services
11 to approximately three million New Yorkers. Our
12 efforts to create a path to sustainability for low-
13 income New Yorkers are rooted in the following three
14 pillars: First, streamlining Access to Social
15 Services. 2. Addressing Homelessness and Housing
16 Instability. And 3. Creating Economic Stability. We
17 will refer back to these three pillars throughout our
18 presentation.

19 The next slide shows through an array of colorful
20 boxes how many New Yorkers are served in each of DSS,
21 HRA's programs. In the interest of time, I won't
22 read all of them but I'll call out a couple, 1.8
23 million people receive SNAP. About 535,000 people
24 receive cash assistance. 41,000 households are
25

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3 supported by City FHEPS, 330,000 are enrolled in Fair
4 Fairs and I could go on. Some programs that are not
5 included in this chart, adult protective services has
6 about 6,000 people under care. DV shelters serve
7 1,200 families each day. The Community Food
8 Connection program serves 46 million pounds of food
9 through 700 food providers annually. And homebased
10 serves 36,000 households annually.

11 Alright, our next slide displays a pie chart
12 depicting DHS funds. Nope, it should not actually.
13 Okay, yes it does. DHS is committed to providing
14 safe, temporary shelter connecting New Yorkers
15 experiencing homelessness to permanent housing and
16 addressing unsheltered homelessness. With its for-
17 profit partners, DHS is the largest municipal
18 organization dedicated to addressing homelessness in
19 the United States. The agency has an FY25 budget of
20 \$3.9 billion, of which \$2.4 billion is city tax levy
21 on a budgeted headcount of about 1,900 people with
22 about 1,800 onboard.

23 95 percent of the DHS budget is for shelter
24 operations, shelter intake and services for the
25 unsheltered. DHS central functions like contracting
IT and human resources are part of the DSS management

1 structure and the Administrative functions that you
2 see here are directly related to the operation of DHS
3 programs.
4

5 Alright, DHS Shelter Census. The next slide
6 depicts a graph depicting the DHS Shelter Census.
7 During the pandemic, there was a decline in shelter
8 entries but at the same time we continue to make
9 permanent housing placements, which led to a decline
10 in the census. The non-asylum census is about 7
11 percent below the prepandemic level and well below
12 the prepandemic peak of 61,400 reached in January of
13 2019. Nevertheless, the Census dramatically
14 increased due to the arrival of asylum seekers. As
15 of May 1st this year, the overall DHS Shelter Census
16 is a little over 86,000. So, about more than 75
17 percent of the growth in the Shelter Census is
18 associated with the asylum seekers.

19 The next slide is a pie chart depicting shelter
20 residents by population. The DHS budget is largely a
21 function of the Shelter Census. Currently, the
22 overall DHS Shelter Census as I mentioned is a little
23 over 86,000. This is an increase of more than 41,000
24 since the beginning of 2022 before the surge in
25 asylum seekers to New York City. Of the 86,000

3 approximately 62,000 or over 70 percent are families
4 made up of children and their adult parents and care
5 givers. Children make up nearly 40 percent of all
6 the people in shelter. Today, approximately 36
7 percent of the overall shelter census is made up of -
8 DHS shelter census I should clarify is made up of
9 asylum seekers over 30,000 people.

10 In January 2022, the Census was around 45,000,
11 lower than it was in 2020 immediately pre-pandemic.
12 As asylum seekers came to New York City and began to
13 enter shelter in large numbers, they drove up the
14 census which increased sharply over the past two
15 years. Asylum seekers account for about 75 percent
16 of the growth in the DHS Census.

17 Now, I'd like to turn to speaking about services
18 for people who are unsheltered. Our engagement with
19 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness is
20 another critical component of DHSs work. Since the
21 start of this Administration, DSS, DHS, have doubled
22 the outreach staffing to nearly 400 outreach staff on
23 the ground as of today and aggressively expanded low
24 barrier bed capacity bringing nearly 300 new beds
25 online since August 2023 alone with approximately
3,900 such beds online as of today.

1 As a result of critical investments and 24/7
2 outreach and the intensification of end of line
3 efforts as part of the Subway Safety Plan, referrals
4 to shelters and low barrier placements increased by
5 70 percent in Fiscal Year 2023. Since the launch of
6 the Subway Safety Plan in February 2022, more than
7 7,000 New Yorkers have been connected to shelter from
8 the Subways. And I'm incredibly pleased to report
9 that thanks to critical investments and a
10 comprehensive continuum of care, DSS, DHS more than
11 doubled the number of permanent housing placements
12 for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness year
13 over year.

14
15 DHS placed almost 1,000 New Yorkers residing in
16 low barrier programs in permanent housing in Fiscal
17 Year 2023. Our next slide indicates that we will now
18 move on to the next segment of this testimony,
19 streamlining social services. As I mentioned at the
20 start of our testimony, our primary goal is to create
21 a path to sustainability for low-income New Yorkers
22 through three pillars of work. The first one that I
23 will speak about is streamlining access to social
24 services.

3 We can move up a couple of slides. This next
4 slide depicts a graph displaying the reduction in
5 backlog for cash assistance and SNAP cases. After
6 record increases in SNAP and cash assistance
7 applications in the past few years, double
8 prepandemic levels, I am immensely to report that DSS
9 has functionally eliminated the previously reported
10 backlogs of 46,000 cash assistance and 4,000 SNAP
11 applications. Those are the peak numbers as of July
12 2023 ensuring low-income New Yorkers can quickly and
13 easily access the benefits for which they qualify.

14 Investments in staffing, technology and process
15 improvements have reduced the backlog of cases by 99
16 and 92 percent respectively. This is even better
17 than when I was here last month. In total, HRA
18 processed more than 600,000 cash assistance in SNAP
19 applications since the July 2023 backlog. I do need
20 to pause and really thank the frontline staff that
21 did heroic work to get that done. It was a
22 tremendous effort.

23 DSS hired over 1,000 new staff people since
24 January of 2023 to process cash assistance and SNAP
25 applications doubled down on training for staff and
strengthened remote application processes to make it

1
2 easier to apply for benefits. The agency also work
3 closely with Chief Efficiency Officer Denise Clay and
4 the Mayor's Office of Efficiency to identify
5 application process enhancements and to eliminate
6 bottlenecks that contributed to the backlog. We also
7 developed and implemented plans to expedite the
8 processes going forward. As of March, nearly 1.8
9 million New Yorkers are receiving SNAP benefits and
10 more than 500,000 New Yorkers are receiving cash
11 benefits.

12 Alright, we've got up on the slides, that's
13 great. So moving to the next one. Our next slide
14 lists some accomplish- oh, okay, I am on slide 14 and
15 where we are listing some accomplishments as it
16 respects to streamlining and promoting the access to
17 benefits. As previously mentioned, cash and SNAP are
18 our highest profile benefits but there is so much
19 more that the agency does. Here are some examples of
20 how we've been able to connect more New Yorkers in
21 need to services that lead to their economic
22 stability.

23 We've created a new portal for landlords and
24 providers to expedite enrollment and rental
25 assistance and to make electronic payments to

1 landlords. With the expanded childcare assistance
2 for those leaving the cash roles. With expanded Fair
3 Fairs to 120 percent of federal poverty level and
4 with the assistance of Speaker Adams and the Council
5 enrolled more than 331,000 New Yorkers in Fair Fairs.
6 And we've provided heat grants to eligible low-income
7 New Yorkers and renters to heat and cool their homes,
8 close to one million in Federal Fiscal Year 2022-
9 2023.

11 Moving to slide 15 and looking ahead to 2025, we
12 are excited about the investments we have made to
13 support our not-for-profit partners and enhance
14 services for our clients in the years ahead. We have
15 issued new RFPs for legal services to strengthen
16 support for clients at the risk of eviction. We have
17 enrolled out enhancements to the Access HRA provider
18 portal which will make easier than ever for CBO
19 partners to help New Yorkers enroll in DSS benefits.

20 We are collaborating with new social care
21 networks under the New York State Medicaid waiver
22 which will provide many Medicaid members including
23 DSS clients with extra services, including nutrition
24 and housing supports to improve long term health
25 outcomes. Over 30 New York City benefit CBO

1 contracts are transferring to DSS and will provide
2 New Yorkers with help access HRA and other benefits
3 and services.
4

5 Slide 16 is a transition slide to talk about some
6 of the ways in which we've been able to further our
7 goals of keeping New Yorkers in their homes, moving
8 families and individuals out of shelter and helping
9 people remain stably housed. On Slide 17 I'm listing
10 our affordable and supportive housing
11 accomplishments. For those who do enter shelter, we
12 want to connect them back to permanent housing as
13 quickly as possible.

14 In FY23 DSS saw a 17 percent increase in
15 permanent housing placements from shelter. To date
16 in FY24 there has been an additional 16 percent
17 increase in housing placements. More New Yorkers are
18 now living safely and stably in supportive housing
19 units. In fact, 46 percent more New Yorkers were
20 connected to permanent supportive housing in 2023
21 than in the preceding fiscal year and 1,000
22 unsheltered individuals were placed in permanent
23 housing including but not limited to supportive
24 housing. DSS has taken steps to strengthen rental
25 assistance programs. We've made City FHEPS easier to

1 use by reducing work requirements, eliminating the
2 90-day rule, allowing for the use of City FHEPS
3 statewide and streamlining the program with
4 technological improvements to ensure that more New
5 Yorkers gain access to affordable housing, DSS
6 launched the Affordable Housing Services initiative
7 to use social service dollars to create affordable
8 housing.
9

10 DSS will be facilitating the creation of stable
11 housing opportunities for nearly 1,500 households in
12 shelter, using AHS. Furthermore, the AHS initiative
13 provides sustainable funding solutions to help not-
14 for-profit providers secure long-term building wide
15 leases or even acquire permanent housing sites while
16 providing light touch services for tenants who were
17 formally experiencing homelessness.

18 DSS has also rolled out extensive training to
19 improve and increase housing package submissions from
20 providers. Moving to slide 18. This slide depicts a
21 bar chart comparing FY18 versus FY23 city spending on
22 housing stability. What is very important to
23 emphasize is that not only is DSS innovating and
24 developing new housing models, the investment of city
25 funds in prevention and housing grows year over year

1 while other funding is stagnant. This chart compared
2 FY18 spending to FY23 spending in DSS on rental
3 assistance including the city and state FHEPS
4 subsidies, HASA Housing and Rental Assistance, Legal
5 Services Homebased Rent Arrears and Affordable
6 Housing Service.
7

8 Spending grew 60 percent overall in this five-
9 year period but city spending grew by 85 percent
10 while non-city funding grew by only 15 percent. The
11 city share of the \$1.6 billion in 2023 was \$1.2
12 billion, 75 percent of the total in 2023. In 2018,
13 the city share was 65 percent.

14 Moving to slide 19. This slide shows a bar chart
15 depicting the upward trend in City FHEPS household
16 placements. The city's investment in increased
17 subsidized permanent housing placements has yielded
18 the following results so far: DHS is currently on
19 pace to place over 12,000 households through City
20 FHEPS in FY24, a 20 percent increase relative to FY23
21 and really record-breaking progress. We are also
22 keeping pace with permanent housing placements using
23 all permanent housing options in FY24. There's been
24 a 16 percent increase in placements in FY24 through
25 January of relative to the same period in FY23.

3 As we saw in the previous slide, city funding is
4 making up a growing share of housing related costs
5 and city funded housing options are making up a
6 greater and greater share of shelter moveouts. In
7 FY24 we are on target for City FHEPS to be the
8 majority, about 65 percent of shelter placements
9 compared to 52 percent in FY20.

10 Moving to slide 20. Looking ahead on our
11 Affordable and Supportive Housing program. As I
12 mentioned earlier, we continue to focus our efforts
13 on moving families and individuals from shelter into
14 permanent housing as quickly as possible. By
15 leveraging social service dollars to address the
16 housing supply shortage, we will create 1,500 new
17 affordable units for households exiting shelter.
18 Through our new state funded Share program, we'll be
19 able to increase shelter move outs for some of the
20 longest-term stays in the DHS system who are not
21 eligible for other subsidies and Project Home, a new
22 pilot program between the New York City Department of
23 Homeless Services and New Destiny Housing, a not-for-
24 profit that provides housing and services to domestic
25 violence survivors and their families. We'll connect
100 families with children living in DHS shelter due

1
2 to domestic violence to safe and affordable permanent
3 housing through a novel housing assistance team
4 model.

5 On slide 21, this slide depicts two bar charts
6 showing trends in emergency rent arrears payments and
7 evictions prevention. To further our goals of
8 keeping New Yorkers in their homes, moving families
9 and individuals out of shelter and helping them
10 remain stably housed, we take advantage of a variety
11 of tools at our disposal. Emergency rent arrears is
12 a cash assistance benefit. This is the graph on the
13 left with the blues bars.

14 In FY23, DSS issued over 300 million emergency
15 rent payments to 43,000 households. Many of these
16 payments go to applicants and recipients of ongoing
17 assistance. The number of households receiving
18 emergency payments in FY23 increased since the
19 pandemic drop in FY21 and FY22. And I can tell you
20 we are on track to well exceed those numbers in FY24.
21 In FY23, DSS's Office of Civil Justice funded legal -
22 their funded legal organizations provided legal
23 assistance to an estimated 98,000 New Yorkers in
24 approximately 43,700 households across New York City
25 facing housing challenges, including eviction,

1 disrepair, landlord harassment and other threats to
2 their tenancies. The number of households served in
3 FY23 is the highest on record since the start of the
4 Access to Counsel Program. These services prove to
5 be essential as the number of eviction filings
6 increased by more than 57,000 or approximately 83
7 percent in the last year. However, it should be
8 noted that eviction filings in FY23 were still
9 significantly lower than prepandemic levels.
10

11 Since 2014, OCJ has provided legal services
12 ranging from brief advice to full representation in
13 291,000 eviction and other housing related matters,
14 with an estimated household sizes totaling up to more
15 700,000 New Yorkers served. Another transition slide
16 where we are transitioning to discussing economic
17 stability.

18 We recognize that more and more New Yorkers rely
19 on our city's resources to make ends meet. In
20 addition to public benefits, rental assistance and
21 other essential resources, I will provide an overview
22 of our career services and other supports that enable
23 New Yorkers to secure steady income and live
24 sustainable lives.
25

1 Slide 23, discuss our work on moving to
2 sustainable futures. DSS offers education, training
3 and employment services to help clients develop job
4 skills and build a career that will lead to success
5 and financial stability. These programs are funded
6 at a total FY24 budget of over \$300 million. As part
7 of our revitalization efforts, we launch the pathway
8 to industrial and construction careers or PINC
9 program to connect clients to jobs in these two
10 industries. We're also restructuring our career
11 service programs and contracts to ensure that we are
12 focused on connecting clients to growth industries
13 with jobs with long-term
14 potential.

15
16 Thanks to changes in state law, we are able to
17 implement new income disregards to support clients
18 economic growth. This means clients who are
19 participating in training programs or who get a job
20 do not immediately face a benefits cliff. As a
21 result they are more likely to achieve economic
22 stability and growth.

23 And one that I am particularly excited about, we
24 are strengthening our pathways for our clients to
25 access human service jobs. In FY23, human service

3 providers hired nearly 6,000 cash assistance clients
4 and again we are on track to well exceed that in
5 FY24. This is a gain for both clients and for
6 providers who are frequently struggling in the labor
7 market.

8 It's a priority to create and expand
9 opportunities that will help low-income New Yorkers
10 achieve sustainability and our work reflects that.
11 On slide 24, we are looking forward. We are issuing
12 new RFPs for career services that will focus on
13 building pathways to sustainable careers. That
14 workforce development program will be released. The
15 RFP there will be released in FY25. We will connect
16 participants to jobs across eight industries:
17 Healthcare, human and social services, technology,
18 industrial and manufacturing, construction, food
19 service and customer service, maintenance and
20 security, and transportation and warehousing.

21 Separately through our partnership with the MTA,
22 we launched the OMNI pilot last week. The 90-day
23 pilot includes 50 volunteer Fair Fairs enrollees who
24 are testing the use of the Fair Fairs discount with
25 the OMNI card. This pilot is the first step to
transitioning the Fair Fairs program. So, the MTA

1
2 OMNI - to the MTA OMNI Fair Pilot system. I will
3 close by underlying our ongoing commitment to break
4 down government silos and to improve access to
5 services. The challenges DSS, HRA, DHS work to
6 confront, bridge across agencies and further across
7 jurisdictional boundaries. Overcoming these
8 challenges goes to the heart of creating the kind of
9 caring compassionate communities we seek to live in.
10 we appreciate the opportunity to testify today and we
11 welcome any questions that you may have. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thanks Commissioner. We've
13 also been joined by Council Members Ossè and Salaam.
14 Thank you for your testimony. I want to get right
15 into it. So, uhm, talking about city contracting
16 with nonprofit providers, DHS contract budget totals
17 \$3.82 billion, which is 97 percent of the agencies
18 budget, largely related to shelter services. HRAs
19 contract budget is nearly \$1 billion and includes
20 programs such as domestic violence shelters, housing
21 and support services for low-income individuals and
22 food to stock our city's food pantries and soup
23 kitchens.

24 Many of these nonprofits find it very challenging
25 to navigate the city's contracting process and

1
2 payments are typically received well after they are
3 provided services. Nonprofits are forced then to
4 front large sums of money, which then often they need
5 to borrow at an additional cost to provide those
6 services to the city. This is truly an untenable
7 dynamic that puts the viability of CBOs and the
8 availability of these essential services at risk.
9 Certainly something that I know as the former Chair
10 of the Contracts Committee.

11 So, are there any updates that you can provide us
12 today since the preliminary budget hearing on what
13 your agency is doing to expedite the contracting and
14 payment timeline for these nonprofit organizations,
15 especially as it relates to the DHS contracted
16 homeless service providers who are all experiencing
17 excessive contracting delays?

18 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Chair. We
19 absolutely take our obligation to a not-for-profit
20 service providers very seriously. As you note, the
21 work that we do is entirely dependent on not-for-
22 profits and we're very grateful for the service that
23 they provide and paying invoices is a key piece of
24 that.

1
2 This has been FY24 has been a particularly
3 challenging year for two reasons. First one and this
4 is citywide, it's not specific to DSS. The city has
5 been migrating from accelerator to passport as both a
6 contracting and invoice payment system. I am fully
7 confident once that migration is complete that it
8 will be better for all of us, both the city, the
9 agencies and also the not-for-profits to have all of
10 the information in one place. It has been a very
11 challenging migration.

12 We're working really closely with our partners at
13 MOCS to make sure that we are resolving issues as
14 promptly as possible and also, MOCS has given us the
15 authority and we are absolutely taking advantage of
16 those to do additional advances to not-for-profits
17 while we are working through those migration issues.

18 The other reason why FY24 has been particularly
19 challenging, particularly on the DHS side is that we
20 have about twice the number of contracts that we
21 typically do because of all the asylum work that we
22 have going on, so it's put added burden on our
23 contracting staff, on the staff that review invoices.
24 We have hired to some individuals to work
25 specifically on the asylum related contracts but

1 we're really approaching this as an all-hands-on deck
2 effort to make sure that we are getting the invoices
3 that did get stuck in the passport process moved
4 through as quickly as possible. That we are t-ing
5 contracts up so that they are fully activated for
6 FY25 and that it is standard operating procedure for
7 us that we do a three month advance at the start of
8 the fiscal year, so that we're able to do those
9 promptly and then we are reviewing our processes from
10 start to finish with respect to both contracting and
11 invoice review to make sure that even when we aren't
12 in this particularly unique moment, that we are
13 looking for ways that we can improve our operations.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Walk us through the
15 timeline. What has to happen once a contract is
16 registered, what has to happen then for the
17 organization to get reimbursed? Walk us through that
18 process and that timeline.

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Sure. Timelines vary but let
20 me talk about the process. So, once a contract is
21 registered, the provider needs to activate their
22 budget now within the passport system right. So,
23 going from a topline budget number to a line item
24 that they can actually invoice in. Part of that
25

1 process is a review of subcontractors, so we need to
2 make sure that any provider that is using
3 subcontractors for example, for food or security
4 within a shelter has gotten three BIDs. That those
5 are in fact independent entities from the parent
6 organization, so we review those. Once the budget is
7 - the subcontractors have been approved, the budget
8 is active in passport. The not-for-profit invoices
9 for those services, that includes providing backup
10 documentation for the cost that they've incurred.
11 That goes through a multilevel review process. It is
12 standard city process, again not specific to DSS that
13 you need to have different levels of the agency staff
14 reviewing the invoice to make sure that there is
15 separation of duties.

17 Once that has been approved, then payment
18 happens. In accordance with the MOCS expedited
19 invoice review procedures that were put into place a
20 couple of years ago, with most vendors, we do a
21 limited prepayment review. So, we're looking at some
22 personnel records and a little bit of additional
23 documentation. Most of the review process is
24 happening on the back end and then I should add
25 specifically for DHS families with children

3 providers, they get paid based on, partially paid
4 based on what we call care days, which is an
5 automatic payment based on the number of people that
6 they had in care that they can then follow up for
7 additional payment based on actual expenses.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is there a limit? Is there
9 a limit to how many invoices an organization can
10 submit at one time for reimbursement?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We strongly encourage
12 providers to invoice in real time so that the
13 standard is invoicing within a couple of weeks of the
14 close, of the preceding month. Uhm, one thing that
15 we do see is that providers will batch their
16 invoices. That does create added complication for us
17 so that we do our best to work through that.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're hearing from
19 providers that they're only allowed to submit three
20 invoices at a time.

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Not something that I'm
22 familiar with. We certainly can look into it and
23 follow up. Again, we strongly encourage the not-for-
24 profits to do it in real time so that we can keep up.
25 You know certainly when we get one invoice, we can
process it more quickly than if we get ten invoices

3 for going back but as far as I know there isn't a
4 limit. I'm happy to follow up.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how - I mean how bad on
6 the scale of one to ten, how bad is the backlog right
7 now?

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So we always have invoices to
9 process, right? We have hundreds and hundreds of
10 contracts and every one of them is submitting 12
11 invoices a year. So, at any given moment we are
12 process hundreds of invoices. As I say, passport has
13 really made this year a little bit challenging
14 because there were budgets and other things that
15 didn't migrate but we're working through that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you have enough staff to
17 do that stuff?

18 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We're really taking an all-
19 hands-on deck approach using overtime when we need to
20 and -

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, that means no?

22 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are taking an all-hands-on
23 deck -

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All hands-on deck means
25 that people that aren't supposed to be dealing with
this are now dealing with this.

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40

3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are very focused on making
4 sure that we get our payments into the hands of our
5 not-for-profits.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so you need more
7 staff. Got it. Uhm, what is the typical turnaround
8 time for reimbursement after a group has submitted
9 their invoices?

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uh, that varies a lot
11 depending on as I say whether or not the invoices are
12 batched. Whether or not it's a contractor that is on
13 what we call enhanced review, which means that
14 there's additional documentation. Whether or not,
15 even for those who aren't in enhanced review that
16 they submitted the documentation that was required.

17 So, but we do shoot to comply with the MOCS
18 standards which is that we should be turning things
19 around within seven days. Again, it's very
20 contextual depending on what documentation is
21 provided.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: If a provider heard the
23 seven-day thing, would they die laughing?

24 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are working very closely
25 with providers. They call me all the time. They
26 call Administrator Carter. They call Administrator

1 French. We are working through the issues. I think
2 right now we are certainly not meeting the seven-day
3 standard. This has been a particularly challenging
4 year because of the migration and because of our
5 additional contract volume but we are very focused on
6 this. I can tell you I meet with the team every week
7 to make sure that we are reviewing where we stand.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I mean I want you to
10 see the Council as partners in this. I mean,
11 ultimately we want to help you get this work done.
12 We want these providers to get paid on time. They do
13 invaluable work. So, you know if you need help, you
14 have to tell us.

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Absolutely, thank you Council
16 Member.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Even if we're wearing you
18 know disguises in a diner somewhere. You got to tell
19 us this stuff. Uhm, can you tell us how many FY22,
20 FY23 contracts have not yet been fully paid out?

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I'm going to have to get back
22 to you on that.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. The workforce
24 enhancement initiative funds, have they all been
25 allocated to the contracted provider budgets? If

3 not, could you tell us the percentage and the dollar
4 amount that's outstanding?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: The majority - yes, they've
6 all been allocated.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, uhm, still on the
8 topic of the nonprofit providers and the payment
9 delays. So, at the Preliminary Budget Hearing back
10 in March, the Speaker asked for a list of all
11 nonprofit with contracting and payment delays at the
12 time. You said you'd get back to us with the info,
13 so we included it in our follow up letter to you,
14 which we didn't get a response back until Friday.
15 Does this mean that DSS does not actually have a list
16 of the providers who are awaiting payments?

17 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, as I mentioned, we are at
18 any given time, we are processing hundreds of
19 invoices. It is something that is moving in real
20 time. We are working very closely with our
21 providers. Our ability to do reporting right now is
22 a little bit stretched because we are midstream in
23 this migration working very closely with MOCS, again,
24 I want to reiterate that MOCS has been a really
25 terrific partner but we are working very closely with

3 all of our not-for-profits and troubleshooting and
4 resolving technical issues as they come up.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, uhm, the Executive
6 Plan includes PEGs for both HRA and DHS related to
7 asylum seeker response costs. For HRA the savings
8 are \$4 million in FY24. For DHS the savings are \$267
9 million in FY24 and \$56 million in FY25. Could you
10 tell us how those PEG savings were calculated?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, I'm going to have to defer
12 to OMB on the specific calculations but in general,
13 we have not been changing or reducing services for
14 our asylum seeker clients. Uhm, there's a lot of
15 uncertainty in the volume of people that we are going
16 to be serving. The number of people coming into the
17 system on any given day is very much a function of
18 federal border policy. What we have found over the
19 last year is that some of the early projections were
20 over estimating how many people we would be able to
21 serve. We have been able to manage the census down
22 and there's been some less robust intake at certain
23 points and time. So, what you are seeing in the DHS
24 budget is adjustment of projected spending based on
25 census rather than changes in service delivery.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so they've been able
4 to find savings not by decreasing services?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, I'm speaking
6 specifically for the DHS system, right? We are
7 sheltering about 50 percent of the asylum seekers.
8 You know this really has been a whole government
9 effort. We at DHS are very grateful for that. In
10 the early months, it was all on our shoulders and it
11 was really very challenging. So, it's important that
12 there are - that it is a whole government effort.
13 That does mean there are a lot of agencies
14 represented in the conversations. Speaking
15 specifically for DHS, I can say that our PEGs related
16 to asylum are entirely about census re-forecast.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, uhm, we know one of
18 the tools the Administration has been using to manage
19 asylum costs is the term limit notices, right? Could
20 you give us a better understanding of the cost
21 implications of that policy? How many term limit
22 notices has DHS issued to date?

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, to clarify as I mentioned,
24 we're serving about 50 percent of the asylum seekers.
25 Overwhelmingly the asylum seekers in the DHS system
are families with children and families with children

1
2 in the DHS system are not receiving notices at this
3 time. We've issued about just under 3,600 notices to
4 adults.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 3,600 only to adults,
6 right? Single adults?

7 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And, and so what the total
9 estimated savings from those, the term limit notices?
10 The time limit notices?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I'm going to have to defer to
12 OMB on that one.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: OMB, okay. Okay, uhm, I
14 want to talk about the subways. February 18, 2022,
15 the Mayor released the Subway Safety Plan outlining
16 the city's strategy to address street homelessness
17 and safety on public transit. The plan included
18 health services and outreach as well as new drop-in
19 centers, safe haven beds and stabilization beds. The
20 FY23 Executive Plan included baselined city funding
21 of \$171.3 million starting in FY23 to support the
22 Subway Safety Plan. FY25 Preliminary Budget included
23 an addition \$16 million in FY24. Could you tell us
24 how much has been spent this far in this Fiscal Year
25 on the Subway Safety Plan?

3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you and let me also add
4 my thanks for your diligence on focusing on
5 conditions in the subway. We really appreciate your
6 attention there. So, our total budget for services
7 for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness is
8 about \$300 million. That's inclusive of the subway
9 safety plan. In FY24, we do expect to spend all of
10 that. It includes outreach. It includes our low
11 barrier beds, safe havens and stabilization beds. It
12 includes drop-in centers and ancillary services like
13 transportation. Uhm, because we have really folded
14 the Subway Safety Plan into our overall streets and
15 subways response, it's slightly challenging to
16 disentangle those pieces.

17 I will say in FY23, some of the beds that we were
18 bringing online had a slightly different later start
19 point than originally planned, so there were, we
20 didn't spend all of the budget in FY23 but we are
21 moving very quickly and focusing on this and we do
22 expect as I say to spend about the \$300 million in
23 FY24.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

25 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Administrator Carter, anything
you would like to add?

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3 JOSLYN CARTER: Thank you Commissioner and thank
4 you Council Members, as Commissioner said for really
5 your support with the Subway Safety Plan and really
6 the folks who are out experiencing homelessness and
7 you know the work that we've been doing with those
8 who are in the subway and on the streets and so, we
9 have really been working diligently to bring those
10 who are in on the street and continue to do so.

11 So, it has been, it is continuous work with our
12 outreach teams. We've doubled the numbers of staff
13 who have been out 24/7 just doing that work that it
14 takes. Lots of, lot of engagement to those who are
15 on the street.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you tell us how many
17 new safe havens and stabilization, the low barrier
18 beds have been open during the current
19 administration?

20 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yup, just about 1,100.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many beds are in
22 the pipeline?

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: There are another
24 approximately 1,100 in the pipeline. We expect that
25 the majority of them will open this calendar year

3 although construction timelines sometimes vary,
4 sometimes substantially.

5 I do want to go back and correct one statement I
6 made. The notices that we issued included some
7 number of adult families but no children under 18.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so you said there
9 were 3,600 right time limit notifications?

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, they're all adults but
11 that's single adults and adult families.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Staying on the low
13 barrier beds, what is the average vacancy rate for
14 those, the safe haven and stabilization beds?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: It varies between about three
16 and five percent.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I got a couple more
18 and I want to hand it over to my Co-Chair. So,
19 talking just in my own experience in the end of line
20 outreach in my district on 95th Street, which is the
21 end of line station, uhm I think we can all agree
22 that there's outreach happening but it's not really
23 working. There's still many, many unsheltered
24 individuals congregating on the subways and the
25 station and I really personally have not seen a big

1
2 improvement since the Administration made this Subway
3 Safety Plan investment.

4 In addition to the subways, there's a woman in my
5 district whose been living on the same spot for so
6 long that she's been immortalized on Google maps and
7 it's heartbreaking and inhumane, while it's not
8 illegal to live on the street, uhm it's heartbreaking
9 and inhumane that we allow human beings to reside on
10 the streets for so long. And I wanted to talk a bit
11 about the involuntary removals. Could you tell us -
12 I have a larger point here but could you tell us how
13 many involuntary removals were made in FY23 and thus
14 far in FY24?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, thank you Council
16 Member. We did see that question when it came
17 through last night. As you know, involuntary
18 removals are an interagency function and so, we're
19 going to need to collaborate with our colleagues and
20 get back to you but we will circle back with that
21 data.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, my question then is how
23 many times does an outreach worker have to engage
24 with someone before it inherently would trigger an
25 involuntary removal, right? If we are visiting a

1 client 20, 30, 40, 50 times, how long before you say,
2 this person clearly needs help? I mean someone
3 saying no, I'm fine. I'm living on the street here
4 for three years.
5

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So let me start and I will
7 pass it to Administrator Carter. Individuals who are
8 experiencing unsheltered homelessness, particularly
9 in New York City where 95 percent of people
10 experiencing homelessness are in shelter, these are
11 individuals who have fallen through every level of
12 society, every safety net that there is right?
13 Whether it's family, religious institutions,
14 government, you name it, we collectively have failed
15 them.

16 There is often very significant trust issues that
17 people are dealing with and there are instances where
18 it takes hundreds of interactions with an outreach
19 worker to build relationships to help people come
20 inside. One of the things that we have found that
21 makes the biggest difference is whether or not we
22 have a placement option that we can offer that is in
23 the community in which that person, that that person
24 calls home because even though they aren't inside,
25 even though they are experiencing unsheltered

1 homelessness, they are connected to a particular
2 community, right? It's one of the reasons why we are
3 very deliberately siting those low barrier beds near
4 and aligned stations. We would love to collaborate
5 with you on a potential site but you know, in answer
6 to your direct question, there is no if this many
7 interactions, then involuntary removal. There's a
8 very specific legal standard around danger to self
9 and others and if a person is not in immediate health
10 danger, be it experiencing unsheltered homelessness,
11 we do have a legal right to take them inside. That
12 doesn't -

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Does it inherent mental
15 health danger when someone's saying no, I'm fine
16 living on the street for three, four years?

17 MOLLY WASOW PARK: It doesn't mean we give up on
18 them. We are going to keep trying. We will keep
19 engaging. We will keep looking. You know I will say
20 I understand - while I understand the frustration, I
21 understand the impulse to look about for ways that we
22 can get people inside. I do want to challenge a bit
23 the idea that what we're doing isn't working right?
24 We placed more than 1,000 people into permanent
25 housing last year and that doesn't account the people

1 that we placed in safe havens and stabilization beds.

2 There's absolutely more work to do. I will be the
3 first to say there is 100 percent more work to do.

4 We have to keep at it and I'm very grateful for the

5 Adams administration for the investment that they

6 have made in this work but we are seeing signs of

7 success. One of the things that I think we need to

8 be doing collectively is looking across multiple

9 levels of government, right? Uhm, although there are

10 instances where you see a given individual on the

11 street for a long period of time, in other instances

12 what you're seeing is people who are being discharged

13 from psychiatric institutions. For example directly

14 the street. So, we need to think about how we as a

15 community are doing better discharge planning so that

16 we're not growing the number of people experiencing

17 unsheltered.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Look I don't think any of

19 my colleagues would debate or say otherwise that this

20 is not extremely challenging work to work with

21 chronically unsheltered individuals. I just don't

22 know if it's an efficient use of your outreach teams

23 time to visit someone hundreds of times before saying

1
2 this person clearly needs help and doesn't realize
3 it.

4 JOSLYN CARTER: So, and I'm going to speak from
5 the social work perspective because I'm a licensed
6 clinician. I think one of the things that is
7 important for clinicians and now we do have nurses
8 with our teams that are going out to really do full
9 assessments and we do want to build trust with those
10 who are on the street and for particular individuals
11 who are hard to reach or who are and this particular
12 person who have been on the streets to build that
13 relationship and it does take time. It might take
14 six months for one person. It may take much more
15 time for another person and this is the case where
16 this is what's happening and for us, really being out
17 every single day engaging that individual is
18 important because relationships is what we know is
19 going to make a difference and so, we're sending
20 teams out.

21 And the other thing to know is that you know
22 1,000 people have moved to permanent housing but
23 7,000 people have come in into shelter off the
24 street, right? So, there's that other piece that's
25 happening and for the teams that are out there, we

3 have outreach workers. We have a psychiatric person
4 who is licensed who is always going out to talk to
5 that individual. At some point, that person is going
6 to say yes and that's going to be the win. So, it's
7 always being persistent. It's not giving up on that
8 individual and knowing that the yes is going to come,
9 I can't tell you it's tomorrow but the yes is going
10 to come at some point so we cannot give up.

11 And frustration can lead us to simply throwing my
12 hands up but the teams know that this is going to
13 come and that's what we need to continue to do.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You mentioned nurses,
15 during the Preliminary Hearing back in March, you
16 mentioned that you were planning to issue an RFP for
17 nurses for the Subway plan, has that been released or
18 when will that be released?

19 JOSLYN CARTER: That's going to be released
20 shortly.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what's the anticipated
22 scope? How many nurses are you looking to hire?

23 JOSLYN CARTER: I will get back to you on that.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so the last thing for
25 me. The most recent report that I got from DHS about
outreach at this end of line station in my district,

1 only nine percent of unsheltered individuals that
2 your teams had engaged with were placed in shelters.
3 Can you tell me, how are we measuring the
4 effectiveness of the Mayor's Subway Safety Plan and
5 how does that stack up to other end of line stations?
6

7 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you. Again, I will
8 start and ask Administrator Carter to chime in. I
9 mean when we look at success, we're really looking at
10 the number of engagements, the number of people who
11 come inside, the length of time that people stay
12 inside, our numbers of permanent housing placements,
13 we look at the overall number of people on the
14 street. You know I can - we do a hope, what we call
15 our hope count every year in January where we do a
16 full survey of people who are experiencing
17 unsheltered homelessness. We have not yet, we're
18 still in the final stages of processing the results
19 for this year's hope count but what I can tell you is
20 that over the last couple of years, while other major
21 cities have seen fairly significant increases in the
22 number of people experiencing unsheltered
23 homelessness, we have not. So, again, absolutely
24 still more work to do because anybody on the street,
25 it's not good for the person, it's not good for the

3 community but I do think that there are signs of hope
4 there.

5 Administrator Carter, what would you like to add?

6 JOSLYN CARTER: You know I think that any one day
7 that a person comes in it's a win for us, so we
8 believe and every person's family where a person
9 comes in, that's a win. So, for us, you know coming
10 in from the street or the subway, that's a win for
11 that particular family and that particular
12 individual. So, for nine percent, but that's nine
13 percent of humans who are no longer sleeping on the
14 street and have a bed at night, so that's a win for
15 all of us.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We've also been
17 joined by Council Members Powers and Sanchez. Uhm,
18 and Restler and Banks, sorry. We're now going to
19 hand it over to my Co-Chair Deputy Speaker Ayala.
20 Thank you team. Commissioner, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Chair Brannan. I
22 just wanted to add that you know the biggest
23 complaint that we receive from you know unsheltered
24 individuals is that they do not feel safe in the
25 existing shelter settings for singles. Uhm,
primarily for individuals that have some sort of

1 mental health diagnosis, it is a very difficult and
2 challenging process and I wonder how much of you know
3 the agencies attention is geared towards making the
4 necessary changes to ensure that those same
5 individuals feel safer in those environments. I know
6 Wards Island for instance is huge but they have a
7 dormitory style quarters, right, living quarters that
8 are pretty dated and do not allow for a sense of
9 safety and privacy that folks are looking for and
10 that's always been a deterrent to try and to get
11 those same people in.
12

13 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, thank you Deputy
14 Speaker. We absolutely realize that we cannot run a
15 one size fits all shelter system right? So, we at
16 this point have about 3,900 what we call our low
17 barrier beds. There's the stabilization beds and
18 safe havens. Those facilities tend to be a bit
19 smaller, a bit lower density than a more traditional
20 shelter although there is a continuum and we're
21 really investing in developing higher quality real
22 estate closing the sites that don't meet our
23 standards and bringing on new sites that are high
24 quality. So, we have closed one of the more
25 challenged sites on Wards Island, for example.

3 But we also are really paying attention to what
4 is happening in the shelters. We take safety and
5 security of all of our clients very, very seriously.
6 You know we track the number of incidents per
7 thousand clients. I have it in here somewhere, I can
8 pull it up but I believe the number of violent
9 incidents per thousand residents within the single
10 adult system is about 3 per 1,000 residents. That's
11 still again still room to grow but it is something
12 that we are working on and where we are seeing
13 progress.

14 Another point of progress that I would call out
15 you know in an era where overdose deaths are
16 unfortunately spiking across the country, we have
17 seen a reduction in the number of overdose deaths
18 within the DHS shelter system, which is very much a
19 reflection of our focus on harm reduction and making
20 sure that we have Narcan distributed across all of
21 our shelters. So, there is no one size fits all
22 model. For some people the dormitory setting is the
23 right one so that we can make sure that there are
24 eyes on an individual. In other cases, the lower
25 density setting is the right option but we are
building and investing in a diversity of settings.

3 I think a very important part of our work with
4 clients experiencing behavioral health issues is our
5 partnership work and we are really engaging in and
6 building out what we are calling our complex case
7 review processes where we're bringing together all of
8 the agencies, DOHMH, H&H, State Office of Mental
9 Health, others who might touch a client, who might be
10 able to offer some resources. At the end of the day,
11 DHS is not a medical agency, right? We are a
12 sheltering agency so making sure that we are
13 connecting people to the services to which they are
14 entitled and helping them build connections to in
15 community services and the resources offered by the
16 agencies that are fundamentally medical agencies is
17 really critical to our work.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Does that include offering
19 those services onsite or would those be like referral
20 based?

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: In many cases, most cases we
22 have some relatively light touch medical services
23 onsite. I don't want to be in a situation where we
24 are ever conditioning peoples access to healthcare
25 based on remaining in shelter, right? The goal is
permanent housing and your healthcare should go with

1
2 you. So, our emphasis is on making sure that we are
3 connecting people, whether it's to a primary care
4 physician or completing a SPOA application, so they
5 can connect to team if they have more serious needs.
6 So, yes, some onsite services but it's not the
7 primary tool.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I think that we need to
9 work on that because I do believe that there has to
10 be a level of stabilization before a person is -
11 especially a person that has a serious mental health
12 diagnosis is prepared and ready to accept and follow
13 up right with the community-based program approach.
14 And to assume that that's what you know that people
15 are going to follow up and they're going to go to
16 their doctors' appointments when they haven't yet
17 been stabilized. It's unrealistic.

18 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, no I would agree with
19 you on that absolutely Council Member and so, the
20 case workers on site, their job is to make sure that
21 those bridges and those referrals are happening.
22 That it isn't just a you know here's the address of
23 the doctor but that it's actually a warm handoff and
24 supports to continue with that.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that. Uhm, I
4 have a question regarding the community food
5 connection and the Council's budget response
6 proposal. So, HRAs Community Food Connection Program
7 formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance
8 Program provides an array of essential food items to
9 emergency food providers, including food pantries and
10 soup kitchens across the city. This program is
11 especially important since hunger remains much higher
12 than it was prepandemic and undocumented individuals
13 are not eligible for SNAP, leaving them to rely on
14 pantries.

15 We were very happy when the program was expanded
16 to offer a wide variety of food options including
17 fresh fruit and vegetable to providers. In Fiscal
18 Year '23, the Council called on the Administration to
19 increase the baseline budget for CFC and it increased
20 the budget by \$30 million for Fiscal Years 2023 and
21 2024. As of the Executive Plan, the CFC budget is
22 \$57.1 million but just for Fiscal Years 2023 and
23 2024. No, I'm sorry, million for Fiscal Year 2024
24 dropping to \$25.1 million in Fiscal Year 2025 and
25 then dropping further to the baseline budget of \$20.9
million starting in Fiscal Year 2026.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH THE
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3 In its budget response for the past two years,
4 the Council called on the Administration to increase
5 the baseline CFC at \$60 million. It was very
6 disappointing that no additional funding was added to
7 the Executive plan to bolster and continue to CFC
8 program at the level needed to meet the demand. Can
9 you tell us what was the actual spending for Fiscal
10 Year 2023?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: In FY 2023 we spent the whole
12 budget of about \$53 million.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: \$53 million. I mean, I just
14 I don't understand what the rationale for making any
15 level of reduction to the program is, especially
16 considering the fact that so many people are still
17 relying so heavily on our food pantries, soup
18 kitchens. I mean, I see the lines just on my block
19 stretch out for two blocks, just people waiting all
20 day.

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We absolutely believe that CFC
22 is a critical program providing critical services and
23 we are working very closely with OMB on the FY25
24 budget.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Requesting an increase?

3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We're working very closely
4 with OMB to make sure that the program is funded
5 appropriately.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay and by appropriately,
7 I'm assuming that keeping it at spending levels.
8 Uhm, how much has been spent this far for Fiscal Year
9 2024 and how much are you anticipating spending by
10 the end of the Fiscal Year?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I'm going to pass it to First
12 Deputy Jill Berry who can speak about how the program
13 works.

14 JILL BERRY: Yeah, so we ensure that we fully
15 expend the CFC budget each year by working with the
16 vendor, especially as we get closer to the end of
17 Fiscal Year to make sure that they have fully spent
18 all of the funds on foods that then are in the
19 warehouse and we can quickly redistribute out to
20 pantries, so we fully expect to spend the full budget
21 again this year.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, so are you part of
23 conversations on - how did we get to the place where
24 the reductions that were announced became a thing.
25 How you know because I'm assuming if we're spending
more, if the need is higher, how did we get to a

1
2 point where we're rationalizing cutting so
3 significantly by 2025?

4 JILL BERRY: There are a number of places in our
5 budget. This is one of them where there are what we
6 refer to as a funding cliffs, where we work very
7 closely with OMB to make sure that on a year-by-year
8 basis, that we are aligning appropriately.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, uhm are you aware of
10 any - are CFC providers given a set of food grant
11 amounts per month or quarter and how is that
12 determined?

13 JILL BERRY: They, CFC providers are given an
14 allocation every six months. That allocation is
15 intended to last for the six months. We also started
16 to give them monthly reports so they can see what
17 their spending is against their allocation. The way
18 that the funding is allocated amongst the CFC
19 providers is looking at a combination of factors.
20 The numbers of SNAP recipients in the district, where
21 there are food deserts, where there are not very many
22 pantries. We look at the tree neighborhoods, racial
23 equity indicators and also the history of spending so
24 that we are allocating through the funds that are -

3 fully allocating the funds available throughout the
4 city.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you communicating with
6 the providers regularly to kind of I guess identify
7 areas that have become high need?

8 JILL BERRY: Yeah absolutely, there's always a
9 little bit of funding that's set aside as a reserve
10 for as new pantries want to roll in, so they don't
11 have to wait till the next six-month allocation and
12 if we see pantries are under spending or over
13 spending, we are in communication with them to
14 understand is that because you have funding from some
15 other funding source or are you short on in needing
16 funds for CFC. So, it's a regular ongoing
17 conversation with our providers.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Does the CFC offer any
19 operational grants or assistance with help providers?

20 JILL BERRY: We do. We have uhm a grant program
21 that we operate every year. We just recently sent
22 out our awards for this year. It's about \$2 million
23 where pantries can apply for grants for things like
24 new refrigerators or to pay the coordinator to manage
25 volunteers for the year of things like that.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And if a CFC needs more food,
4 how long does it take before you're able to kind of
5 help increase I guess their access to additional
6 resources to get that food to them?

7 JILL BERRY: So, the vendor is responsible for
8 sourcing and making food available. Generally they
9 are - there's a catalogue, an online catalogue of
10 food that's available to the CFC providers and they
11 can identify which foods they want, what's
12 appropriate for their pantry for the clients that
13 come to their pantries. They can balance it with
14 food they may be getting from City Harvest. They can
15 go to CFC and have a little bit more choice and put
16 together a well-balanced pantry bag.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Has the quality of the food
18 been compromised based on the number of inflated
19 number of folks that are in need of such assistance
20 on the same budget?

21 JILL BERRY: No we work with [INAUDIBLE 01:11:20]
22 to make sure that all the food is appropriate.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Uhm, as we all know,
24 the city shelter system didn't just become
25 overburdened in April 2022 with the unanticipated
arrival of asylum seekers. The DHS system had

1 already been strained for many years. One of the
2 proven strategies the city can employ to address
3 housing instability is the provision of rental
4 assistance vouchers. The Council has repeatedly
5 called on the Administration to increase baselined
6 funding for City FHEPS vouchers to align with the
7 actual spending more closely and to ensure that HRA
8 has adequate staffing to support the efficient
9 administration of the vouchers.
10

11 The Council has also called on the Administration
12 to fund HRAs budget to meet the requirements of the
13 package of legislation that the Council recently
14 passed to expand voucher eligibility, which became
15 effective January 9, 2024. We are very happy to see
16 that funding was added for City FHEPS in the
17 Executive Plan with \$614.9 million added in Fiscal
18 Year 2024 and \$540.3 million baselined starting in
19 Fiscal Year 2025. This brings the total funding for
20 rental assistance up to \$809.9 million in Fiscal Year
21 2024, \$702.3 million in 2025 and approximately \$629
22 million baselined starting for Fiscal Year 2026. How
23 did HRA determine how much to add to the baseline?

24 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you. There were
25 discussions back and forth with OMB. We can

1
2 certainly get back to you on the nuances of the
3 calculation but as you say, it was designed to align
4 much closer to actual spending in the past. There's
5 always a certain level of uncertainty around rental
6 assistance spending, right? It is a function of the
7 number of people participating. The size of the
8 families, right? So, whether or not you know the
9 people who come in the door next year, it's more
10 singles or more large families. What happens with
11 rent guideline board increases. What happens with
12 fair market rent increases and then the housing
13 market as a whole? So, there is, with all of those
14 variables that are outside our control, there is
15 always going to be some level of uncertainty as to
16 what spending is going to look like. So, I think,
17 I'm extremely glad that we substantially course
18 corrected the baseline here understanding that we're
19 going to need to adjust on an ongoing basis and that
20 would be the case no matter what.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah. What was the actual
22 spending on rental assistance in Fiscal Year 2023?

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, specifically for City
24 FHEPS and related programs, it was \$508 million in
25 FY23. For everything that we consider rental

1 assistance as a stand-alone rental assistance
2 program, it would be \$553 million. My old lady eyes
3 are giving me trouble. I will note that there is, we
4 provide rental assistance through a number of our
5 cash assistance program, so for example, there are
6 about 33,000 households within HASA that receive
7 enhanced rental assistance as part of their cash
8 assistance grant. So, those costs aren't reflected
9 in the numbers that I just gave you.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay and what is the actual
12 spending thus far in Fiscal Year 2024 and how do you
13 anticipate spending? How much do you anticipate
14 spending by the end of the fiscal year?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, \$520 million year to date
16 for Fiscal Year 2024. Again that is specifically on
17 rental assistance programs, not including the related
18 cash assistance. The FY24 budget is \$842 million
19 again for those rental specific programs.

20 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you anticipate that you're
21 going to be spending that amount?

22 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, in that neighborhood,
23 yes.
24
25

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. And realistically, how
4 much does HRA expect to spend on rental assistance in
5 Fiscal Year 2025?

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I mean again because of the
7 factors that I mentioned around what happens with FMR
8 versus rent guidelines, board, sizes families, it is
9 a moving target. The last couple of years we've seen
10 quite large changes in Fair Market rent values set by
11 HUD, so I think I would expect it to be in the
12 neighborhood of what we are spending this year but
13 there's a lot of uncertainty and we'll have to
14 revisit that with OMB.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, can you tell us
16 currently what funding sources are used to support
17 City FHEPS and how much funding is city and how much
18 comes from non-city sources?

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Sure. City FHEPS is a tax
20 levy program. This year and last year there was a
21 little bit of stimulus funding that was swapped in
22 there but essentially it's a tax levy funded program.
23 Some of the other rental assistance programs, which
24 are substantially for the most part, substantially
25 smaller but they do bring in other sources of
funding, so we have a very small home which is a HUD

3 grant, tenant based rental assistance program that's
4 federal. State FHEPS is a mix of city and state
5 funding. SODA again, very small at this point but
6 that's a city funded program, and then as I mentioned
7 HASA is a cash assistance program, so that's 71
8 percent city funded.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: 71 percent?

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: City funded, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. For all the rental
12 assistance programs, how much funding is the city and
13 how much - well, I guess we've kind of covered some
14 of that but how much comes from non-city resources
15 and what are the non-city resources?

16 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uh, yeah, so as the vast
17 majority of it is city funding for all of our housing
18 stability programs, including rental assistance and
19 then things like Homebase. I think we are - this was
20 in my testimony. I think it was about 85 percent
21 city funded. I'll confirm that number.

22 The other funding sources are a little bit of
23 federal money and some state money for particular
24 programs. My team just passed me a note that 33,000
25 are all HASA clients, 27,000 of them are getting
rental assistance.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Do you anticipate
4 spending down all federal pandemic funding allocated
5 to rental assistance before the expiration of the end
6 of the calendar year?

7 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are tracking all of the
8 expiration dates on our stimulus funding very closely
9 and making sure that we adhere to them, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. I would like an update
11 on the size of the current program, then talking
12 about the rental assistance, enrollment and
13 processing. Uhm and how it is serving clients. At
14 the Preliminary Budget hearing you testified that
15 38,000 households were currently enrolled in City
16 FHEPS and in your follow up letter that we received
17 last Friday, you indicated that 41,000 households are
18 currently enrolled in the program. How many
19 individuals are enrolled in and are using all HRA
20 rental assistance voucher programs?

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, we provide rental
22 assistance for about 70,000 households every year
23 including City FHEPS, HASA and all of those other
24 rental subsidy programs that I just rattled off.
25 That makes us functionally one of the biggest housing
authorities in the country. So, although we are -

1
2 our identity is not as a housing agency, we are in
3 fact a very significant player in that space.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, if I am reading this
5 correctly, over the past two months the enrollment
6 increased by 3,000 households or nearly eight
7 percent. Is that correct?

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Uhm, why was there such a
10 large increase and how much does the enrollment
11 typically increase from month to month?

12 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, we have been incredibly
13 focused on shelter exits and connecting generally low
14 income households with affordable housing that 41,000
15 and the change includes both in community moves and
16 in shelter. Traditionally, it's about two-thirds of
17 the vouchers are going to people in shelter. We've
18 been, it is a huge priority us as an agency. We are
19 focused on our housing programs every day because we
20 know it is so critical to the work that we do. We've
21 got a four-pronged work plan that we have going on
22 within the agency to make sure that we are really
23 maximizing peoples access to housing. We're focused
24 on getting as many people vouchered as possible.
25 That's the first step right? So, that can include

1 getting access to a City FHEPS voucher but it also
2 includes for example, the Share program that I
3 mentioned in my testimony. We're really thinking
4 about housing supply. Although DSS is not
5 fundamentally a housing development agency. We live
6 in a city with a 1.4 percent vacancy rate. It's even
7 lower rent units. If we don't think about housing
8 supply, we're never connecting our clients to
9 housing. So, for example, we change the rules around
10 City FHEPS. We made it usable statewide. That's not
11 absolutely growing the supply of housing but it is
12 growing the supply that is available to our clients
13 and we are actually absolutely growing the supply of
14 housing because we're using social service contracts
15 now to support what is essentially project based
16 rental assistance that not-for-profits can use to
17 acquire development financing.

19 And then the third workstream is really thinking
20 about how many housing packages we're getting in the
21 door. It is you know, not-for-profits, our shelter
22 providers are working with clients, making sure that
23 they are assembling all of the required, identifying
24 an apartment and assembling all of the required
25 information. It's hard work. It's detailed work.

1 We're doing a lot of work to train not-for-profit
2 providers to set clear expectations and to make sure
3 that we are providing sufficient support so that they
4 can meet those expectations. And then the last
5 workstream is making sure that we within the agency
6 are doing everything that we can to process the
7 housing packages as promptly as possible.
8

9 So, that means investing in technology. We have,
10 I've talked about it before but an end-to-end
11 processing system called Current, which we are
12 rolling out. We are intentionally doing that rollout
13 slowly because we don't want to screw it up for
14 anything that is important as rental assistance, we
15 want to make sure we get it right but that system is
16 really helping. We've been streamlining processes.
17 We cut the number of documents from 17 to 12. We
18 extended the timeline that documents are good for so
19 people don't have to refresh them as often, on and
20 on. So, by working on all four pathways
21 simultaneously, I think what we see is the number of
22 shelter exits is increasing quite dramatically.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's good news. Uhm, do we
24 know how many individuals have been deemed eligible
25

3 and have received shopping letters but are still
4 residing in shelter?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: There are about 11,000
6 households with shopping letters in shelter, which I
7 think really very much a reflection of that 1.4
8 percent vacancy rate that I mentioned. It's hard to
9 find housing.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, understood and does HRA
11 currently have any backlogs at any step of the
12 process in administering the rental assistance
13 vouchers?

14 MOLLY WASOW PARK: No, I wouldn't say that we
15 have backlogs. Uhm, we've looked at the time that it
16 takes to process on average and this is I will say
17 based on a sample of data until our end-to-end system
18 is fully rolled out. You can't do it comprehensively
19 but on average it takes uh three to four weeks from
20 the point and time that we receive a package until
21 checks are cut. There are absolutely exceptions
22 around that average cases that are particularly
23 challenging but we troubleshoot those.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I haven't been receiving as
25 many calls, I'll acknowledge that. Uhm, how many
people currently are on staff at each DHS and HRA

1
2 tasked with Administering the rental assistance
3 voucher programs and how many specifically work on
4 the City FHEPS program?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: That's one of those entirely
6 rational straight forward questions. It's actually
7 quite complicated to answer because of the diverse
8 nature of our rental assistance programs. So, there
9 are about 200 people that are specifically whose jobs
10 are specific to rental assistance processing. But it
11 is an effort that crosses the agency right, so that
12 doesn't include cash assistance staff that are
13 supporting HASA clients for example. It doesn't
14 include the fiscal team that is cutting checks. It
15 doesn't include, so across the board there's really
16 hundreds of people who are touching the rental
17 assistance process.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are any of these positions
19 vacant?

20 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We're a 14,000 percent agency.
21 We always have vacancies but we've been really
22 prioritizing hiring particularly frontline staff.
23 OMB has been a great partner allowing us to continue
24 to move forward despite the hiring freeze and one of
25 the titles that we have been really focused on all

1
2 along have not paused any hiring is the case workers,
3 including those who are working on rehousing efforts.

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Uhm, in November of
5 2021, Local Law 125 of 2021 was enacted.

6 Establishing prevailing wage requirements for
7 security guards as city contracted shelters. I was
8 really proud of that bill. I was a co-sponsor. And
9 since the passage of the legislation, the prevailing
10 wage has been funded on a year-to-year basis. How
11 much was spent on the prevailing wage increase in
12 Fiscal Year 2023 and how much do you expect to spend
13 in 2024? I'm still confused you know in terms of why
14 it hasn't been baselined?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, I have the 2024 numbers
16 with me and we can circle back on 2023. For 2024, we
17 project to spend \$63.5 million for DHS and \$34
18 million for HRA on those prevailing wage. You know,
19 I hear you about the annual funding. OMB has worked
20 with us every year to adjust the budget to make sure
21 that we are meeting our legal requirements. As I
22 mentioned, there are a number of places where we have
23 some cliffs in our budget. I mean but it's Local
24 Law, so has there been any conversation about
25 baselining?

1
2 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We talk to OMB every day about
3 the specifics of our budget and I will certainly pass
4 on the feedback.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. Uhm, shelter, so this
6 is on the DHS Shelter Provider Contracts. The
7 Adopted Fiscal Year 2024 Budget included a baseline
8 reduction of \$36.2 million for DHS shelter service
9 providers. Which providers continue to express has
10 been quite painful for them? At the Preliminary
11 Budget Hearing, you testified that DHS, like all city
12 agencies, was required to take a PEG and that given
13 the agencies predominantly contracted services, the
14 options possible were very limited.

15 Now that the Fiscal outlook has improved and some
16 PEGs were restored in other agency budgets, do you
17 expect that the DHS PEG would be restored at
18 adoption?

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you. So, just to
20 clarify, this is a PEG from last year. At this time,
21 we are working with every provider to implement it in
22 the least painful way possible. I certainly
23 recognize that least painful doesn't mean not
24 painful. All of our providers are doing critical
25 work, providing critical services and resources are

3 necessary but we are working on the implementation
4 plans. As circumstances change, I will certainly -

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: But circumstances have
6 changed. The Fiscal outlook is great, so -

7 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I think the - I will certainly
8 defer to OMB on the overall Fiscal picture. I would
9 say there are slightly fewer headwinds then there
10 were but there are still real challenges associated
11 with the end of stimulus funding, the asylum crisis.
12 It is not quite as challenging as it was but it is
13 still quite challenging so but again, I will defer to
14 OMB on the overall fiscal picture.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Have all the impacted
16 contracts been amended and is this change fully
17 implemented across all the providers?

18 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are working with providers
19 on contract amendments. The contract amendments that
20 we have going on were largely done with the allowance
21 amendments and budget changes, but at any given time
22 because we have so many changes going on, it's quite
23 likely that we have some amendments going on but the
24 PEG has been largely phased in.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. At the Preliminary
Budget Hearing testimony from HRA staff, deferred

1 from what HRA leadership testified to regarding the
2 benefits backlog. HRA indicated that the backlog was
3 nearly eliminated and that mandatory overtime was no
4 longer being heavily relied upon. Employees later
5 testified that mandatory overtime was still happening
6 often at some sites and that HRA still had a backlog
7 between 18,000 to 21,000 applications as of March
8 7th. In addition to staff, the staff claimed that
9 the technology changes HRA has made such as those
10 relating to the ANGIE system severely hinder their
11 ability to work efficiently because the system does
12 not allow workers to double check applications.
13

14 It is prone to glitches and that the IT tickets
15 are not quickly resolved. Staff members testified
16 that due to the changes, they process fewer
17 applications per day than before ANGIE was
18 implemented. Can you clarify why there was such a
19 notable discrepancy in your testimony and the account
20 of HRA staff at the hearing?

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, absolutely. I'm going
22 to start and then I'm going to pass to Administrator
23 French and First Deputy Berry. So, let me start by
24 saying, we have functionally eliminated the backlog.
25 The numbers that they were cited use a different

1 definition of work in progress but they are not
2 overdue. We take the feedback from our staff very,
3 very seriously. We have been doing a lot to listen
4 to them and to make sure that we are taking them into
5 account including working on a lean six sigma
6 exercise lead by the Chief Efficiency Officer of the
7 city that involve frontline staff but I'm going to
8 pass the mic.
9

10 JILL BERRY: So, the numbers that are displayed
11 in the ANGIE system under the unfortunate heading in
12 the agency system of backlog, we're going to change
13 that name there that was designed before we actually
14 had a backlog, so what those numbers in ANGIE
15 represent the 18,000 or so that the staff saw, those
16 are real numbers. Those are the numbers of case
17 actions that are ready to be taken. It doesn't mean
18 that any of them are overdue, it just means that they
19 are ready for a worker to process and move on to the
20 next step.

21 So, we're going to change the labeling in ANGIE
22 so that it's clear those are not backlogged items but
23 rather the numbers of actions that are ready for
24 staff to take and move on to the next step.
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Why would that not be clear
4 to the staff?

5 JILL BERRY: I'm sorry?

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Why would that not be clear
7 to staff? Why would they not understand the
8 difference?

9 JILL BERRY: Because our labeling in the system
10 called it a backlog. We were - it was designed
11 unfortunately at a time when we did not have actual
12 backlogs and the way we're using that term has
13 changed but it is clear that it is all actions that
14 are ready to be taken in the system. We're going to
15 change the labeling to be a little bit more clear
16 about that. It's just a one number flag in the
17 ribbon in the system.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

19 JILL BERRY: And in terms of glitches, absolutely
20 system is glitchy. As we roll out new systems, they
21 do have experienced glitched. Our IT department is
22 going, regularly goes through all of the tickets that
23 they receive. They try to batch them into groups.
24 We try to address the issues so that it is easier for
25 staff to use the system so they don't experience the
glitches. It's not a perfect system but we have

3 teams of people in our IT departments who are focused
4 on improving those systems and making them easier for
5 staff to use.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: When was the ANGIE launched
7 again?

8 JILL BERRY: Uhm, 2022 I believe, very recently.

9 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's not that recent but I
10 think it's been around long enough that at least that
11 level of communication to the staff should have
12 occurred and I'll just mention because I think it's
13 my responsibility to do so in a question but there
14 have been reports of staff at HRA who have complained
15 of superiors being very aggressive and disrespectful
16 because of the number of applications that are being
17 processed and I get that. You know everything seems
18 to be you know a numbers game in the city and it's
19 the way we report and keep track of efficiencies but
20 if those accusations are true. I would hope that
21 somebody was looking into those accusations because
22 you know I don't think that that's something that
23 obviously that we do not support here at the Council.

24 SCOTT FRENCH: Absolutely Deputy Speaker, thank
25 you and uhm, you know we want to make sure that we
have constant feedback loops from our staff and we

3 hear what's going on. I know as it relates to you
4 know leadership and management, we have been doing
5 also refresher training on more soft skills as
6 managers and how you you know work with teams through
7 challenging times but we definitely want to you know
8 stay connected to our staff and to the unions to cure
9 the feedback and work collectively to address
10 everything and in regards to overtime, we have seized
11 the use of mandatory overtime to the extent that we
12 have been doing it. Primarily it's voluntary but
13 there are moments where we uhm, will call for
14 mandatory overtime because we will see that there is
15 a number of cases that have come that are due and so,
16 we want to stay timely. We want to connect people to
17 benefits as quickly as we can and in those instances,
18 we will do mandatory overtime but we are trying to
19 keep it very, very focused and minimal and utilize
20 voluntary as much as possible.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is the staff given advanced
22 notice?

23 SCOTT FRENCH: Mandatory overtime can be called
24 on the same day.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

3 SCOTT FRENCH: We try to, we try to minimize that
4 and given where we are as the Commissioner said, you
5 know functionally clearing the backlog, we try to
6 make sure as much as we can to give advanced notice
7 and again, primarily focus on voluntary. It's really
8 an exceptional circumstance right now where we would
9 have to invoke mandatory overtime.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you have tracking
11 mechanisms that allow you to see and predict that
12 they're going to be - that they are going to have a
13 backlog to prevent the spontaneous call of you know
14 mandatory overtime?

15 SCOTT FRENCH: Yes and we have teams who are
16 constantly looking at you know the number of cases
17 that are coming up. What is the work volume? There
18 can be instances though where something will happen.
19 There will be an error that we have to fix that does
20 require mandatory but again, we try to minimize that
21 as much as possible but you know during the height of
22 the backlog, mandatory was called quite a bit. So,
23 uhm but we are trying to minimize that and project as
24 much as we can.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I would hope so because
you know I have my day planned and you're telling me

1 that I have to rearrange and to have somebody pick up
2 my kids and have somebody you know buy pizza because
3 now I can't cook. I'm going to be very upset the
4 next day, so I hope that you know people are given
5 adequate time. I'll ask one more question because I
6 have a million of them and I could be here for days
7 but uhm regarding the time limit notices and the
8 required documentation. Since the legal aid
9 settlement was reached, how many people have hit
10 their shelter time limits and how many of those then
11 applied for an extension?
12

13 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Deputy Speaker. So,
14 to reiterate, we are serving about 50 percent of the
15 asylum seekers in the city. Currently in the city's
16 care, the overwhelming majority of those ion the DHS
17 system are families with children not currently
18 receiving notices, so you know I can follow up on the
19 larger numbers with the Mayor's Office of Asylum
20 Seeker Operations. We have as I noted, served about
21 3,600 notices, because the individuals go back to the
22 larger Asylum Reticketing Center, I can't right now
23 give you an answer on what percentage have come back
24 in but we will certainly follow up with OASO and get
25 back to you on a more complete answer.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Alright and I would also like
4 to know how many people have been required to exit
5 shelter due to limit, uhm to the limits that have
6 secured ultimate housing and how many exited DHS
7 shelters and moved into a faith-based site, such as a
8 mosque or a church? And how many people who were
9 granted an extension were able to stay in the same
10 shelter?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, for those who come back
12 in, let's start with the last question first. For
13 those who go back to the reticketing center apply for
14 another placement. It could be anywhere throughout
15 the asylum system, so it could be a DHS site. It
16 could be a HERC NISUM site because DHS operates very
17 much the minority of the single adult sites, we're a
18 very small slice of that particular response. Just
19 statistically speaking, I think it's unlikely that
20 very many of them went back to the same shelter. We
21 are not currently doing notices for families with
22 children.

23 More generally about where people go across the
24 board, this is true for asylum seekers and non-asylum
25 seekers. With adults what we see is that there is,
it's a fairly transitory population. People will

3 come and go. They make their own arrangements for a
4 little while. They may come back and we don't
5 require people to report to us where they are.
6 They're not required to register with DHS on an
7 ongoing basis. If we placed somebody in a permanent
8 housing, particularly if it's a subsidized permanent
9 housing that we're paying for, we do track that and
10 we know where they are but for people who make their
11 own arrangements, that's not data that we track on a
12 regular basis.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I'm going to tell you that
14 I've been helping two migrant young men that came
15 into the city in February and I, with my you know
16 experience as with my connections have had a really
17 hard time getting them from one point to the next
18 point, in order for them to successfully be able to
19 not be dependent on any type of system. At this
20 point, they're not in shelter but because we were
21 able to find them alternative housing, but something
22 as simple as getting an identification card through
23 IDNYC took weeks, right? Not because they didn't
24 have the documentation but rather because we couldn't
25 have - there weren't any appointments. You know
going to see an immigration attorney, you have to

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3 wait a couple of weeks and then they have to fil out
4 papers and then they have to send those to Federal
5 Plaza and then you have to wait another maybe six to
6 seven weeks in order to receive a response. Getting
7 your working papers, if you you know, if you haven't
8 processed that documentation, it can take up to five
9 months before you're able to do that.

10 So, my problem with the current you know limits
11 on time is that they don't adequately provide folks -
12 had we started to triage folks from day one, then you
13 know maybe we would have been here. That should have
14 been the way to go but to expect folks to in 30 days
15 be able to successfully plan out what their next you
16 know part of this journey is going to be is
17 unrealistic and that's you know, that's why I find it
18 a cruel policy because I think that yeah, you're
19 going to have some folks that are going to try and
20 figure it out because they have no other choice but
21 for the most part, you're recycling you know families
22 and individuals that are coming in and out and losing
23 track of them because nobodies paying attention to
24 where they're going, how they got there. Did they
25 have a successful you know plan? That part of the
case management component is not part of - your job

3 is to ensure that somebody has a roof over their
4 head. Not necessarily triage in that way and I think
5 that that's the missing piece of this puzzle.

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I would say that the city is
7 investing very heavily in the case management and the
8 legal services component, recognizing that this is a
9 population with specialized needs. So, through city
10 legal services, there have been tens of thousands and
11 can certainly follow up with you on exact numbers,
12 appointments for asylum, TPS, and work authorization.
13 We're really seeing a lot of movement on that.

14 H&H is contracting for specialized case
15 management services, particularly targeted to this
16 population. It will be an H&H held contract but
17 we'll also serve DHS sites as well and I'm going to
18 pass it to Administrator French to speak about IDNYC.

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Thank you Commissioner. Deputy
20 Speaker, in regards to IDNYC since we were last here,
21 we've actually expanded even further the number of
22 appointments that are available every week. So,
23 every Friday afternoon, 7,100 appointments are now
24 available for the following Monday through Friday and
25 we continue to look at ways at which we can maximize

1 that. I believe I worked with your office
2 specifically on those two cases.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yes, really good.

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Uhm and you know happy that we
6 could work it out. One case I believe was really
7 about mailing and the cards are created in
8 Massachusetts for a reason and then mailed and then
9 in the other instance it did take us a little bit to
10 figure out what documentation the individual had but
11 I'm glad that we were able to address it and get the
12 application in.

13 And I'm willing to give you know, I'll give up my
14 desk if I need to at my district office if that will
15 help find a temporary home for these popups because I
16 think that they're essential but you know the point
17 being that you know, there has to be a trajectory
18 right from point of entry to point of exit and there
19 are certain things that a person needs. Just basic
20 you know essentials. You need an identification
21 card, so how do we get them uhm processed as quickly
22 as possible. Like is there a different process that
23 we should be putting in? You know it's a lot. I get
24 it. I really want to thank you for the work that you
25 have done because I know that it's been very

1
2 difficult but I think that in moving forward if you
3 really you know are honest about the intent to
4 successfully get folks out of shelter, especially you
5 know asylum seekers to get them onto the next you
6 know part of their journey, that we need to be able
7 to follow that. And with that, I just wanted to ask
8 on the Right to Counsel because obviously this is
9 something that's really important to the body. Can
10 you tell us how many eligible tenants facing eviction
11 have had cases proceed without representation in
12 court due to the limited availability of the Right to
13 Counsel program?

14 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you. I'll agree it's a
15 really important program. I want to before I answer
16 that, take a step back a little bit and talk about
17 where we are with the program. As you know, we are
18 midstream on doing new contracts for FY25 because we
19 are negotiating contracts to keep my remarks a little
20 bit high level but I think there's some good
21 information that I can provide. We got really
22 terrific proposals and from a range of legal service
23 providers, proposing quite a comprehensive breath of
24 work that were included in those submissions, so that
25 is terrific. We are also making some changes to our

1 operations to Right to Counsel from the DSS side, so
2 that we think that we can make it work even better
3 than it has been in the past. I think the key there
4 is the bifurcation of the RFPs for what we call brief
5 advise and the full representation so to make sure
6 that when we are paying for full representation,
7 that's what we're getting and it's not getting
8 substituted with the brief advice. We're really
9 thinking about performance standards and how we
10 implement performance standards with the providers
11 and then making some changes on our internal
12 operations so that we — making sure that we are
13 steering people to whatever service that they need to
14 remain stably in their homes. That includes legal
15 services but there's other tools that we have at our
16 disposal, so we want to make sure we're being
17 strategic there.

18
19 Uhm, all of that being said, your specific
20 question is a little bit challenging to answer. Not
21 everybody who comes through has in court actually
22 screens for Right to Counsel eligibility. Some
23 people are coming in with their own attorney. Some
24 people are just frankly distrustful of government and
25 aren't going to interact with us. Some people come

3 to court after the point of default, so that they
4 miss that window unfortunately. Some people are over
5 income and then last year we know that there were
6 some people who didn't get screened because there
7 weren't sufficient attorney's onsite.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Did you track how many?

9 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, because we know – because
10 we can't distinguish between all of these different
11 reasons why somebody might not have been screened. I
12 can't tell you how they break out across those
13 different categories but we do believe this is a
14 really important program. That it is vital. That is
15 serves clients and so, we are continuing to think
16 about how we operate this and make sure that we are
17 getting legal services to as many people as possible.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, that's not an answer
19 because I think if you have 100 people that come in
20 and we're only able to 40 to an attorney, then that
21 leaves 60 that we're not. So – and I get it that
22 that person may not even have needed an attorney but
23 I'm just trying to kind of get an idea of how many
24 people are coming in. And I was actually at a
25 housing court a couple of months ago and I was able
to see – it actually was about maybe eight months

3 ago. There was a young lady out in the hallway
4 trying to get people in to the program. Letting them
5 know that the program existed and trying to get them
6 connected. So, of those people that are coming in
7 there. Is there a specific requirement that they
8 keep track of how many? Because in my office, I know
9 who came in and for what.

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, what I can tell you is
11 that about 50 percent of people who came through last
12 year, about 50 percent of people who came through
13 housing court was represented by Right to Counsel
14 Attorney. But that other 50 percent is made up of a
15 slew of different reasons. That is not 50 percent of
16 people that we were unable to serve. So, I want to
17 be very clear about that.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: In Brooklyn, we have been
20 piloting some enhanced overlay between traditional
21 HRA services and the Right to Counsel, so I think
22 that maybe what you're referring to and it's a
23 program that we're excited about and looking to
24 strengthen as well.

25 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, that's a better
response. I mean I'm hoping obviously that we can

1
2 get to the point where we're you know getting
3 everyone that needs an attorney because obviously
4 with the housing scarcity and you know the limited
5 options these days. It's imperative that we try to
6 keep as many folks housed you know as we can, so I
7 appreciate all efforts geared toward making that a
8 reality. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've also been
10 joined by Council Members Williams and Hudson. I
11 just have one quick follow up before I get to my
12 colleagues. Something we had discussed earlier that
13 we were hearing from providers at the issue on the
14 workforce enhancement. That about it being allocated
15 to provider contracts but that the additional funding
16 needs to be approved in each provider contract before
17 they can start paying the staff the increases.

18 So, there are delays due to all levels of review
19 that are needed for budget modifications and all
20 providers have not received and paid out the funding.
21 So, do you know, can you tell me what percentage of
22 providers have received all of their workforce
23 enhancement funding?
24
25

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3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We have done the vast majority
4 of the contract amendments and I can get back to you
5 with more specific numbers.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Alright, thank you.
7 Okay, we've got questions first from Council Members
8 Brewer followed by Stevens and Cabàn.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.
10 First of all I do want to thank as I always do
11 Marshal Horn, Marica Scott Faden and certainly
12 Administrative Carter, you Commissioner and Mr.
13 French because you're always very responsive. I
14 don't always agree with you but I appreciate the
15 responsiveness. And also the consent forms, maybe
16 you need them but they cause delays. We always hear
17 about another form that I'm not going to discuss
18 right now but the consent forms do cause delays and I
19 want to know how we can address that. That's
20 question number one.

21 Number two, I think that the FHEPS vouchers we
22 all know is really a way that people do get housing
23 and it's very helpful. So, want to know has the time
24 gone up or down in terms of how long it takes to
25 process? And I know with Council Member Ayala, she
26 asked about the vacancies but I want to know if we

1 have a specific number of vacancies in that division
2 that would or would not cause delays. I want to know
3 what that is. Number two, you know my main question
4 is main change and you said it was to open for
5 negotiations, people want \$7 million. It's not in
6 the Exec, so I really want to keep main chance. If
7 you're talking about keeping people off the street,
8 put some damn beds in there if you need to. I know
9 it's going to take two years to become a safe haven,
10 that's what was told but in the interim, those folks
11 would be on the street. So, I just want to put that
12 on the table. I want to keep it. I know that you'll
13 say there's another place they can go, [INAUDIBLE
14 01:48:55], something on 9th avenue but it already
15 exits and the owner is happy to keep it so I want to
16 know about Main Chance.

17 I also want to know about on these contracts, do
18 we still have contracts with Dot Go or that's not you
19 and that's just H&H? And then on the SNAP, to your
20 credit, I understand there's many, many fewer
21 backlogs but did we — how many got denied either for
22 SNAP or cash assistance?

23 And then just finally, this whole issue of
24 finding places, uhm when people get discharged, we've
25

1
2 been talking about from upstate, meaning from prison,
3 I've always said why can't they go to the Fortunes or
4 similar? Are we still working to do that so that
5 they don't end up in the DHS system? And what are we
6 doing to make sure that happens? And then as you
7 know, people will not go unless there's a single
8 room. They are fussing on the street. If there's
9 not a single room, they don't want to go to a
10 shelter. So, my question is, what are we doing about
11 that? Even when we're building some of these new
12 shelters on 59th Street, which you know I don't
13 approve of. I want permanent housing instead. What
14 are we doing to make sure that obviously the safe
15 haven low barrier work? Safe Haven on 83rd Street,
16 fabulous, fabulous. Supported it from day one but
17 you don't have enough so the question is, how are you
18 making more single rooms so that people would go
19 there? Those are my questions.

20 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Council Member.
21 That was a lot. I was taking good notes but you'll
22 let me know if I missed anything.

23 Let me start and then I will let my colleagues
24 chime in. With respect to City FHEPS both vacancy
25 rates and time to process. I'm going to say right

1 now, my answers are going to be unsatisfactory. We
2 are in the process of building out our end-to-end
3 City FHEPS processing system. Until we have that
4 fully built and fully rolled out, which we are – it
5 should be within the next year end change, I can't
6 track with confidence the processing time. What
7 we've been doing is pulling samples on looking at
8 various cohorts of vouchers. What we are seeing is a
9 fairly consistent three-to-four-week process. Again,
10 recognizing that there are uhm, that there are
11 variations there and exceptions and we do need to
12 troubleshoot on those exceptions.

14 Staffing, there are – we have about 200 people
15 who are full time actual focused on City FHEPS and
16 there are vacancies in addition to those 200 people
17 but really as I mentioned to the Deputy Speaker,
18 because this is a program that touches so many
19 different parts of the agency, right, it includes
20 provider staff. It includes the DHS rehousing team.
21 It includes the people reviewing packages. It
22 includes fiscal, the whole thing. You know I don't
23 necessarily feel like those are my most
24 representative numbers but we are very focused on
25 making sure that we are moving people out of shelter

3 as quickly as possible and I think you know what you
4 can see in our numbers is that we have been doing
5 that, right? We have had a 20 percent increase in
6 the number of people moving out of shelter with City
7 FHEPS for the first half of this fiscal year relative
8 to last fiscal year, so we're really focused on that.

9 Uhm, I'm going to leave Main Chance for a minute.
10 We will come back to that. DSS is not using Dot Go
11 for any of our asylum operations. Uhm, I'm going to
12 again come back to denials. I'm doing the shorter
13 ones first. You know prison discharges; this is
14 something that we are very focused on. I think two
15 weeks ago, we opened, had a ribbon cutting on a
16 really beautiful new site in collaboration with
17 Osborne that will specifically serve men over 50 who
18 are coming out.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many?

20 MOLLY WASOW PARK: 140.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, you have 2,500
22 coming out every year.

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, we work very closely with
24 DOCs on discharge planning. On making sure that
25 there is collaboration. I think it is a real issue
and it is the relationship building and the retained

1
2 problem solving that is what we are doing but
3 absolutely we agree that Fortune Society, Osborne and
4 others are really critical partners.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, what else are we
6 doing though to help that process? In other words
7 finding buildings etc.

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: And I think finding buildings
9 is always an issue, right?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But I had some buildings
11 that could have been permanent but you wanted them to
12 be shelters.

13 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I you know keep coming back to
14 the 1.4 percent vacancy rate. It's why we as an
15 agency are investing in the Affordable Housing
16 Services program right? Where social service
17 contracts can be now used for permanent housing and I
18 actually think we have one coming up -

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We've got one on 74th
20 street. We'd be glad to have permanent housing for
21 this population on 74th Street. 160 West 74th Street.

22 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Happy to follow up. We have
23 one in your district with Fortune Society that is
24 permanent housing.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm very supportive.

3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Great. Uhm, and then with
4 respect to single rooms and shelters, uhm, I really
5 do think this is not a one size fits all situation.
6 Yes, there are some individuals for whom a single
7 room is a really important part of a stabilization
8 and they might have a reasonable accommodation,
9 medical needs, other reasons and that is an important
10 piece of our response.

11 In other cases, people who for example are
12 actively using, we want to make sure that there's an
13 opportunity to have eyes on people so that we can be
14 reversing overdoses. It's something that we've been
15 doing. Unfortunately, very successfully and
16 unfortunate and that I'm sorry it's necessary to do
17 it quite so much but it is a really important part of
18 the work that we do.

19 The other tradeoff that we have to think about
20 when we're siting shelters, is that when we do do
21 single rooms, we're going to need a lot more shelters
22 right? And you know, I talked -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But you get more people
24 off the street Commissioner if you did it so that's
25 the tradeoff.

1
2 MOLLY WASOW PARK: There are a lot of tradeoffs.
3 It's very complex but certainly single rooms, double
4 rooms are an important part of our response
5 particularly to street homelessness.

6 I'm going to start the denials conversation and
7 pass it over to Administrator French and then we'll
8 pass it to Administrator Carter for Main Chance. So,
9 with respect to denials, I mean I think across the
10 board we are generally seeing about 40 percent of
11 applications are accepted. People clarify that
12 number if I've got it wrong.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, 60 percent are
14 denials?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: One of the things that we see,
16 it's true here and it's true in many other instances
17 that I've seen in my career when applications for
18 benefits are put online and we really lower the
19 barrier to application, people are more likely to
20 start the application process earlier on in their own
21 personal journey. They may not have assembled all of
22 the documentation. They may not have thought through
23 as carefully whether or not they were eligible so
24 when we made you go into a center when it was like
25 find childcare for your kids and get on the train and

3 do this. People waited until they were pretty far
4 along before they did it. Now that you can do it in
5 your couch from your living room, people are starting
6 earlier and it's just - and so they are less likely
7 to actually complete the process and therefore we
8 reject but Administrator French.

9 SCOTT FRENCH: Thank you Commissioner. The
10 Commissioner is correct. A lot of the volume that
11 we're seeing is I think because we have been able to
12 institute ways in which people can more easily access
13 benefits and apply for benefits. That doesn't
14 necessarily mean that people are actually eligible
15 for benefits right. The federal and state, those
16 really requirements are very specific and so I think
17 some of what we're seeing is people applying and then
18 either through the process, realizing this might not
19 be something that I want to continue with or will
20 work out I think and for other folks that they are
21 just not eligible for the benefits because the
22 requirements themselves are so specific. You know we
23 will get back to you on specific denial rates.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You could get some
25 breakdown yes. When you say 40 percent uh the 60
percent denial, that doesn't sound good and when you

3 talk about something more specific it might be
4 better.

5 SCOTT FRENCH: Yeah, though I will say you know
6 even with that take for example cash assistance, you
7 know we have 535,000 individuals on cash assistance,
8 which is one of the highest numbers ever. So, you
9 know more people are getting connected to benefits
10 but also more people are applying so the numbers I
11 think –

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I hear about people on
13 denial with the food stamps or SNAP more than cash
14 assistance, just so you know.

15 SCOTT FRENCH: Okay, so we'll get back to you
16 with more specifics.

17 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I would say both cash and SNAP
18 caseloads are up since I was here, we were here even
19 just in for the preliminary hearing. Cash in
20 particular is up about 25,000.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Not surprising given the
22 economy and the cost of living in New York City.

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Right. Administrator Carter
24 can speak to Main Chance.

25 JOSLYN CARTER: Thank you and Council Member
Brewer, first I want to thank you for your support

3 and you know really being someone we can really count
4 on for those experiencing homelessness. What Main
5 Chance was, so we talk a lot about what our new
6 process has been for those experiencing homelessness
7 and really want to make sure that there's a
8 throughput right, so coming in drop-in center to
9 really connecting with those who are working to have
10 that connection to go to Safe Haven to permanency and
11 really have found out that model does work. And so,
12 we have been talking with our providers around doing
13 that. So, Main Chance does not have that but our
14 work has been to work with the provider to make sure
15 that those clients who utilize that site know where
16 the drop-in centers are, right? So, they will be the
17 one as in the West 114 Street and the other one
18 that's in Manhattan.

19 So, we are working with the providers so that the
20 clients will come to them. We are going to put up
21 the signs now, it is May. At June 30, because this
22 is you know we are moving towards the end of the
23 Fiscal Year. We've been talking with the provider
24 around that. We understand their frustrations right
25 but we want to make sure that the close down is
seamless and as they move into the next fiscal year

3 and what's going to happen with them, I don't know at
4 this point but we do want to make sure that the
5 clients that utilize that site are aware so that we
6 don't have you know and I can tell you that those who
7 are over there will have an outreach staff in that
8 area to make sure that people know where they need to
9 go. So, we'll be working with the provider to make
10 sure that the clients know where to go to.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You know I don't agree
12 with it. You also know that the folks at the - all
13 the businesses in the area don't agree with it. The
14 BID doesn't agree with it. You tell me another site
15 that has a business improvement development that
16 funds probably thousands if not millions of dollars
17 for a site like that. They give all the extras.
18 Nobody else has that. Who has a BID that gives that
19 kind of backing? So, I just think you're making a
20 huge mistake. I want to keep fighting it to the end
21 and I want them to continue. They also send people
22 to other overnight faith and if you're opening more
23 faith, don't get me started about this sprinkler junk
24 that you're talking about. Not you, the Fire
25 Department. They do that.

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3 I'll stop because I know my time is up but Main
4 Chance should not close. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, we have Stevens
6 followed by Cabàn and Carr.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good morning or
8 afternoon. I don't even know what time it is at this
9 point. It's still morning, I still got a couple of
10 minutes. Just, I have a couple of questions. So,
11 I'll start out with City FHEPS. I got a call from
12 one of my former participants that I worked with a
13 number of years ago and they got the City FHEPS
14 voucher. They were super excited about it but there
15 was a couple of things, by the time they got called,
16 it was already like two weeks after the date that I
17 guess it was issued and then they were told that they
18 only had four months to find an apartment or they had
19 to start the process all over again and so, I just
20 need to get some clarity around like what this
21 process looks like and a timeline and what supports
22 are given to folks who do get City FHEP vouchers?
23 Because the other thing was she said that she got a
24 list of realtors and folks but all the numbers were
25 disconnected or it was like some type of scam. So,
just trying to also think about like what supports

1 are they also given when they are told that they only
2 have four months to use this voucher before they
3 would have to start the process again. And then
4 following up on NY IDNYC, I would like to also offer
5 up my office as a pop-up place to do an event. We've
6 put on a number of things but this is something that
7 I know that is needed and is important but also just
8 had a question on how many NYCD Centers are across
9 the city and do you plan to open new ones and what is
10 the current wait time for an appointment? And I know
11 you have a number of staff but like do you believe
12 that you need more staff? And then I had one more
13 question that was given to me by my colleague Linda
14 Lee and I'm specifying that because this is a very
15 specific question. But her question is HRA and MOMÉ
16 was informed that Asian New Yorkers who qualify for
17 food stamps disenrolled at eight times the rate of
18 those Asians with citizenship and obviously, I'm sure
19 this is happening at other communities but she wanted
20 to highlight the Asian community. Can you discuss
21 HRAs effort to reenroll those who disenrolled to get
22 back into the system? Because we know like through a
23 lot of rhetoric, people were nervous about their
24 citizenship and they started to disenroll, so how are
25

1 we trying to engage them to reenroll in the city's
2 programs? Because we're seeing an uptick at a lot of
3 food pantries and some of this is because people
4 didn't follow up because they were nervous about
5 their benefit. So, those are my questions. Thank
6 you.
7

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you very much. I'm
9 going to start and my colleagues will jump in. So,
10 City FHEP shopping letters are good for 180 days. At
11 the 180-day mark, if you are still eligible, it will
12 automatically renew if you are in shelter. If you
13 are in community, you do need to go back to homebase
14 to get the renewal there but it absolutely can renew.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: What does that process
16 look like then? Like it just automatically you just
17 have to go and say hey, I need to renew? What does
18 that look like?

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Right. Yeah and Scott jump in
20 but yes, you go to homebase and if your eligibility
21 still stands right, so you still meet the - you're
22 still on cash assistance right? You meet that
23 eligibility right? It is absolutely possible to
24 renew that.

25 Uhm, with respect to the -

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I don't know if he's
3 going to jump in with more detail because that, what
4 does that process look like? So, just say you renew,
5 like I didn't get an answer on what that looks like.

6 SCOTT FRENCH: So, when the existing shopping
7 letter right expires, as the days that the
8 Commissioner talked about, the person who is assigned
9 to a homebased office, you would go to the homebased
10 office, they would confirm that your eligibility
11 information remains the same and your letter then
12 gets extended. There was obviously mis-messaging to
13 the individual to say that they had to use this
14 within four months and that's something I'll bring
15 back because that's not what should be communicated
16 to individuals. There's not a time limit on when you
17 can use it. It's just periodically we do need to
18 confirm that you still remain eligible for the
19 program.

20 So, but I will, this is a helpful case that we
21 bring back and speak to our providers around to make
22 sure that they're messaging it correctly to
23 individuals.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, they definitely
3 would have to start the whole entire process over,
4 right?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I am going to correct myself.
6 It is 120 days not 180 days, so apologies there. One
7 of the things that we have actually recently put into
8 place is that if you are actually midstream through
9 the process, right your housing package is in at the
10 120 mark, we're not going to expire. We don't want
11 anybody to lose the unit that they've already
12 identified.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, what happens
14 because like even one of the things she said was that
15 by the time they outreached to her, it was already
16 like two or three weeks in and so she had already
17 lost time. How do you account for that?

18 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I think we need to do again on
19 the specific set of circumstances which we're happy
20 to do offline. In this, what should happen in the
21 shelter system is -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: She wasn't in the
23 shelter. She got lost.

24 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Okay, uhm so it is - it's
25 certainly a little bit more complicated when you

1 don't have the on the ground staff of the housing
2 specialists in the shelter. Again, as Administrator
3 French said, it seems like this is a situation that
4 we need to dig in and make sure that the homebased
5 office was handling it appropriately.
6

7 Uhm, let me address the SNAP piece of it and then
8 we'll circle back on IDNYC because there were a few
9 more questions there. I think one of the things that
10 I would really point to -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, wait are we done
12 with the FHEPS? Because I feel like there was not
13 enough, I don't think it was addressed at all.

14 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I didn't address the support
15 piece of it. I apologize.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And I also don't feel
17 like you addressed the other piece because if we're
18 trying to get people out of shelter and keep people
19 in their homes and all these things, like I'm not
20 really feeling like it's addressing the issue because
21 even if at 120 days, like how do we address the fact
22 that a lot of folks are not getting it at the start?
23 And so, like she got called three weeks in. What
24 does that look like? What does that process look
25

3 like? So, I don't feel like that question was
4 answered at all.

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, that is not standard
6 operating procedure. So, we need to dig in on the
7 specifics of the case.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I don't think it's just
9 a specific case. I think this might be something we
10 should be digging in across the board.

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, one of the things that we
12 do frequently is that when people identify situations
13 that we, when we look at given cases that we use
14 those to reverse engineer and identify places where
15 we need to make changes to our process. Because I
16 haven't dug in on the specifics here, it would be
17 premature for me to say whether or not this is one of
18 those cases.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, people are not
20 getting the vouchers, getting responses three weeks
21 in and having a later date, then that's not something
22 that's happening regularly?

23 MOLLY WASOW PARK: It's not something that I've
24 heard of systemically. That doesn't mean that it
25 isn't a problem that we don't need to dig into. I
just -

3 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I see providers out
4 there faces looking at me like hmm, but - so we
5 should probably look into it.

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Right, happy to look into it.
7 With respect to the supports, again it's a slightly
8 different answer for those in shelter versus in the
9 community. I think in shelter, there's a housing
10 specialist whose job it is is to work with that
11 individual to make sure that they are finding access
12 to housing. That they know how to apply for the HPD
13 lottery. That they are getting access to the
14 homeless set asides, completing all of those
15 different pieces of the process.

16 Homebase, the Homebase office can provide some
17 level of that same support but it is because somebody
18 is not in a residential program. There is a little
19 bit less support. From what I'm hearing you say, it
20 sounds like, uhm you know -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: They were literally
22 given a list of providers and when - I mean real
23 estate agents and things like that, either it was
24 disconnected or it was a scam.

25 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Okay, so that sounds like
another place where we need to do some follow up and

3 I'd say whether it is a specific homebase office or
4 something that we need to look at more holistically
5 with homebase. That's certainly something that we
6 can follow up on.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay.

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, with respect to SNAP
9 enrollment, the particular you know demographic piece
10 of it is not an element that I'm familiar with.
11 Although I do know that certainly during the Trump
12 Administration in particular, that there were a
13 number of immigrant communities that were rejecting
14 federal benefits to which they were entitled because
15 of a fear that would affect their long-term
16 immigration status.

17 One of the initiatives that we have going right
18 now that I'm excited about that I think will allow us
19 to address this issue and other similar is our
20 funding for the — what we call NYC Benefits. It's 30
21 plus CBO's that we are funding to a tune of about \$10
22 million a year to provide really situational specific
23 outreach support. Each of those contracts is a
24 little bit different. They are relatively small
25 contracts that are designed to meet the needs of
specific communities with the idea that local

3 community-based organizations are better equipped
4 than we are to speak the – to address the concerns
5 and do the specific outreach that's needed for given
6 communities.

7 So, I'll need to look and can certainly follow up
8 about whether or not there's one that is specifically
9 related to SNAP and Asian Americans but I think in
10 general you relying on not-for-profit partners who
11 have that community, who have the trust of community
12 based, of community members is something that we are
13 trying to lean on for that kind of outreach.

14 Uhm, good on that one?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Not really but I'm going
16 to let it go. I'll let Linda follow up.

17 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Okay. IDNYC, happy to
18 collaborate on a pop up and you know staff is
19 something that we are always looking at. As I say
20 through all of our hiring, we have been really
21 prioritizing frontline staff including but not
22 limited to IDNYC. We, as Administrator French noted,
23 we have added a number of appointments, so there is
24 7,100 appointments being released every week. What
25 we are seeing, it varies a little bit week to week
but generally there are still appointments left.

1 Monday, whether it's a couple of dozen or a couple of
2 hundred it varies but -

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, what's the actual
5 wait time for an appointment? Like how long people
6 are waiting for like with their appointments?

7 SCOTT FRENCH: So, uhm, 7,100 appointments are
8 released Friday for the following Monday to Friday,
9 so for people who make an appointment they chose the
10 time and that is the time -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: During that week?

12 SCOTT FRENCH: For the following week, yeah. For
13 the following week. So, yeah, we shifted to that
14 when we shifted to appointment only. Uhm, you know
15 and we always look to see how we can have more
16 appointments. Currently there is ten IDNYC
17 standalone sites, plus one group that is focused on
18 the DOE. Based upon the last time we were here
19 though as well; we are actively looking at
20 identifying another site in the Bronx. That will be
21 a standalone site, so that we don't have to focus you
22 know too much on pop ups because we like to move the
23 pop ups around where they'd like to be but we'll
24 definitely follow up with you about the pop-up idea

3 and once I have more specific information about any
4 additional sites, we'll let you all know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah because between me
6 and Deputy Speaker Ayala, that's already three
7 because she has one in Manhattan and one on the
8 Brons. I have an office in the Bronx. I can
9 definitely reach out to Assembly Members. They will
10 be happy to pop up because this is something that we
11 see and a lot of people who need these appointments.
12 And thank you for answering the questions but I have
13 a lot of follow up with the City FHEPS, so I'll talk
14 with you guys offline because I have a lot of
15 concerns that this program is expanded and it doesn't
16 seem like we are in the weeds of like keeping people
17 either from ending up in a shelter and even saying
18 that folks who are in shelter are kind of getting a
19 little bit more support obviously but like, if you're
20 not in shelter, how are you - where's their housing
21 specialist? How are we supporting them? What does
22 that look like and I don't feel like that was kind of
23 answered in some of the questions but I will follow
24 up offline. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Cabàn
followed by Carr and Riley.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. I just, just a
4 really quick shout out to the movement for justice
5 UAW members who are in Chambers solidarity with you
6 all. And I'm going to do it Gale Brewer style and
7 just shoot a bunch of questions at you and I want to
8 start with the RISE program. You know, I want to
9 know if HRA has been negotiating with OMB to restore
10 the RISE program. If you're aware that that PEG will
11 result in a loss of jobs at the gay men's health
12 crisis? And one thing that I want to put in context
13 there is that obviously the community that GMHC
14 serves is a community that has a mistrust in
15 government and healthcare related service delivery
16 based on their lived experiences and so, have you
17 identified especially in light of these PEGs you know
18 what programs can provide the specialized services to
19 community GMHC serves? Because I think that
20 obviously they do that particularly well.

21 I also want to move into questions around the
22 housing stability microgrants fund. I know that it's
23 baselined at \$1.2 million. We said last budget cycle
24 that that was woefully underfunded. The folks that
25 are delivering those services in the domestic
violence base have also said that it is woefully

1 underfunded and so, if you can confirm that that
2 baseline for the program remains at \$1.2. I know
3 that the Council wants \$6 million, so do advocates.
4 Do you anticipate making increase to that budget?
5 How many microgrants were awarded in Fiscal Year
6 2023? How many were awarded so far in Fiscal 2024?
7 How many do they anticipate rewarding? How much has
8 been spent so far in Fiscal Year 2024 for the program
9 and then just given that NGBV pilot demonstrated the
10 need far exceeds this level of funding. You know do
11 you feel that that's sufficient to meet the demand?
12 I mean you've talked a lot about prioritizing,
13 getting survivors out of the shelter system. We know
14 that the vast majority of folks in family shelters
15 are survivors. These microgrant funds could keep
16 people from entering that shelter system in the first
17 place, diverting them before they get there.

18
19 So, those are the questions I have on that and
20 then I wanted to follow up on a question from Chair
21 Brannan from earlier. He asked some questions about
22 invoicing and Commissioner; you recommended sending
23 those invoices in real time but what I pose is that
24 you can't do that if your contract isn't registered
25 on time. And so, when you all register late, which

1 happens quite often in fact, these organizations that
2 are stuck with a backlog of invoices that they are
3 waiting to submit upon registration and so, the
4 agency does in fact then at that point, the agency
5 does in fact limit the number of invoices you can
6 submit at once for delaying that payment and so, you
7 know if – how are these organizations supposed to
8 invoice in real time when the registration is being
9 delayed? Like, you know what's the answer there?
10 So, I'll stop there.

12 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Council Member. I
13 will go in reverse order. Contract registration
14 absolutely, it's a critical piece of the puzzle. You
15 know one of the things that we see is you know
16 payment issues. Sometimes in registration, sometimes
17 it's about the review of subcontractors. Sometimes
18 it's about invoice review. There's a variety of
19 things – issues and challenges that can translate out
20 into providers not getting paid. Every single one of
21 those is a problem. We are really focused on our
22 contract registration. I think we are although
23 there's some amendments for FY24 that are still
24 outstanding, we're essentially done with the contract
25 regis- base contract registration for FY24.

1
2 Obviously we're close to the end of the year and
3 we're really pushing forward for FY25. The way the
4 system works, we actually cannot submit FY25
5 contracts for registration until mid-May, so we're
6 trying to stack them up so that we can then submit to
7 the Comptroller as much as possible.

8 So, you know again, it's something that we're
9 really focused on. Agree that it is critical that we
10 are -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Do you have a percentage?
12 Like what percentage of them are being registered
13 late?

14 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, I think that we - I don't
15 have a specific percentage. We're in the you know 20
16 or 30 percent potentially but you know late can mean
17 a couple of weeks. Late doesn't necessarily mean
18 months but it is certainly something that we are very
19 focused on.

20 With respect to the microgrants, that is an NGBV
21 program. We are their financial conduit but I'm
22 really going to have to defer to them on the
23 specifics of the program because we don't administer
24 any of that. And Administrative French, can you
25 speak to -

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3 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: If I could just interject
5 very, very quickly I mean the reason why we pose it
6 to you all is because NGBV isn't an agency and so, we
7 don't have an opportunity to question them and so at
8 last years Executive Budget hearings and Preliminary
9 Budget hearings, we got the information about the
10 program from you all.

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I am absolutely going to have
12 to follow up with my colleagues with NGBV on that. I
13 simply can't speak and would be misrepresenting if I
14 did try and speak to the details of the program
15 because they administer it. We are happy to play a
16 role in coordinating the sending over that
17 information to your office.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you.

19 SCOTT FRENCH: Thank you Commissioner. Thank you
20 Council Member. So, the RISE program at GMHC, I
21 think when we were here at the Prelim as well and
22 still hands true, you know based upon the budget of
23 HRA, much of it is very fixed. So, in meeting the
24 targets we needed, we had some very difficult
25 decisions and we had to make those decisions. The
RISE program was one of them and you know at this

3 point you know one of the reasons behind that was is
4 that you know participation in employment services
5 for our HASA clients is voluntary. There's a
6 commentary on the benefits of the program but looking
7 at the spaces in which we had some choices to make,
8 that led us to unfortunately have to you know PEG
9 that program. And at the moment, you know we are not
10 reinstituting it but -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: I mean I'll just say in
12 terms of priorities, just saying that the majority
13 Black and Brown, low-income New Yorkers living with
14 HIV who need these services should absolutely be a
15 priority especially when the money is there when you
16 look at again, a bloated police budget, the overtime.
17 All of these different things. I mean it's hard to
18 send a message to New Yorkers that these folks don't
19 deserve the funding that they've been getting year
20 over year.

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Just building off of what
22 Administrator French is saying, more than 80 percent
23 of DSS's tax levy budget is passthroughs of
24 entitlements and if you include City FHEPS in that,
25 which is not actually legally required but I think we
all agree is really critically important. We're

3 talking I think above 90 percent of our budget is
4 pass throughs of direct cash assistance in various
5 forms to clients.

6 So, our ability to take PEGs leaves us with no
7 easy choices. I absolutely hear you on the value of
8 those particular services but in a situation where we
9 as a city had to make really tough budget decisions,
10 DSS's options -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: So, I'm overtime so I just
12 want to end with this last question of, so you agree
13 then that HRA needs more staff and more money to
14 deliver the services that New Yorkers deserve?

15 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I think we recognize that the
16 services that we provide across the board are serving
17 low-income New Yorkers but in a time of very
18 challenging budget decisions, DSS, like every other
19 agency, has to make tough decisions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Alright, I know that you
21 can't like you know say something that is contrary to
22 what the Mayor has done in terms of his PEGs and cuts
23 and cuts and cuts but like, I don't know maybe if you
24 think that you need more funding blink twice or
25 something. Like this is just, none of these answers
make sense.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I feel blank.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council
6 Member Carr followed by Riley and Louis.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair.

8 Commissioner, always good to see you. I want to
9 associate myself with the comments of my colleague in
10 support of the RISE program and the work it does with
11 GMHC. Although I might suggest alternative agencies
12 for efficiencies than the NYPD but perhaps we'll
13 focus on one of them right now, which is the asylum
14 seeker migrant crisis as a piece of your budget.

15 It's increasing since January, I think about
16 \$18.9 million on your end and that's in spite of
17 attempts by the Administration to drive down cost
18 through re-estimating expenses, as well as the
19 renegotiation of the Callihan Consent Decree as it
20 pertains to this population. So, I'm just wondering
21 if you can explain to me why we're talking about more
22 monies for this and in particular, I think \$4 billion
23 and \$3 billion a piece for fiscal years and the
24 outyears. If you can explain to me why we're seeing
25 increases rather than decreases?

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3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Council Member. I
4 believe and we'll verify the numbers but for the
5 current Fiscal Year what we've seen is reductions in
6 projected spending for asylum seekers. Funding has
7 been added to the outyears. I think this is a
8 recognition of the fact that you know we are the
9 mercy of federal border policy and that we can expect
10 this to be a challenge that we are dealing with in
11 one form or another for unfortunately for the
12 relatively long term.

13 Uhm, it has been really challenging and
14 unprecedented couple of years managing through the
15 asylum seeker crisis. Our budget has gone up, down
16 and sideways with respect to how much is in the
17 budget for asylum seekers. That is a reflection of
18 changing projections on the census, reallocation of
19 responsibilities between different agencies. So, for
20 example, we took over a couple of sites from H&H.
21 Funds were shifted out of their budget into our
22 budget. That's not a new census, it's a whose
23 operating? There's been changes in state funds that
24 are allocated for asylum operation and where those
25 have been parked, so originally that was all parked
in our budget even though we are obviously not the

1
2 entirety of the response. So, I think the one thing
3 that is very safe to say is that there will be more
4 reprojections and it's probably too early to make too
5 much out of the outyear numbers.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: So, what I'd say is that
7 you know you have I think four excuse me, five
8 shelters operating on an emergency contract basis in
9 my district at this point and three of them right,
10 located in one site are basically 25 percent of the
11 population of the census tracked before they were
12 there. So, you've exponentially increased the
13 population of the area and there's very little to
14 serve. The community that was already there let
15 alone the addition, and so, folks in my district are
16 wondering when this is going to end. You talk about
17 the changes for the consent decree, 30 days for folks
18 to stay. You have the ability now I think to turn
19 away folks who are coming back to the shelter.

20 So, when are we going to see some light at the
21 end of the tunnel where you're going to wind down
22 some of these operations because I understand you
23 don't control the border but your policy about how
24 attractive New York is visa ve other cities, once
25

3 folks do cross that border, it's very much in your
4 control.

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: And yeah, thank you Council
6 Member. So, we are working to make sure that we are
7 meeting legal and moral mandates that we are not
8 putting families with children in particular out on
9 the street, so the consent decree changes, which were
10 some very targeted exceptions to policy pertained
11 particularly to adults, single adults and adult
12 families. Families with children are not affected by
13 that particular legal agreement. I think it is in
14 all of our interests to think about how we can
15 integrate the new New Yorkers more fully into the
16 fabric of the city and into the state and country as
17 a hole. I mentioned earlier that we were working
18 with H&H to role out new case management services to
19 make sure that we are connecting people with the
20 services that they need so that they can move on.
21 The goal is not shelter for the long term. So,
22 whether it's legal services, case management
23 services, we're really trying to focus on making sure
24 that people have access to that and certainly if
25 there's you know as we have in the past but we're
happy to continue to do so if there's particular

3 issues around the sites in your district, we're happy
4 to follow up.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: And just in closing, if you
6 can get to me the contracts for those five shelters
7 in terms of the costs, when they're set to expire or
8 be potentially renewed and other details relating to
9 that and the current populations in the shelter, I'd
10 love to get that information.

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We'll follow up.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Riley on
13 Zoom.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Thank you
15 Chair Brannan. Thank you Chair Ayala. Can you guys
16 hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you so much. I just
19 want to thank the Administration for your testimony.
20 I just have a few questions here. So, my first
21 question is ACS partners with community-based
22 organizations in three neighborhoods to provide the
23 FEC, which is the Family Enrichment Centers, which
24 are more homelike spaces that provide a range of
25 offerings for and with the community, understanding
family enrichment centers had the capacity to help

3 families and young people in and outside of ACS to
4 connect them to resources and their community. And
5 so my question is, how were these three locations
6 chosen and what research and funding have been
7 allocated to expanding these centers throughout New
8 York City.

9 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Council Member, I believe
10 these are ACS programs. So, I'm going to have to
11 defer to my colleagues there.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Subway safety,
13 I'm just going to go to subway safety. Subway safety
14 is a critical issue and our current safety plan
15 includes involuntary transfer for people in the
16 subway system. Tools like the HRA's top 50 is a
17 metric used to coordinate case management, help give
18 partners, outreach programs and other tools for
19 people to revive care. So what improvements have
20 been made to model based on the fact that Jordan
21 Nealy was on this list. Jordan was a young Black man
22 killed last year on the subway asking for food and
23 resources.

24 Being unhoused should not be a death sentence.
25 What changes have been made to bolster HRAs subway

1 resources to ensure crisis management systems are
2 connected coherently?
3

4 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Thank you Council Member. So,
5 we absolutely agree that it is critical that we are
6 meeting the needs of very vulnerable individuals. We
7 are working very closely with our healthcare agency
8 partners to make sure that we are assessing the needs
9 of individuals on really a case-by-case basis. I
10 think as you mentioned, the top 50 list, this brings
11 together the tools of not only DHS but DOHMH, H&H,
12 very often the State Office of Mental Health.

13 We do provide wrap around services in every
14 single shelter that we operate. We have mental
15 health shelters that are designed to serve some of
16 the needs of individuals experiencing behavioral
17 health but at the end of the day, because we are not
18 a healthcare agency, these partnerships are really
19 critical. So, we are focused on making sure that we
20 are connecting people to ACT and IMT teams, other
21 mobile health treatment. That we are filling out the
22 applications for supportive housing so that we can
23 connect people to permanent housing. And generally
24 meeting people where they are. It is never a
25 requirement to participate in healthcare, to take

3 medication, to be in a DHS shelter, because we want
4 to make sure that we are encouraging as many people
5 as possible to come indoors.

6 And you know this work that we are doing
7 specifically focused on those with significant
8 behavioral health needs is really a component of our
9 overall outreach on those who are unsheltered,
10 including significant increases in outreach workers,
11 investment in stabilization and safe haven beds. And
12 really again, I'm going to just emphasize the
13 partnership with sister agencies. Administrative
14 Carter, anything you want to add.

15 JOSLYN CARTER: Thank you Commissioner and thank
16 you Council Member. I think the collaborative effort
17 that we're making with our partnership is really
18 important. And so, and we do understand that those
19 who are experiencing homelessness and certainly those
20 who have fallen through the cracks of society and so,
21 collaborating with healthcare teams and mental health
22 teams and putting support around those individuals is
23 important and crucial and that's the work we've been
24 doing and continue to do with all of our partners.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Well, for the sake of
time, I just want to touch base offline to see how

2 you guys are doing outreach on the subway system.

3 Taking a ride from the Northeast Bronx down to City
4 Hall, I do run into a lot of people and mostly young
5 people who are on the subway system are sleeping in
6 the morning, so I don't know how this outreach is
7 taking place and how you guys are partnering with
8 your sister agencies but just would like to
9 thoroughly go through that process to see if there's
10 any loopholes to see how we could address that issue
11 specifically.

12 And I just - I'm sorry, you wanted to respond to
13 that?

14 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I was just going to say happy
15 to do that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Alright thank you and just
17 wanted to follow up with Council Member Stevens,
18 IDNYC. I also would love to partnership with you
19 guys to use my office as a space to do this. I
20 wanted to know currently right now, how many
21 locations do you have in New York City? And if there
22 are any that are open for people to come make
23 appointments or come into this process to get the ID?

24 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, thank you Council Member.
25 We currently have ten standalone offices. We also

1
2 have one team that focuses on the DOE and then do
3 popups with elected officials and others through
4 other means. Uhm, and then we are actively looking
5 to open one additional site in the Bronx and when we
6 have that information, we will let you all know but
7 that's currently it's 10 and we're looking to expand
8 to 11 while still using our teams in the Mobile
9 Command Center to do pop ups in specific communities
10 as well as communities that maybe are a little more
11 out in the boroughs that could use that focus.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you and just two more
13 questions. The website for IDNYC often times out or
14 will not populate appointments. Is this an issue
15 where the Administration needs to further invest in
16 technology? And is there anything fiscally
17 prohibiting the Administration for creating a direct
18 NDNYC hotline in addition to the current 311 question
19 redirect and what does the staffing for this look
20 like?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: As it relates to the IDNYC
22 website, I have not heard that issue with the website
23 but I will go back to our IT teams and ask them to do
24 some looking and testing of it to determine if
25 there's anything specific that's going on that's

3 causing it to time out in that manner. And then as
4 it relates to the hotline, you know currently we
5 really are using you know 311 is the best way for
6 individuals who don't have access to a computer to
7 make an appointment at this moment and so, that is
8 what we're currently using and we do not have plans
9 at the moment for a hotline.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Chairs.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I just wanted to clarify.
12 So, you mentioned that there may be a potential 11th
13 IDNYC office opening. Do you know which borough?

14 SCOTT FRENCH: The Bronx.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: In the Bronx, okay.

16 SCOTT FRENCH: We were looking when we were here
17 last and I hope to have some good news for you soon.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, you were shocked that
19 there was just one? Yeah, okay. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've got Council
21 Member Louis followed by Restler.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Chair and good
23 afternoon. Thank you all for being here. Uhm, I
24 have two quick questions, one on the Office of Crime
25 Victim Services and the other on the Haitian Relief
Initiative. I'll start with the Haitian Relief

1 Initiative. The Executive plan includes an
2 additional \$1.7 million in Fiscal 2024 for the
3 Haitian Relief Initiative and I just wanted to know
4 if you all could just quickly share, is the funding
5 for a particular provider or are the direct services
6 being provided by the agency? What services are
7 being provided and how are you all tracking the
8 success of the program? I know this was all started
9 under the de Blasio Administration and the Adams
10 Administration then adopted the program, which we
11 truly appreciate. We would love some updates on that
12 and the second question is regarding to OCVS and its
13 transition.
14

15 So, \$17.7 million is being provided in the
16 Executive Budget under FY25, \$23.6 in FY26, to move
17 OCVS to end GBV. So, I wanted to know if you could
18 provide some more information about the transition of
19 the office being sent over? We just wanted to know
20 if more information could be provided about the
21 funding? Will additional funding still remain in
22 MOCJ? Is everything being sent over at one time?

23 JILL BERRY: Yeah, so for both of these
24 initiatives, DSS is primarily the fiscal conduit and
25 we would have to get back to you with responses from

3 on the Haitian American Initiative as part of Action
4 NYC, which is managed by MOIA. We'll have to get
5 back to you after we touch base with our colleagues
6 at MOIA for more specifics on that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

8 JILL BERRY: On the transition from to NGBV of
9 the -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: OCVS.

11 JILL BERRY: OCVA yeah. I'm a little bit more
12 familiar with that. Not everything is being
13 transferred over. Many of the MOCJ initiatives were
14 being distributed out to the appropriate agencies to
15 run those programs. Point and number of those
16 contracts fit more squarely with the work that NGBV
17 was doing with victims and so, that transition has
18 been happening over a couple of months to make sure
19 that it goes as smoothly as possible. Transferring
20 the contracts and finances to the DSS portfolio for
21 NGBV to manage.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: How much is remaining at
23 MOCJ?

24 JILL BERRY: We'd have to get back to you on
25 that.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: How much is being
4 transferred over?

5 JILL BERRY: Again, we'd have to get back to you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Why don't you have that
7 information today?

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Council Member I'm sorry, I
9 had to step out briefly. We at DSS are a fiscal
10 conduit for a number of different agencies. We do
11 NGBV, MOIA, PEU, a variety of others. We are not
12 directly involved in managing their budget. We are a
13 passthrough and that is all, so that leaves us less
14 equipped to answer questions about the work of other
15 agencies.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: You should have that
17 information nevertheless or something to provide.
18 When will the transfer be effective or when did it
19 become effective when you learned about the
20 transition of OCVS to NGBV.

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I believe they're in the
22 process of registering contracts right now.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And when will you know
24 when the information will be provided?

25 MOLLY WASOW PARK: The contract registrations are
in process and I think at that point they will be

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3 effective but I'm going to have to defer to my
4 colleagues at NGBV on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And how soon would you be
6 able to provide the information to us before we try
7 to pass a budget?

8 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We're going to need to
9 coordinate with our colleagues at the other agency
10 since we don't directly administer the funds.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you. Thank you
12 Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member
14 Restler.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chairs
16 Brannan and Ayala, Commissioner Park, Administrators
17 French and Carter, Deputy Commissioners Berry and
18 Levine, Ferdinand and DeStefano, good to see you all.

19 I just want to firstly before I ask my questions
20 want to associate with myself especially with the
21 comments of Council Member Stevens, Riley and Louis
22 all relating to IDNY and the importance of expanding
23 capacity as Scott remembers well, this is something
24 that I worked on for years and helped quadrupled the
25 program in a matter of months after we launched it.
There is definitely capacity. We could expand

3 capacity if there was a political will to do so and
4 meet the demand that exists. Commissioner Park, I'm
5 going to ask you about a topic that I annoy you
6 about, I think at every one of these hearings. So, I
7 hope you're ready and excited to discuss DHS shelter
8 moveouts into NYCHA, which have unfortunately come to
9 a halt. Do you know how many people have moved from
10 DHS into NYCHA last month or Fiscal Year to date?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I'm very surprised that this
12 is your question. I'm happy to talk about it. Uhm,
13 we -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That means that you were
15 prepared and ready to go.

16 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are doing you know a couple
17 of dozen moves into public housing every month. I
18 really want to emphasize that the NYCHA of today is
19 in a different place than the NYCHA of the previous
20 Administration and what we are seeing is a lot of
21 progress on behalf of NYCHA on dealing with their own
22 very long-term physical issues, which is something
23 that should, that I think matters to all of us who
24 care about the state of affordable housing, right?
25 If were to lose NYCHA public housing, it would be
devastating for the city. It would be devastating

3 for the shelter system. That would be I think the
4 worst of all possible outcomes. It is – in order for
5 them to preserve that incredibly valuable stock of
6 housing, they need to invest in their own physical
7 stock and I think there's a lot of really creative
8 work that is going on right now. What that
9 translates though means into right now there are
10 fewer move out opportunities into public housing for
11 DHS shelter, right? Because they are doing the
12 repair work that they need both to get individual
13 units up to quality and then also as they are doing
14 larger scale rehab, they are doing checkerboarding.
15 Uhm, as much as I am looking for move out
16 opportunities for my clients, I am deeply grateful
17 that NYCHA is investing in their long-term success
18 because if they didn't do that, it would be worse for
19 all of us in the long run.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, no look I got to
21 jump in because I'm short on time and you know we've
22 seen a tenfold increase in the number of vacant units
23 under Mayor Adams. It hasn't gone down. It's still
24 it started at about 500. It's been approximately
25 5,000 vacant units for two years and so I know that
there's a need to do more thorough repairs and fix up

1 units. The question is why are we not dedicating
2 more resources to do those proper repairs to move
3 NYCHA families out. We used to be at about 6,000
4 moveouts out of the DHS system into NYCHA each year.
5 This year, we're on pace for maybe 1,500 maybe.
6 That's a 25 percent - just 25 percent of people
7 moving out of shelter into NYCHA. You're making a
8 lot of progress on a lot of other fronts on moveouts
9 that you and your team deserve credit for but this is
10 simply a question of management, political will, and
11 resources where we could be moving thousands of
12 families. We used to be moving thousands of families
13 each year into permanent housing. We're no longer
14 doing it. So, do you think there is a timeline by
15 which things will actually start to improve? Because
16 it has been bad. Really, really disastrously bad for
17 two years.

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: So, with all due respect, I
20 don't ever actually remember the time when it was
21 6,000 moves a year. It certainly was higher than it
22 has been.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I think that was the
24 average from FY15 to FY21 between 5,000 and 6,000 in
25 that range.

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3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, maybe people.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: People, people, yes
5 right.

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Oh, so the numbers that I gave
7 you were families.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I understood. I was
9 speaking in people just to be clear.

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, you know with respect to
11 investments of resources and specific timing
12 questions around NYCHA repairs, I will - we'll
13 certainly need to defer to NYCHA. We aren't directly
14 controlling those. I would say you know NYCHA has
15 been a strong partner. They continue despite all of
16 the work that they have going on and the efforts that
17 they have to do repairs in their own units. They do
18 continue to allocate units to us. We are working
19 with them. I think this was mentioned in the Mayor's
20 State of the City. They are allocating Section 8
21 vouchers, which has not been the case for a very long
22 time. So, public housing is a really critical
23 resource. Over the long term, my goal is that it
24 remains a solid resource in good standing and I think
25 that is what NYCHA is doing now and we are working
with all of our housing partners, HPD, HDC, NYCHA,

3 HCR to make sure that we are continuing to expand
4 move out opportunities and you know despite the
5 temporary drop off in the number of NYCHA moveouts,
6 what we are seeing is an overall increase in
7 subsidized exits at our shelter.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And you deserve credit
9 for some of those areas for improvement. I'm not
10 taking that away from you. This is one area that is
11 fully within the control of the city and we're not
12 doing the work that's necessary to connect homeless
13 families to permanent housing. Just if I can, two
14 other topics I'd like to ask about briefly. I'm very
15 concerned, again in areas of credit, uhm, you guys
16 have done a ton of work to address the backlog in
17 public assistance applications, which I know was not
18 easy. But my concern is that we're seeing a growing
19 rate of rejections among applications, especially for
20 cash assistance. Where I believe back in 2020, a
21 majority of people who were applying for cash
22 assistance were accepted at the beginning of the
23 pandemic, that era. Now, we're at a portion, we're
24 just about one-third of applications for cash
25 assistance are accepted, 37 percent I believe as of
January. I'm very concerned. Can you explain why

3 we've seen this dramatic increase as applications
4 have gone up a huge increase in the number of people
5 who are being rejected for those applications.

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yeah, absolutely I'm happy to
7 start and Administrative French will chime in. I
8 think largely what we are seeing is that we have
9 significantly lowered the bar to application, right?
10 So, before the pandemic, in order to apply for cash
11 assistance, you had to you know either bring your
12 kids with you or find somebody to take care of your
13 kids, get on the train and go sit in an office for
14 several hours, right? You – before you did that, you
15 really made sure that you had all your ducks in a
16 row, right? You were collecting documentation. You
17 really thought through the eligibility process. What
18 we are finding now is that many people start the
19 application process and don't complete it. And I
20 think that's consistent with patterns that I have
21 seen in a lot of different context when the barrier
22 to application is lower.

23 So, you know for example, Housing Connect, the
24 HPD's Lottery System, right? A lot of people apply
25 for housing and then don't you know get called to
start the application process. Don't complete it

1 because it's easy to apply for everything. I think
2 the rejection rates and Administrator French will
3 correct me if I'm wrong, are comparable to SNAP where
4 they were pre-pandemic, which at that point was
5 already a largely online process. So, it is the
6 right thing to do to lower the barriers to access for
7 public services but what it means is that you get
8 many more applications when people are earlier in
9 their journeys, they haven't necessarily thought it
10 through. We are monitoring and doing samples of
11 rejections to see if there is any consistent pattern,
12 anything that we need to be aware of for staff
13 training. At this point, we have not seen anything
14 but I will allow Administrator French –

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm going to get in
17 trouble with Chair Brannan, so I'm just going to jump
18 in to say, I'm really concerned that with the online
19 only process, there's no opportunity for people to
20 get the help they need. That's certainly what we
21 hear from our constituents is that they get stuck.
22 They have a problem and they're not getting the
23 assistance. When they call, the average wait time is
24 80 minutes so far in FY24 down to 65 minutes in
25 January peaked at 101 minutes in September.

3 So, that's a long time to call and wait to get
4 help, an hour and 40 minutes, an hour and 20 minutes
5 on the phone. Working people can't afford that. The
6 last thing I just wanted to ask about and then I
7 promise to shut up is uhm, I've been deeply concerned
8 about the decline in tenants who are in of Council
9 accessing attorney's in housing court. My
10 understanding from the reports I have read or that
11 we've seen a steady decline since the eviction
12 moratorium was lifted, uhm, and as of the end of last
13 year, we were at approximately just about 35 percent
14 of tenants who were eligible actually accessing
15 attorneys in housing court.

16 We all know the impact that that has on
17 evictions. I know you all want to stop evictions. I
18 express my solidarity to the MFJ folks who were here
19 fighting for decent conditions and compensation but
20 just on this question, I saw that you got a new RFP
21 that's coming out. In that RFP do you have a goal
22 for the percent of tenants, eligible tenants that
23 will be represented in Housing Court and is there
24 anything else that's being done to help reverse this
25 really troubling trend that leads to more evictions
in New York City?

1
2 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Administrative French, do you
3 want to start with the questions around eligibility?

4 SCOTT FRENCH: I would just say as it relates to
5 applying for benefits. Individuals can still come
6 into any one of our centers and apply, so if there
7 are individuals who are having online issues, right
8 they can come to any HRA location and can be assisted
9 with benefits. So, I'm happy to talk more about if
10 there's any specifics that are going on but while we
11 encourage people to do it online because they can do
12 it from their home. They can do it on a weekend.
13 They can do it whenever they would like to, that is
14 not solely how individuals need to do it, so we
15 encourage people to come into the locations if
16 needed.

17 MOLLY WASOW PARK: And our NYC benefits
18 contractors are also available to provide assistance.
19 Uhm, really pleased that we are able to continue
20 those contracts as I mentioned to the tune of about
21 \$10 million.

22 With respect to our Right to Counsel and legal
23 representation, agree that this is a very critical
24 program. I'm excited by the new RFP. I think we've
25 gotten terrific response and I can't get too deep in

1 the weeds on specifics because we are still
2 negotiating those contracts but I think some things
3 that we are doing uhm to really strengthen the
4 program and to make sure that we are getting
5 everybody the access to the services that they need
6 in order to remain housed, that includes Legal
7 Services but isn't limited to Legal Services right?
8 There are absolutely people for whom emergency rent
9 arrears is sufficient. Uhm, I think we have
10 bifurcated the RFPs for full representation and brief
11 legal advise to make sure that we are really putting
12 out very specific targets around full legal
13 representation. That it's not getting made up for
14 with brief legal. We are being more direct about
15 performance standards that are in the new contracts
16 and we're working with our providers on
17 implementation there. And then we're doing some
18 realignment of our own operations to make sure that
19 we are being strategic about how we are connecting
20 people to services, again making sure that if what
21 somebody needs is a one shot or a landlords needs to
22 work through an issue in order to avoid going to
23 housing court that we are positions to do that.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Look and I really
3 appreciate all that and there are a bunch of tools in
4 your toolbox. That's why I support the agencies
5 being combined together so that we can do everything
6 we can to keep people out of shelter but just on now
7 a question. Are you anticipating having a goal in
8 these contracts for the percentage of people who
9 actually have eviction proceedings against them that
10 are in housing court that will be represented by
11 lawyers?

12 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are focused on complying
13 with the law right which says that anybody at the
14 given income level is entitled to legal
15 representation. So, we are looking to allocate our
16 services so that we get to that standard, recognizing
17 that there are going to be people who you know as I
18 mentioned earlier, maybe come in with their own
19 attorney because of a variety of distrust of
20 government issues, opt not to work with us. People
21 may come in later in the process at the point at
22 which that screening window has already passed but we
23 want to the extent possible, absolutely to minimize
24 the number of people who don't get access to an
25 attorney because of resource issues at our agency.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I could ask a thousand
4 more questions but I really appreciate the latitude
5 Chairs Brannan and Ayala. thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Commissioner I wanted
7 to ask you about a HERC that's actually in the
8 Speakers District, the JFK Crown Plaza. Uhm, it was
9 recently reclassified as a DHS run shelter. Could
10 you tell us what is the current population at that
11 shelter?

12 MOLLY WASOW PARK: It's a families with children
13 site. I will need to get back to you on the specific
14 number of people but yes, it's families with
15 children.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and what are the
17 implications of that, the reclassification to being a
18 DHS run HERC?

19 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, this was a citywide
20 decision to bring it under the DHS umbrella so that
21 we can ultimately leverage the DHS contracting
22 structure where we have not-for-profits that are
23 providing services. The feeling was that that would
24 be a more effective way to deliver services than the
25 H&H model.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And will that - will he
4 HERC then continue serving the migrant population?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Yes, it is an asylum site and
6 we are continuing to maintain it as an asylum site.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, are there differences
8 in services provided at that location compared to an
9 H&H run site?

10 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are collaborating with H&H
11 on case management services. As I say they are the
12 ones that are going to be holding the case management
13 contract but it will serve DHS sites. I think what
14 is different is in the operation, day-to-day
15 engagement with clients where DHS has a long history
16 of using not-for-profits who then you know hold
17 subcontracts. H&H has been building the plane and
18 flying it a little bit at the same time. We are
19 very, very grateful for their involvement that
20 challenges were too big for one agency to handle
21 alone but we think the not-for-profit shelter
22 operator model, the DHS has historically used will be
23 effective in this instance.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, if there's a positive
25 financial impact in that reclassification, would you
be looking to do that elsewhere?

3 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Uhm, we - there is one
4 additional site that we have done already, a families
5 with children site. It really is site specific.
6 There are certain you know physical layouts and site
7 models that aren't going to be appropriate for DHS or
8 appropriate for a not-for-profit to take on but we, I
9 talk to my colleagues at H&H every single day as well
10 as the OASO team, so to the extent that it makes
11 sense to move a site between agencies, we absolutely
12 will look at it.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the main, I mean
14 what's the main reason for doing that? Is it
15 oversight or?

16 MOLLY WASOW PARK: It was largely a budget
17 management issue that we were able to do, operate
18 those sites. The two sites that I mentioned in a way
19 that was a little bit more efficient than H&H was
20 able to. The census at Crown Plaza is 335. The
21 other site where we did it is the Wallcott Hotel
22 which has a census of 176, both of them are families
23 with children.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I guess I'm just trying to
25 understand if we found a way to do it more

3 efficiently through DHS, why wouldn't we do that
4 across the board?

5 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Two reasons. One, there are
6 physical layouts that are just not appropriate for
7 DHS not-for-profit contractor to take on right. Some
8 of the large tech facilities, for example not
9 appropriate for DHS.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Why?

11 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Not-for-profit capacity tends,
12 they - given a not-for-profit organization can handle
13 sites of a certain size. Once you start to get
14 bigger it becomes a little bit more challenging for a
15 not-for-profit organization to operate well.

16 So, I think that is a particular challenge. We
17 also have a different legal and regulatory
18 environment than the HERCs do, so we need to take
19 that into account but we are looking and then the
20 last thing that I would say and this has been very
21 true is given this growth in the system and the pace
22 at which asylum seekers have come to this city, we
23 have really strained our traditional provider
24 capacity. We're working with a number of new
25 providers. I think that has been an upside of this
particular crisis and that we have brought new

1 entities into the system but our traditional not-for-
2 profit base does have limits in what they can take
3 on. I certainly wouldn't want to put a brand-new
4 not-for-profit provider in control of some of the
5 very large sites.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And just to clarify, you
8 said there's 335 people at JFK?

9 MOLLY WASOW PARK: Correct, sorry, that's 335
10 families.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 335 migrant families.

12 MOLLY WASOW PARK: 176 families at the Wallcott.
13 That is obviously a target, a number that will move
14 you know on the margins on a day-to-day basis.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Deputy Speaker.

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I just have a couple of
17 follow up questions. Regarding the GMHC right has a
18 workforce program. Uhm, actually this is regarding
19 the baselined PEG of 284. Did HRA ask OMB to restore
20 this cut in the Executive Plan?

21 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We're working really closely
22 with OMB on all of our financing needs. Obviously we
23 have a number of real challenges in front of us
24 related to excuse me, all of our funding cliffs and
25 so, we have robust conversations about those PEGs,

1 restorations and also the new needs that are in front
2 of us and we're trying to balance all of that.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: That's not a yes or a no
5 Molly.

6 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We are working very closely
7 with OMB on an ongoing basis. It is, correct, it is
8 not a yes or no because the dynamics are very
9 complicated given all of the issues that we have in
10 front of us.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, would it be fair to say
12 that you are trying but it's not a high priority?

13 MOLLY WASOW PARK: I think it is fair to say that
14 we are working with OMB to make sure that the budget
15 that is passed at adoption is meeting all of the
16 agency critical needs.

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is there an update that you
18 can provide on the planned transition and your
19 conversations with GMHC since we discussed this at
20 the preliminary budget hearing?

21 SCOTT FRENCH: Sure, I can take that one. So,
22 yes, we've been discussing with GMHC the process of
23 the ramp down of the contract you know and talking
24 with them about individuals who still want to avail
25 themselves of employment services. Even though it is

3 voluntary for them, we will connect them with other
4 existing HRA employment services providers to connect
5 them to training, education or whatever, whatever the
6 individuals may be looking to participate in.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I just want to
8 highlight that you know when we're talking about
9 poverty, the last thing you want to cut is food and
10 workforce development at any point and I'm like
11 really disappointed at this years budget and the idea
12 that we're cutting you know both programs, so both
13 have them put on the chopping block. You know I've
14 had conversations with the Commissioner about this.
15 Even in my own district I'm seeing two jobs plus
16 programs cut as well and these are pipelines to
17 employment and specifically because we're talking
18 about communities where there's a higher density of
19 poverty, it's really disturbing. It's like there's
20 no real justification for that. Uhm, we should be
21 working with these providers to enhance their
22 services, not you know in any way shape or form
23 reduce them and to say that people have a right to
24 you know uhm visit a site someplace else and have to
25 leave their own community is really disheartening and
I hope that we do better.

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3 Regarding the human services COLA, does that
4 include HRA civil legal service providers?

5 JILL BERRY: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: It does, okay perfect, thank
7 you and regarding Angie, is the system developed by
8 HRA staff or a contracted vendor?

9 MOLLY WASOW PARK: This was developed by HRA
10 staff.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: HRA staff, okay. Uhm, and
12 what is the expense in capital budget for Angie?

13 MOLLY WASOW PARK: We'll have to get back to you
14 on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, do you know how the
16 system was developed?

17 JILL BERRY: Yeah, it was developed uhm, by or
18 agency in conjunction with a lot of meetings with
19 staff, with procedures, with the IT teams, we brought
20 in some outside consultants to try to design it in a
21 way that would encourage and incentivize staff to
22 follow through on the work to try to make it so that
23 it brings the person and the family - a lot of
24 thought went into ANGIE in terms of previously a lot
25 of the work was in person right, so you're an
eligibility worker, your in a center and the

1 families, the households, the individuals are sitting
2 in front of you. So, we tried to and maybe we did a
3 good job, maybe there's more work to be done but we
4 tried to design it in a way that would bring the
5 person to the worker so that it didn't feel like they
6 were just doing nameless work. That's why trying to
7 give them, the staff, some sense of how much work is
8 still waiting to be done. We can't see it in the
9 waiting area but that 18,000 number was just meant to
10 give people an idea that there people waiting on you.
11 Your work is important and it is impacting tens of
12 thousands of New Yorkers every day. So, that's some
13 of the design that went behind it. A lot of the rest
14 of the design was to try to encourage workers to slow
15 down, not quickly process the case, but slow down,
16 think through each question uhm to make sure that
17 you're capturing all the information correctly, so
18 the family gets the right level of benefits so that
19 something doesn't get accidentally overlooked or
20 missed.

21
22 And I know that that can be frustrating to the
23 staff who see that 18,000 number. They want to hurry
24 up and get the work done and in past versions,
25 systems they were able to click through the screens

1 we say and get it done faster but that doesn't always
2 mean that it resulted in the right benefit level for
3 our clients that depend on us for our benefits. And
4 ANGIE was really designed to try to slow the worker
5 down, present all of the information to the worker.
6 It was designed also in ways that you don't have to
7 leave ANGIE to go somewhere else to get data. It's
8 pulling that information from other systems. That
9 does slow it down a little bit while it's going out
10 and doing those data matches but it is making sure
11 it's presenting all of that information. The whole
12 comprehensive picture, using all of the data systems
13 and data that we have available to us as an agency
14 without the worker having to go hunt and find that
15 information to make the right decision and to make a
16 holistic decision that results in the right benefit
17 levels for families.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I mean I get it you want to
20 be most efficient. I just wonder where in your tool,
21 what level of troubleshooting is happening with the
22 actual staff and not the supervisors, the people that
23 are using the system right to get feedback from them
24 directly on what's working and you know what's not
25 working.

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3 JILL BERRY: Yeah and if I could just add one
4 more thing to that point with our backlogs, our cash
5 assistance backlog was much larger than our SNAP
6 backlog. And so, we really spent a lot of time over
7 the last year focused on fine tuning the systems that
8 support the cash assistance program, which means that
9 yes, as passing ANGIE that support the SNAP only
10 population, those systems have not gotten the same
11 level of attention over the last year but that is
12 something we are shifting towards now. We have a lot
13 of feedback from the staff from the work that we did
14 with the Mayor's Office of Efficiency. We have a lot
15 of great ideas and initiatives that came up through
16 that work and we are pivoting only now to start to
17 implement some of those changes.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And just finally, is the
19 ANGIE program an HRA capital project?

20 JILL BERRY: Yes, it was.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, alright, thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, seeing no further
23 questions, we are going to move on to public
24 testimony. Commissioner and your team, thank you so
25 much and we will follow up with whatever we were
unable to get answered today.

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3 PANEL: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Alright, we're
5 going to take a ten-minute break and then we'll have,
6 we'll start public testimony. [03:03:20] -
7 [03:22:43]

8 Serg, we're rolling? Okay. [GAVEL] Okay, I'm
9 now going to open the hearing for public testimony.
10 I remind members of the public that this is a
11 government proceeding and the decorum shall be
12 observed at all times. As such members of the public
13 shall remain silent at all times say for whoever is
14 testifying. The witness table is reserved for people
15 who wish to testify. No video recording or
16 photograph is allowed from the witness table.
17 Furthermore, members of the public may not present
18 audio or video recordings as testimony but they may
19 submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant
20 at Arms for inclusion in the official hearing record.
21 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, make sure
22 you filled out an appearance card with the Sergeant
23 at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,
24 you'll then have two minutes to speak on today's
25 hearing topic. The DHS and HRA FY25 Executive Budget
hearings. If you have a written statement or

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3 additional written testimony you wish to submit to
4 the official record, please provide a copy of that
5 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also
6 email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov
7 within 72 hours of this hearing to be included in the
8 official record. We will now call the first panel.
9 I apologize if I can't read your hand writing or I
10 pronounce your name wrong Valentina Vidal, Casey
11 Schmoll, uhm Seleste Wilson. Casey Schmoll, Seleste
12 Wilson and Valentina Vidal.

13 [03:24:25] - [03:24:46] Okay, so we can go left
14 to right, just say your name before you begin and
15 we'll put two minutes on the clock.

16 VALENTINA VIDAL: Good afternoon. My name is
17 Valentina Vidal. Thank you, Chair Ayala, members of
18 the General Welfare Committee, and other esteemed
19 Council Members for the opportunity to testify today.
20 My name is Valentina Vidal, and I am the Bilingual
21 Vocational Case Manager at GMHC. I am here today to
22 ask for you to restore the funding in the final
23 Fiscal Year 2025 NYC budget for our Realizing
24 Independence through Support and Employment, or RISE,
25 workforce development program. I am a case manager

1
2 at GMHC because of the RISE program, and I am also a
3 HASA client.

4 If the funding is not restored, GMHC staff will
5 lose their jobs and clients will lose out on the
6 specialized services only GMHC can provide. In fact,
7 I testified before you on March 11, GMHC has been
8 notified that two additional HIV prevention contracts
9 with DOHMH will be terminated. This brings the total
10 to nearly \$1.1 million in cuts to GMHC's funding and
11 nearly 13 jobs lost.

12 Founded in 1982 as Gay Men's Health Crisis, the
13 world's first HIV and AIDS services organization,
14 GMHC has provided comprehensive services to over
15 5,500 New Yorkers living and affected by HIV and AIDS
16 every year. This is among the reasons why our
17 workforce development program, which supports clients
18 living with HIV and AIDS who are ready, willing, and
19 able to return to work, is so important.

20 Training and linking clients to safe and stable
21 jobs puts them on the path to financial independence
22 and leads to better health outcomes like medication
23 adherence and improved mental health. Since 2014,
24 GMHC's RISE program has helped 674 clients find
25 employment by providing culturally competent and

1 individualized assistance, including resume building,
2 vocational training, internships, employment and
3 benefits counseling, job placement and retention
4 assistance for unemployed and underemployed workers
5 at all stages of career. Yet, due to the
6 Administration's January plan, HRA will eliminate
7 RISE to satisfy the \$283,000 PEG. And one last
8 thing, GMHC understands that HASA intends to provide
9 these workforce development services when our
10 contract ends. And please consider the following
11 when assessing whether that is possible: GMHC has a
12 SUNY Advanced Technology Training and Information
13 Networking, computer lab at our facility.

14
15 In 2023, our lab was completely refurbished with
16 new computers. Please stand with GMHC and the HASA
17 clients we serve by advocating for the full
18 restoration of the RISE program at its \$401,725
19 annual contract. Restoring RISE will mean over five
20 GMHC will not lose their jobs, and vulnerable New
21 Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS will be provided
22 with the training and tools they need to find
23 employment and reach economic independence. Thank
24 you again for the opportunity to testify today.

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3 SELESTE WILSON: Good afternoon. Good afternoon
4 Chair Ayala and members, public officials and members
5 of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity
6 to testify today. I am Seleste Wilson, an
7 Eligibility Specialist II and a member of AFSCME
8 Local 1549, District Council 37 in New York. I have
9 worked for SNAP for just one year but I love my job
10 and it's been an amazing. I am a Deacon, an outreach
11 Deacon in the community, so it is exciting for me to
12 see the other side. This is my first time before
13 this Committee, and I can confirm the ANGIE System
14 continues to be a barrier to timely benefit delivery.
15 We also still suffer from a lack of the support in
16 additional staff and training, which they are great
17 trainers, to necessary to get the right benefit to
18 the right people on time.

19 I would also like to confirm we have a
20 significant backlog that we have seen and we
21 acknowledge of being right now 30,000. The problem
22 with ANGIE, if the system flags an error while I'm
23 entering a client's information or processing
24 eligibility in the system, the case has to be
25 suspended until the IT can fix the problem. This
could take anywhere from three weeks to two months.

1
2 In the meantime, I have to move on to the next case
3 and everything with the original case falls through
4 the cracks.

5 It has previously been reported by my colleagues
6 that the prior POS System allowed us to complete
7 tasks more easily with fewer fatal errors and fewer
8 challenges than in ANGIE. This is still true. The
9 current System creates a huge backlog of cases. The
10 stress of reducing this backlog contributes to
11 employee retention problems. As a result, we need
12 many more Eligibility Specialists, but the pay is not
13 high enough, given the cost of living here. In the
14 end, the ANGIE System hurts the clients and stops me
15 from being able to do the work in a timely manner.

16 Our managers originally said that the ANGIE
17 System could help frontline workers and could benefit
18 the client but for frontline staff, it has done the
19 opposite. Understaffing and a lack of training also
20 continue to be challenges in SNAP. At my location,
21 which is 2500 Halsey, right in the Bronx, for the
22 four past months, we haven't had mandatory overtime.
23 However, people are still working overtime from 8:00
24 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., sometimes until 10:00 p.m. on
25

1 Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays but we haven't had
2 mandatory overtime at my location.
3

4 Now, HRA says that they've hired 700 employees.
5 We hold 350, so we haven't seen that. We believe it
6 would help us to allow to continue to take calls. We
7 would love to request if we can take calls at opposed
8 to the 9-5 being that we are working overtime, we can
9 expend it to actually do the interviews with the
10 client. This is a supplemental program, so we should
11 work with the working people where their after-work
12 hours starts at 5 p.m.. If and when we are working
13 overtime at least Saturday but in total, we should be
14 able to extend the hours of interviews by
15 communicating with our clients via phone.

16 Since we have merged a lot of SNAP offices at
17 call centers to allow the process to be a little more
18 quicker, but because of the ANGIE is so outdated, it
19 doesn't help us much to be ahead of processing the
20 cases. Thank you.

21 CASEY SCHMOLL: Hi guys. My name is Casey
22 Schmoll, I'm an Eligibility Specialist also at Halsy
23 with Seleste. For the most part just going to go
24 into a couple details about ANGIE and then I will
25 send an email to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Alright,

1 sweet. So, it's a great system and what Deputy
2 Director Berry was saying but the way she said it, I
3 don't know if maybe there's a disconnect between the
4 people that were sitting here to actually the people
5 that are out there processing. So, from the outside
6 view, it looks good right. If there's one person on
7 the case and it's pretty simple. It would be the
8 same as if you're filling out an application and it's
9 a one page. That goes through great but what we're
10 supposed to be doing really is focusing on families
11 right?
12

13 So, now you've got someone whose got three pages
14 on an application. It's I don't know, it's uhm, it
15 falls short. I think the idea is great that it is
16 what she was saying, is that it does allow us to go
17 through slower and actually take our time but it
18 really isn't anything that an employee is doing
19 right? So, we will go through all the way line by
20 line very carefully and then the part of the system,
21 it's hard to explain I guess unless you know you're
22 doing it. Basically all this information you're
23 putting into a bucket that then you press start and
24 calculate right? When you get to the end, sometimes
25 it will say now that information is there. So, you

1 literally went half an hour with a client. You went
2 slow. You did your time. You put in all this
3 information in the bucket and then you literally
4 press start and it says there's nothing there or
5 there's an error. And there's not really -

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How often does that happen?

8 CASEY SCHMOLL: More often than not. For me
9 myself, uhm it doesn't happen as often but that's
10 because I know how to do the work arounds but that's
11 not fair. You know what I mean? Like, I shouldn't
12 have to be click, knowing that if I click here three
13 times and then go back here and then press space,
14 that's really what it is and that's - and then my row
15 knows it and my supervisor knows it but maybe the row
16 next, you know what I mean? So, it isn't - and
17 that's not something that should actually - that's
18 not something that should be you know, that should be
19 standard practice. It should be if I'm going through
20 very carefully and I am checking these, all these
21 different items that are provided to us like she was
22 saying, they're all there it's just, it's not
23 connected.

24 So, I can pull up the wage verification reporting
25 right. Oh, that's so convenient, it's right there.

1 The client doesn't have to send me the pay stubs.
2
3 It's there in the income screen so you say yes, add,
4 right? When you get there, it's not even there. So,
5 you have to still go back in and manually and then if
6 you manually put it in when you get to the end, it
7 comes up double. So, it really is a computer thing
8 that really has to be - there's too many glitches and
9 then the answer even from the Director, you know you
10 go up to your supervisor there, the answer is IT
11 ticket because nobody knows what to do and you either
12 fill in the IT ticket and they respond in five
13 minutes then go, oh yeah just refresh. It still
14 didn't work or it literally doesn't get answered
15 until three months later. Did you try now? And by
16 then, it kind of is like a gamble. By then someone
17 has clicked it and just by the odds of the system
18 because they hit at 401 instead of 402, it works this
19 time. You know but it's not, that's not consistent.
20 A client is doing what they're doing. All the case
21 come and call, it pulls up it says, no transaction
22 history. You literally can't open the case. Their
23 information it's there and well for management
24 system, the main motherboard but at our processing
25 system to transmit that information, it's just uhm,

1
2 it kind of feels like it's still in like beta
3 testing.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what do they tell you
5 when you raise these concerns?

6 CASEY SCHMOLL: Uhm, it's either - and that's why
7 I wish that there was - I wish that they had stayed
8 here just because we also were, we've met with them
9 on different things, on Diversity Council so we know
10 those people but I wish that there was a connect
11 versus just I'm a frontline worker and we're
12 complaining and then it kind of gets brought up to
13 management then I don't know if maybe we don't know
14 after that. It would be cool if the people who are
15 developing the system, if it is happening I don't
16 know about it. It would be cool if every first and
17 third Thursday of the month, frontline workers are
18 going to meet with IT people and we're going to go
19 over a case together and you know because we send
20 them screen shots and this and that but they say that
21 the IT will come back and say it's fixed. It's not
22 you know and it's the worst thing to talk to a client
23 and they have a kid and they just lost their job and
24 you want to help them and it's frustrating you know?
25 Because it's like that's time where I'm like if I

1 could do it on paper, I would do it on paper you
2 know? Because all we're doing is being limited by a
3 computer system that's not - like I said, it is nice.
4 It's fast but it's a system that there are so many
5 regulations and guidelines that need to be put in to
6 fill out an application properly but that system
7 isn't - it's not strong enough to be handling the
8 workload that's there.

10 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you ever have an
11 opportunity to speak to the folks that were creating
12 the system? Do they come back?

13 CASEY SCHMOLL: I didn't only because we've only
14 been there a year, so but if there was an opportunity
15 to bring the frontline people with the people that
16 are actually you know doing the da- the IT people
17 that are creating the system, I think it would help.
18 I really do.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

20 CASEY SCHMOLL: Because I think that they just -
21 I think too IT gets overwhelmed right, so they just
22 see all these tickets and then some of the tickets do
23 come from people not being trained enough. So, there
24 are times when someone will be like well, this is why
25 I'm doing that. I'm like, no, no, no, that's not

1 right and that's not why you need an IT ticket. So,
2 then IT might be saying, thinking on there and well,
3 they don't know what they're doing anyway. You know,
4 so I think if there was a connect to bring the people
5 who are using the system with the people who created
6 the system, I think it would help.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I really appreciate you guys
9 in bringing this to our attention because we hadn't
10 heard until you know the employees brought it up at a
11 hearing a few, I think it was last year and since
12 then, we've been having conversations but obviously,
13 you know we need to be a little bit more voice torus
14 because it doesn't seem like they're taking those
15 suggestions to heart.

16 SELESTE WILSON: And I just wanted to say that a
17 lot of times when IT may call us on the phone that we
18 really don't use at our desk, we'll say things that's
19 wrong with the system and they'll be like, we don't
20 know what you're talking about because we're thinking
21 that they understand what we're saying, what's going
22 on with let's say a specific case, uhm the system is
23 not working. They'll be like, we don't even know
24 what you're talking about. So, we get a lot of that,
25 so we're not even sure what their fixing and then we

1
2 will go back to the case. Sometimes we hold on to
3 cases because it feels like you know I'm going to
4 speak for myself and I'm sure that Casey feels the
5 same way. We want to help everyone and so, it's kind
6 of hard when you have people that's crying on the
7 phone and they're saying certain things and then
8 we'll go back into the case, which we're really
9 supposed to continue to go to the next cases and it's
10 like a month later and the case is still not done.

11 And then there's things like we would request
12 from them. So, let's say whether it is SNAP or even
13 cash assistance, if you're requesting for an
14 emergency that you need a lease, you need a
15 composition letter, and you need a breakdown. Well,
16 those three things are the same, so the person gets
17 rejected because one of them are not sent when the
18 information is there but then it's not mandatory to
19 show where you live. Well, then why are you being
20 rejected?

21 So, those are two major things tht are like so
22 in-depth of can we move on so these people can get
23 some food?

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Councilwoman Avilés.

25

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much for
4 your testimony and the work that you do. You
5 mentioned training. It sounds like it's not very
6 good or not. Can you tell a little bit more about
7 what training and support looks like?

8 CASEY SCHMOLL: Yeah, so as someone who actually
9 that's kind of where I'm looking at with my
10 trajectory like when we did training. Our trainers
11 were great. The people were great. It's the system
12 that's got - that's the issue is that even in
13 training, the trainers would be like, well we can't
14 do that in training. Like the module that was set is
15 you know it's still ANGIE but it's only the trained
16 ANGIE so we couldn't even do everything that we're
17 supposed to be ready to do on the floor and the
18 trainers even said that and you could tell their
19 frustration.

20 So, they're like yeah, we actually don't have
21 access to that in the training. We're doing things
22 like we're going to do in training but out there
23 that's not how that's going to be and it's like, for
24 someone like me, I got it, right? I got it. I
25 understood. Someone like her, she was in my same
class. She was like, I have no idea and so, I

1 understand that for me, example, my brain is like
2 okay I can figure it out. I put it together but for
3 someone else, that's not what should be done. I mean
4 it should really, it's called streamline paperless
5 off the system. Everything should be paperless.
6 Everything should be streamlined. The streams not
7 there. It's kind of an you know uhm so the trainings
8 great but I think that there needs to be offered
9 retraining for some people who want it. So, some
10 people get on the floor and then once they're there,
11 they're like oh, I need this and this and this but
12 that's not offered because it's a lot of - I think
13 the management is still focused on taking the calls,
14 getting the production but it's like right but if
15 somebody's processing this case and then there's two
16 errors, they can still submit it and then that case
17 will be an error and then someone has to come back
18 and fix it, which is fine. It's a team effort but
19 that's all of this is just kind of, it's kind of like
20 if your taking these cases and just kind of throwing
21 them everywhere. You know, the idea of it is there
22 of getting those cases done as quickly as possible
23 but then the execution kind of - it's kind of a free
24 for all.
25

1
2 SELESTE WILSON: And then what we also notice
3 because we try to greet people you know the new ones
4 that are coming in. They're just sitting there
5 because they have to I mean literally just sitting
6 there and watching and so, when you're training, you
7 cannot train just by watching. But the problem is
8 there's a lack of trainers and so you have maybe five
9 people that are training all of these people that are
10 coming in. They only take about maybe 20 people at a
11 time, so all of these people are just waiting and
12 these five great trainers are training but they have
13 to wait. And so, it takes about six weeks. They
14 tried to make it like really expeditiously like right
15 after we came in, they reduced it to like three weeks
16 for the one so that was like a whole bunch of work
17 being put on them and it's kind of hard to receive it
18 and then you're right on the floor with the clients.
19 So, we really need more trainers to be able to train
20 for this.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all
22 for your testimony.

23 SELESTE WILSON: You're welcome. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we have the next
25 panel Lisa Meehan, Craig Hughes, Sean Davis, Tara

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3 Joy, and Chris Fasano. Chris Fasano, Tara Joy, Sean
4 Davis, Craig Hughes and Lisa Meehan. [03:42:53] -
5 [03:42:58]

6 CRAIG HUGHES: Hello, my name is Craig Hughes. I
7 am a Social Worker normally in the Bronx. I've been
8 in front of these hearings many times. This is my
9 first time as a worker who has been on strike for two
10 and a half months. I don't wish that on anyone. It
11 is very hard.

12 I will be very brief with this. I would much
13 rather be responding to the line that HRA just fed
14 you about why people are being denied basic survival
15 benefits. It has nothing to do with them sitting on
16 couches. It has everything to do with the
17 bureaucracy that's a nightmare but that's not why I'm
18 here today. I'm here today because me and 106 other
19 working-class people in New York City have been on
20 strike for two and a half months. We are legal
21 service workers and Mobilization for Justice.

22 We represent poor and working-class people in
23 anti-eviction cases. In cases in front of Department
24 of Education and Disability claims and public
25 benefits and so on. I am going to go probably five
seconds over but I'll be as quick as possible.

3 So, I'm the only Social Worker in the Bronx at
4 Mobilization for Justice. Over the last two and a
5 half months, there's been no social worker in the
6 Bronx. There's also one in Manhattan, no social
7 worker in Manhattan. They have hired scabs, our
8 executive leadership, meaning they hired temp
9 replacement workers to take positions while we are
10 out on strike but there are no social workers. There
11 are no serious attorneys. There are a massive crash
12 of housing court cases that they adjourned months ago
13 that are coming up. Something like 30 in Bronx
14 Housing Court this week alone, which will not get
15 adequate representation.

16 So, just a couple of quick things. One, Deputy
17 Speaker Ayala, I can't thank you enough for asking
18 Commissioner Park under oath about the three percent
19 COLA. To give you an idea of Mobilization for
20 Justice Executive Leadership's approach to bargaining,
21 they have said, they do not get that COLA. The COLA
22 that Molly Park said, yes we absolutely get it, they
23 up until last week have said, we don't get that.
24 They are offering us raises that are nowhere near the
25 level of inflation.

3 So, there are two things uhm and I really will be
4 quick, I'm sorry to take your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead, go ahead.

6 CRAIG HUGHES: Thank you so much. That I really
7 want to highlight to give you an idea of the demands.
8 Our management has claimed that we are trying to
9 bankrupt the organization. We are anti-poverty
10 workers. That's the last thing we want to do. What
11 we do want is wages that are sustainable for our
12 families and wages that allow our clients to have
13 sustainable staffing at this agency.

14 There are two key demands, for example, that I
15 want to bring up that management is absolutely
16 refusing to touch in a two-and-a-half-month strike.
17 One is a \$60,000 salary floor. \$60,000 in New York
18 City for anyone is hard to live on. That is a demand
19 that management absolutely refuses to budge on. They
20 will not offer our lowest paid workers who are mostly
21 people of color \$60,000 a year. That is egregious
22 but that is their position.

23 The other thing is that they before we went on
24 strike, they had a temp worker who was uhm, against
25 the rules of collective bargaining agreement on staff
as a temp worker for months beyond what they were

1 supposed to. They were supposed to have hired her.
2 The union filed a grievance on her behalf and they
3 explicitly fired her in retaliation for that
4 grievance. One of our key demands is that she get
5 rehired and management will not budge on it. So,
6 they wrongfully terminated a temp employee that they
7 exploited that they would not give union rights to
8 and then when the union raised a grievance, they
9 retaliated against her and then they will not hire
10 her. And those are two key reasons we have been on
11 strike for two and a half months. \$60,000 for mostly
12 people of color who are working with folks who are
13 struggling the most in this city and to help make
14 sure that someone who was wrongfully terminated gets
15 their job back and that our union is in weaken
16 because management doesn't like to play by its own
17 rules.
18

19 And so, there's other folks here and I'm going to
20 zip it but I would much rather and I think we all
21 would much rather be here talking about what HRA just
22 said and not fighting for the basic things that we
23 need to be able live in this city. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many workers are on
25 strike?

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3 CRAIG HUGHES: 106. We started with 109, uh we
4 started with 110, we lost 4 I think.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead.

6 LISA MEEHAN: Hi, good afternoon. Thank you so
7 much for the opportunity to speak. I'm just pulling
8 up my testimony. So my name is Lisa Meehan, I'm a
9 Staff Attorney at Mobilization for Justice and along
10 with my colleagues here, I've been on strike with my
11 union for over 10 weeks. We're striking for many
12 demands which center around making our work
13 sustainable. I don't have to tell you all that non-
14 profit workers are often overworked and under paid.
15 We want better working conditions and better pay to
16 combat burnout and stop attrition, which will help us
17 provide better services for our clients, which is all
18 of our main priority and why we all do this work.

19 In particular, like Craig mentioned, we're asking
20 MFJs management to raise starting salaries up to
21 \$60,000 a year for our support staff and our
22 paralegals. This is a priority for me personally
23 because I started my career as a paralegal at a
24 similar legal services organization.

25 When I was a paralegal I did not make enough
money to live comfortably and my income was low

1
2 enough so that I nearly qualified for our
3 organization services. I know from my experience and
4 not position that support staff and paralegals make
5 organizations like MFJ run. Their work is as
6 important as the work that attorney's do and they
7 deserve to be compensated as such. It's also
8 hypocritical for an organization that proports to
9 fight for economic justice to underpay its employees.
10 The union knows that MFJ can afford to raise these
11 salaries but they still refuse to do it. We're here
12 before you today because HRA has helped MFJs
13 management prolong this strike.

14 MFJ has not been providing contractually
15 obligated services during the strike and in fact,
16 they've closed the intake lines and are not taking
17 any new clients or any new cases. So, we have two
18 asks of the Council today echoed by my colleagues who
19 are here at the table with me. The first is to
20 please inform MFJ that the Council will not fund the
21 organization while this strike continues and
22 specifically MFJs management needlessly prolongs it.
23 We're concerned that continuing to fund MFJ while the
24 strike goes on may lead to many people continuing to
25

3 receive inadequate representation. I'm sorry, I'm
4 just going to finish my second point.

5 Uhm, thank you. Second, we need the Council to
6 help ensure HRA does not contribute to strike
7 breaking by giving MFJ a break on its contractual
8 obligations and by offloading work from the agency
9 and pressing other providers to take strike work.
10 So, thank you so much for your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 SEAN DAVIS: Good afternoon. My name is Sean
13 Davis and I am a member of the Unionized Staff and
14 Mobilization for Justice. As I speak to you today, I
15 am tired, I am frustrated but by no means ready to
16 give up. We have been on strike for 10 weeks. This
17 is week 11. When we are not on strike I am a Staff
18 Attorney with the Mental Health Law Project. That's
19 a general practice project meaning that we do a lot.
20 We do everything from Social Security Administration
21 hearings to protecting tenants in Housing Court that
22 are facing eviction.

23 That's all work that unfortunately we cannot do
24 right now. We are unable to do that right now
25 because we are on strike. As some of my colleagues
mentioned we are strike because you know, among other

1 reasons management is refusing to pay our lowest paid
2 workers a living wage that would allow them to live
3 in the city and the communities that they serve. MFJ
4 talks about vulnerable and low-income New Yorkers and
5 helping to improve their conditions and lives but
6 management does not demonstrate that mentality with
7 its own employees and by extension our clients.
8

9 Those same low income and vulnerable New Yorkers
10 that they claim to care about. Simply put, MFJs
11 management does not practice what it preaches. Our
12 biggest project is our housing project. I want to
13 talk about you know the clients that are in the
14 housing court system right now. They are not getting
15 the same level of service that they would if the
16 unionized staff were still in our office and that is
17 clear from the court watching that I have done. That
18 is a disservice to our clients and there is no other
19 way to put it.

20 On the note of disservices to our clients, we
21 cannot continue to function as an organization with
22 our current attrition rate. A fair contract will
23 make it so that we retain skilled and passionate
24 employees. Everybody, we are a wall-to-wall union
25 support staff, paralegals and attorney's by

1
2 incentivizing them to join and to stay at this
3 organization. It's time to put the people first.
4 Everybody in this room knows that this is a labor
5 town so we intend and expect to win a fair contract,
6 so that we can get back to helping our clients in
7 every way that we can. Thank you for the time and
8 the opportunity to speak. I appreciate it.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 TARA JOY: Good afternoon. My name is Tara Joy,
11 I am a member of the Unionized Staff of MFJ and I am
12 currently employed in the housing project there,
13 which provides eviction defense to tenants in
14 Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx. In my role as
15 Housing Intake Specialist, I am responsible for
16 tracking and coordinating the intake of new cases,
17 which means that I can see first-hand how
18 overwhelming the volume of eviction cases has been in
19 comparison to our staff capacity and can also see
20 first hand how that capacity is being effected by
21 staff turnover.

22 My colleagues have talked about some of our
23 specific core demands and I really want to focus on
24 the reason we're asking for those demands and the
25 impact of staff attrition on an organization like

1
2 ours. I have been in my current role for a little
3 over two years and unfortunately have already
4 outlasted several of my colleagues. So, I just want
5 to talk about like what happens when people quit in
6 the short, medium and long term.

7 In the short term, when an attorney leaves MFJ,
8 their colleagues have to spread themselves thinner by
9 absorbing all of their existing caseload. In the
10 medium term, for however long that position goes
11 unfilled, our ability to take on new clients is
12 reduced by that much more. And for reference MFJ
13 currently has over a dozen vacant staff positions and
14 in the long term, people who burn out and leave the
15 housing practice early, the more people who do that
16 the less people there are to develop the kinds of
17 advocacy skills that come with years of experience
18 and can make a truly life changing difference to
19 clients outcomes.

20 These compounding affects are harmful to legal
21 workers, harmful to clients, harmful to the state
22 admission of MFJ. That is why our union voted
23 overwhelmingly to strike and why we've been out for
24 ten weeks. We're still here today because we're
25 intending to build a workplace for staff. We're

1 willing to stay and able to effectively do the work
2 we all care about.
3

4 I know for a fact that in the ten weeks we've
5 been out, there's no one filing my role at MFJ. No
6 one is also covering the dozens of intakes with
7 potential new housing clients, that my colleagues
8 would normally be conducting every single week. That
9 means MFJ is violating the terms of their contract
10 with HRA and not only has HRA failed to demand that
11 they uphold these terms, they have assisted MFJ in
12 offloading labor to other providers.

13 HRA is enabling our management and prolonging
14 this strike and preventing us from getting back to
15 serving our clients as fast as possible and so, I am
16 joining my colleagues in asking Council Members to
17 hold both HRA and MFJ for the role in this strike.
18 Thank you so much for your time.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

20 CHRIS FASANO: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Christopher Fasano. I am a Staff Attorney at
22 Mobilization for Justice. I've been at Mobilization
23 for Justice for the past ten years. I want to speak
24 a little bit to what brought us to a strike.
25

1
2 The attrition that we've seen over the past year
3 is easily the worst I've seen in my tenure at
4 Mobilization for Justice. We have lost 23 case
5 handlers this past year alone and as my colleague
6 said, that has brought us down to 110 case handlers
7 at the start of the strike. We've lost a few more.
8 We're now down to 106.

9 Over a dozen vacancies that we often have at any
10 given time remain chronically unfilled. And this is
11 something that management is well aware of. Before
12 we started negotiating this past fall, our Deputy
13 Director addressed our Board of Directors and
14 described the crisis of attrition and these
15 chronically unfilled lines. And when the board asked
16 our Deputy Director how the organization could solve
17 this attrition crisis, she said that the organization
18 would have to pay people more and give them more
19 flexibility. But once negotiations began, management
20 did no such thing.

21 When we went on strike in February 23rd,
22 managements offered us a three-year contract with a
23 two percent raise in each year. Uhm, that is the
24 same offer that we received three years previously in
25 2018, 2021 and 2018 as well. That offer just doesn't

1 keep up with the current cost of living much less
2 doesn't make up for the erosion of income these past
3 few years we've all experienced due to inflation.
4 And management still has not budged much from that
5 position. Just last week, they went up to three
6 percent the first year, two percent the second year,
7 three percent in the third year and as the agency
8 earlier testified, that three percent COLA applies to
9 legal services.
10

11 So, the offer that we're getting from management
12 falls below what they are required to provide. And
13 worse yet, just last week, after ten weeks of strike,
14 we heard that management would come to us with its
15 bottom line. Which means that for the first ten
16 weeks of the strike, management has felt no urgency
17 to make its best offer, give us a fair contract, end
18 the strike, and provide the vitals as we go back to
19 providing the vital services that our clients need.

20 The ten-week strike represents one-fifth of our
21 fiscal year in which the organization has not been
22 providing the services its contracture required to
23 provide. Management has only been able to continue
24 this strike by ignoring our clients needs and in the
25 needs of its staff. We do not believe though that

1 Mobilization for Justice can ignore its funders. So,
2 that is why that we're asking the agencies and the
3 Council to make clear to Mobilization for Justice
4 that they will not continue to fund an organization
5 that puts its workers on strike so that organization
6 can't provide services. Thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you all very
9 much. [03:57:25] - [03:57:30] Okay, our next panel
10 Alison Wilkey, Paula Inhargue, Kristin Miller and
11 Chris Mann. Alison Wiley, Paula Inhargue, Kristin
12 Miller, Chris Mann. [03:57:49] - [03:58:22].

13 You can begin when you are ready.

14 ALISON WILKEY: Great, my name is Alison Wilkey
15 and I am the Director of Government Affairs and
16 Strategic Campaigns at the Coalition for the Homeless
17 and I'm also here speaking on behalf of the Legal Aid
18 Society. So, the biggest takeaway from the Mayor's
19 Executive Budget is that there is no plan to address
20 the unprecedented housing affordability and
21 homelessness crisis. We have over 140,000 people
22 living in shelter plus countless more living on the
23 streets or doubled up in homes and we have a net
24 zero, effectively a net zero vacancy rate for
25 apartments that rent at the lowest rates, which is

1
2 like under \$1,100 a month. Yet the Mayor and the
3 Governor are treating this just as a supply issue.
4 You know they're pushing the position that if we
5 build more luxury in market rate housing that somehow
6 and in some future there will be housing for families
7 at the lowest income levels or for people who are
8 living in shelter.

9 That is a fantasy and there is no plan. There
10 was nothing in the state budget to address housing
11 for the lowest income families or for people who were
12 currently homeless and there's nothing in the Mayor's
13 City of Yes plan that does anything for extremely
14 low-income families. Those who are making 30 percent
15 AMI and meanwhile the Mayor's Executive Budget
16 doesn't sufficiently fund existing programs that help
17 people find permanent housing. So, there are three
18 things that really need to be in this budget. First,
19 we know and we heard today that City FHEPS accounts
20 for the largest percentage of shelter exits but there
21 are delays in backlogs and processing and processes
22 that don't make sense in City FHEPS. We keep hearing
23 the Administration talk about their success in
24 reducing the backlogs in cash assistance and SNAP by
25 hiring almost 1,000 people and looking at those

1 processes and trying to make them more efficient. We
2 need that same attention and those same resources to
3 be applied to City FHEPS to make it work and while
4 we're at it, we need that same attention to be
5 applied to the 5,000 vacant units in NYCHA.

6
7 Second, we need more funding for the City
8 Commission on Human Rights. It's the only agency
9 that enforces a source of income discrimination.
10 Starting in January, they will enforcing the Fair
11 Chance for Housing Act. They need at least \$18
12 million in baselined funding and then third, we do
13 still need more safe haven and stabilization beds and
14 as was pointed out earlier, single occupancy beds.
15 Those low barrier beds really are the most effective
16 way in getting unsheltered people to services and
17 ultimately to permanent housing and yes, the city has
18 brought online, this Administration 1,100 new beds
19 and they said today that there are 1,100 in the
20 pipeline.

21 The Coalition for the Homeless has been calling
22 for 3,000 new beds for years and that need is likely
23 higher at this point. Even if we had these three
24 things, we still need to invest in affordable
25 housing. We do not have enough affordable housing

1
2 for extremely low-income families and for people who
3 are currently homeless. And so, we are calling on
4 the city to invest at least \$2.5 billion in
5 affordable housing. Thank you for the opportunity to
6 testify Chairs and look forward to working with you
7 more on this.

8 CHRIS MANN: Good afternoon. Thank you Chairs
9 Brannan and Ayala for the opportunity to testify
10 today. My name is Chris Mann, I'm the Assistant Vice
11 President of Policy and Advocacy at Win, which is the
12 largest provider of shelter and supportive housing
13 for families in New York City. We operate 16
14 shelters and nearly 500 units of supportive housing
15 throughout the five boroughs. Sadly last night, just
16 under 7,000 people called Win home, including over
17 3,600 children. New York is facing the worst
18 homelessness crisis in its history and the situation
19 demands a city budget that will move people out of
20 shelter and prevent homelessness in the first place.

21 Win's policy priorities for FY25 promote common
22 sense and cost saving policies that we estimate can
23 save the city more than \$3.6 billion annually.
24 First, we need to end the cruel 30- and 60-day rules
25 that needlessly evict individuals and families from

1 shelter. Instead, we should pursue commonsense
2 solutions such as utilizing faith-based shelters that
3 are far less expensive than emergency hotels, which
4 we're relying on now and we should go further by
5 expanding rental assistance to undocumented people.
6 A move that Win found could save the city almost \$3
7 billion annually.
8

9 We also need to improve services for families
10 that are in the shelter system to help them exit more
11 quickly. First, we should fully fund and implement
12 Local Law 35, which we estimate would cost \$13
13 million so families in shelter have the mental health
14 services that they need. Additionally, the city
15 should expand Win SBS pilot to bring existing
16 workforce services to more families in shelter.

17 Further, the city must improve and expand City
18 FHEPS, as you know which lies the city must implement
19 and fully fund Local Laws 99 through 102. Policies
20 Win found could save the city \$730 million annually.
21 The city should also improve City FHEPS
22 Administration. In the packet that we just
23 submitted, there's the new report from Win and REBNY
24 that lays out a number of reforms that we think would
25

3 help improve the Administration of that program
4 significantly.

5 Finally, the city must fully restore the 2.5
6 percent cuts, which are really hampering out ability
7 to provide these essential services. Fully fund
8 Right to Counsel, streamline and improve supportive
9 housing so vacant units are filled quickly and
10 finally, restore funding to MOCS to ensure nonprofits
11 get paid on time and I'm sure Kristin's going to talk
12 quite a bit more about that. So, thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

15 KRISTIN MILLER: Good afternoon. I'm Kristin
16 Miller, I'm the Executive Director of Homeless
17 Services United, which is a member organization of
18 nonprofits across New York City who provide shelter
19 and homeless services.

20 Thank you for letting me testify Chairs Brannan
21 and Deputy Commissioner Ayala. We want to thank
22 first the Speaker Adams and the entire City Council
23 for your leadership and commitment to secure the Just
24 Campaign COLA. This money is essential to the
25 workers who deliver crucial work to all homeless and
people in need across the city. What we need now for

3 you is to help assure that that money gets into
4 peoples paychecks. We touched on some of this
5 earlier. Our coalition of nonprofits provides the
6 majority of nonprofit shelter capacity for the city
7 and continues to encounter great difficult receiving
8 timely payments from the New York City Department of
9 Social Services.

10 Dozens of contracted providers are owed anywhere
11 from \$700,000 to \$31 million from the City of New
12 York for services already rendered. Some providers
13 have been forced to take out lines of credit just to
14 meet cash flow needs and are paying very high
15 interest on this lines of credit for which there is
16 no pay back.

17 We urge the Council to ensure that the Fiscal
18 Year 2025 budget includes sufficient funding to
19 restore and expand headcount at DHS, DSS and MOCS to
20 eliminate pervasive contract and reimbursement delays
21 for our nonprofit providers. While the shelter
22 system has doubled over the last two years, the
23 infrastructure at the agencies has been kept up. And
24 so, Commissioner Parks was talking earlier about the
25 multilevel approval process, right? So, kudos at the
contracting process has improved. The Commissioner

1
2 rightly said earlier for example, that the WEI monies
3 have been allocated to agencies but there's many
4 steps from allocation to actually being approved in a
5 contracted providers line-item budget and this is
6 where we are experiencing delay after delay for the
7 reasons that we've been talking about. Part of it to
8 that Chris mentioned is uhm we're really surprised a
9 decrease in the MOCS budget for this upcoming fiscal
10 year. The amount of contracts in our sector has been
11 growing exponentially but the process, the people
12 that we need to process this stuff is not increasing.
13 In addition, the passport migration has been
14 challenging as the Commissioner has said. It's been
15 extremely challenging and we are surprised to see a
16 huge cut in MOCS OTPS budget in IT. So, we feel that
17 that should be expanded and not decreased.

18 We have very specific budget asks that have been
19 mentioned by my colleagues that we'll be submitting
20 to you in writing including the City FHEPS, the
21 headcount, the restoring of the \$2.5 PEG. We can't
22 decrease the baseline of these contracts when demand
23 continues to grow and grow.

24 So, with that, I thank you very much and I turn
25 it to my colleague.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Kristin, give me that stat
4 again you said. How many groups are owed payment?

5 KRISTIN MILLER: Most of all my members are owed.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: But you said a number.

7 KRISTIN MILLER: Oh between \$700,000 and \$31
8 million.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay.

10 KRISTIN MILLER: They are paying anywhere from
11 \$17,000 a month in interest on lines of credit. One
12 of my members is last year, paid \$1 million on
13 interest in a line of credit because the city owed
14 them so much money.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Did you submit your
16 testimony as well?

17 KRISTIN MILLER: I will be submitting it online.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, good thanks.

19 KRISTIN MILLER: Thank you.

20 PAULA INHARGUE: Thank you Chair and members of
21 the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity
22 to testify today. My name is Paula Inhargue and I'm
23 a Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses.
24 United is a policy and social change organization
25 representing neighborhood settlement houses that
reach 770,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life and

1
2 our members provide a wide variety of services to
3 their community such as providing support to access
4 benefits and case management for HRA programs. My
5 testimony today will focus on the NYC Benefits
6 Program and food insecurity issues and my written
7 testimony goes into more detail and includes
8 additional recommendations.

9 As you may know through the NYC Benefits program,
10 community-based organizations have dedicated staff
11 members to help their community access benefits such
12 as SNAP, cash assistance, among others and providers
13 have cited the promise and early results of the
14 program.

15 Uhm on April 17th, HRA announced to providers that
16 their contracts will continue for an additional three
17 years, which was very good news for the future of the
18 program. However, the Executive Budget included a
19 one-time \$4.6 million investment in new needs funding
20 for this program in FY25, which does not appear to be
21 baselined. It also remains unclear from reading the
22 budget documents how much funding this program
23 received in total and whether it is sufficient to
24 support the 36 providers and free technical
25 assistance providers. We believe the program total

3 is currently closer to \$10 million given the size of
4 individual contracts but the city must ensure that
5 the funding for the New York City benefits program is
6 baselined in FY25 and outyears so all providers are
7 able to continue their essential work.

8 It is also crucial to address issues of hunger,
9 food insecurity, and poverty in New York City. That
10 is why the city must restore the previous funding to
11 the Community Food Connection Program, previously
12 known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program and
13 expand it to \$60 million to sustain and grow the
14 program. Therefore allowing providers to effectively
15 allocate resources and keep supporting the growing
16 needs of asylum seekers.

17 The city should also restore the Council's Food
18 Pantry Initiative to FY23 levels of \$7.63 million
19 recognizing its important role in addressing food
20 insecurity and supporting our communities in need.
21 Pantries are an essential part of the city's effort
22 to address food insecurity and we were disappointed
23 to see this funding cut by over \$300,000 in FY24. As
24 I said, you can find more detail in my written
25 testimony and thank you again for the opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

3 Okay, next panel Jerome Nathaniel, Nicholas
4 Buess, and Chanya Holness. Jerome Nathaniel,
5 Nicholas Buess, and Chanya Holness. [04:11:33] -
6 [04:11:49]. Yeah you could start.

7 JEROME NATHANIEL: Great, thank you so much for
8 holding today's hearing on the Executive Budget. My
9 name is Jerome Nathaniel, I'm the Director of Policy
10 and Government Relations at City Harvest.

11 This year City Harvest is on pace to deliver 79
12 million pounds of food to a network of 400 emergency
13 food providers across the five boroughs. Many of
14 those programs rely on the city's Community Food
15 Connection Program, making it a critical lifeline for
16 many of our leaders in the food system that are
17 responding to an increased demand in emergency food.
18 It's critically important that the city increases
19 funding to \$60 million and we thank the City Council
20 for aligning with many advocates for the Mayor to
21 protect the Community Food Connection program.
22 There's over one million reasons why we need that
23 increase but the one million reason that I really
24 want to uplift is that City Harvest recently shared a
25 report which shows that there are one million more
New Yorkers each month that are attending our panty

3 services across the five boroughs when compared to
4 before COVID. Furthermore, the number of children
5 within that one million have more than doubled,
6 making this something that is really important to the
7 most vulnerable New Yorkers.

8 In addition to that, you'll see in our written
9 testimony we thank the City Council for advocating
10 for the restoration of many PEGs that were introduced
11 back in November but we're asking us to go further to
12 make sure that the Department of Educations Office of
13 Food and Nutritious Services has the funding they
14 need to continue to provide quality meals to all
15 children and also, that HRA has the support that they
16 need to not only enroll people into SNAP but also to
17 retain quality staff and train quality staff so that
18 we don't face a situation where we have a backlog in
19 SNAP applications like we did many months ago.

20 We know as an emergency food provider that for
21 every meal that we provide, SNAP provides access to
22 nine meals, so it's critically important that our
23 city is doing what we can to make sure that we're
24 able to enroll people into the SNAP program fairly
25 and expeditiously. And then finally in our
testimony, we ask for the creation of flexible

3 funding to support community solutions to hunger
4 through what we're calling a food justice grant.
5 This is something that was included in the Mayor's
6 Office of Food Policies ten-year food policy plan and
7 we're asking the City Council either through
8 initiative or discretionary funding to invest in that
9 effort. Thank you for this time.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 NICHOLAS BUESS: Hi, good afternoon Chairs. I'm
12 Nick Buess from the Food Bank for New York City.
13 Thank you so much for giving us all time today and
14 for your ongoing advocacy. I want to focus a little
15 bit on food security. Jerome spoke about the
16 Community Food Connection. It's deeply concerning
17 that the Executive Budget continues to propose a 50
18 percent reduction. And I want to put some of the
19 testimony in context that we heard today from HRA,
20 which is that in FY23, all of the funds which are
21 increased, thanks to the Council advocacy were
22 completely exhausted.

23 In that same year, there was a dramatic increase
24 in the supply of food across New York City from
25 organizations like Food Bank and City Harvest. Those
resources have declined dramatically, federal

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3 resources in particular. Secondly SNAP benefits
4 were at an increased high during FY23 as well. In
5 New York City though, one year ago, households lost
6 an average of \$151 per month in grocery benefits.
7 Some families who are some in the highest need lost
8 an average of \$440 per month. So, in that same
9 timeframe, when you have emergency food providers
10 serving more people when there are more resources
11 available, its unconscionable that we would be
12 cutting that food program this year. So, thank you
13 for your continued advocacy. We join City Harvest
14 and advocates from across the city calling for \$60
15 million for that program. We applaud HRA in their
16 work to continue to advance NYC benefits. We believe
17 that model of working with community-based
18 organizations is the way to ensure more New Yorkers
19 continue to access SNAP. We'll continue to work with
20 those providers on our SNAP taskforce and training
21 them on our mediation model. So, you know HRA is
22 doing to great job in that respect and like Jerome
23 mentioned, clearing the backlog. So, but when it
24 comes to Community Food Connection, New York City can
25 and should do better. Thank you.

1
2 ANGIE VEGA: Hello, good afternoon. Thank you
3 members of the Committee for allowing me to testify
4 today. My name is Angie Vega and I am the Assistant
5 Director of the Healthy and Ready to Learn Program
6 for the Children's Health Fund.

7 So, today I am going to be talking about the
8 importance of the continued and increased funding for
9 programming that critically supports school and
10 parents in ensuring that students are well positioned
11 to thrive in school like our New York City Council
12 funded program Health and Ready to Learn. Healthy
13 and Ready to Learn was developed by the Children
14 Health Fund in 2014 as part of our mission of
15 supporting kids so that they can thrive. It was
16 developed recognizing the importance of education in
17 helping kids to reach their potential and that they
18 need to be their healthiest selves to take advantage
19 of educational opportunities.

20 The program is designed to help students identify
21 and address health issues, many rooted in social,
22 racial and economical inequities that impact student
23 learning. When students have their health need meet,
24 for example such as they can see the board, hear
25 their teacher or focus on school work and so on, they

1 are more likely to learn and succeed in school.

2
3 Ultimately translating into a greater likelihood of a
4 productive and healthy life.

5 The Healthy and Ready to Learns started with a
6 strong focus on screening and responding to what we
7 call health barriers to learning, such as addressing
8 medical issues like asthma, dental concern, vision
9 problems and mental wellbeing. While we continue to
10 address these health barriers to learning, we are
11 focused more and more on growing and worrisome needs,
12 childhood trauma. HRL therefore has evolved to
13 including supporting trauma sensitivity schools and
14 home environments to better address the fallout from
15 COVID-19 pandemic and surrounding social issues like
16 increases in over racism and violence.

17 Through our current model, we leverage finding
18 from our Flagship School PS49 in the Bronx and in
19 Council woman Diana Ayala's District office, District
20 8 to inform materials and training that we conduct
21 with educators, parents citywide throughout our
22 resource and training center.

23 So, we launched this resource and training center
24 in 2017 which became an online platform for the
25 Children's Health Fund in order to scale our impact

3 to reach students throughout New York City. Our in
4 line [INAUDIBLE 04:18:41] is equity and diversity
5 focused and houses a broad library that includes info
6 graphs and our active learning images, external
7 resources link. Here is a snapshot of what the
8 Research and Learning training and Research and
9 Training Center Healthy and Ready to Learns impact.

10 So, since 2017, nearly 40,000 users have access
11 to website to request training curriculum, view
12 recorded workshops and download free materials to
13 support their health and education work. In the year
14 2023, our most recent complete, our New York City
15 grant, the resource and training center has reached
16 5,893 users. From January 2023 to present, we have
17 trained in 27 schools, in 18 districts to 69 parent
18 workshops, 10 students workshops and 4 professional
19 development workshops reaching 2,276 individuals.

20 Our impact is clear and the demand for our
21 program continues to increase to meet the growing
22 needs in the most vulnerable communities. Our goal
23 for the 2025 is the following: To expand in
24 additional New York City school districts where
25 teachers and parents need us most. Build more
partnership with nonprofits organizations focused on

3 early childhood care and education. Respond to the
4 needs of community most impacted by the ongoing
5 migrant crisis. Increase in tailored out trainings
6 to continue to meet specific needs of teachers and
7 school and communicate our efforts through social
8 media, traditional media, community outreach and
9 translating educational material into multiple
10 languages.

11 For this reason, the Children Health Fund urges
12 the New York City Council and the Mayor to include
13 funding to ensure critical investments for early
14 childhood learning, mental health programming and our
15 Healthy and Ready to Learn Initiative. These actions
16 will expand access to thousands or more students
17 throughout the city, giving them the best chance of
18 succeeding in school and in life.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

20 ANGIE VEGA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

22 Okay, next panel we have Gabriela Sandoval Requena,
23 Shakeema North, Reverend Terry Troia, Dash Yeatts-
24 Lanske and Irene Branche. [04:21:15] - [04:21:41].
25 We can start from the left, go ahead.

3 DASH YEATTS-LANSKE: Good afternoon Chair
4 Brannan, Deputy Speaker Ayala and members of the
5 Committees. My name is Dash Yeatts-Lanske and I'm a
6 Policy Analyst at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the
7 opportunity to testify today.

8 Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services
9 and supportive housing provider serving over 2,000
10 single adults annually. I would like to begin by
11 thanking the City Council and the Administration for
12 the three percent cost of living adjustment in the
13 next three years for the human services city
14 contracted workforce. We look forward to working
15 with the city for a seamless COLA implementation.

16 With that said, there are few things that are
17 alarming about the Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget
18 starting with the steep cut to MOCS that was
19 mentioned on a previous panel. The budget for MOCS
20 cuts headcount by nine people and cuts to the OTPS
21 budget by over \$12 million, with the largest cut
22 happening in the technological strategy contractual
23 services budget.

24 This is deeply alarming because it is challenging
25 getting nonprofits paid on time already, even without
this cut. As of the end of February, we were owed

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3 almost \$2 million by DHS. Additionally, in last
4 years budget while many other PEGs were restored, all
5 DHS contracts received a 2.5 percent cut. We
6 appreciate the City Council's call to restore the 2.5
7 percent PEG and urge you to continue this advocacy as
8 the restoration was left out of the Executive Budget.
9 We thank the City Council for your support of
10 increasing NYC 1515 scattered site rates and
11 increasing the rental subsidy to 110 percent FMR. We
12 hope the Council can work with the Administration to
13 include this in the final budget.

14 Additionally, last year, a historic bill package
15 was passed by City Council to expand City FHEPS
16 vouchers. It will be necessary to baseline City
17 FHEPS to cover existing voucher holders and new
18 voucher holders to increase access to housing through
19 this and finally, we appreciate the City Council's
20 proposed \$4.4 million increase to the City Commission
21 on Human Rights Source of Income unit. Source of
22 Income discrimination is the biggest challenge the
23 people we serve face when searching for an apartment.
24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

3 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Good afternoon Chairs
4 Ayala, Brannan and Council Staff. Thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify on behalf of New Destiny
6 Housing. My name is Gabriela Sandoval Requena, I am
7 the New Destiny's Director of Policy and
8 Communications. Our mission is to end the double
9 trauma of abuse and homelessness among domestic
10 violent survivors. We do this by developing
11 supportive housing for survivors like Raven Hall in
12 Chair Brannan's District, assisting those who are
13 fleeing abuse, obtain subsidies and find safe new
14 homes and advocating for additional housing
15 resources. New Destiny is also a co-convenor of the
16 Family Homelessness Coalition and a member of the
17 Supportive Housing Network of New York.

18 So, why do we do this work? Because even the
19 only 50 percent of domestic violence incidents are
20 reported to the police, NYPD files one incident
21 report related to domestic violence every two
22 minutes. So, since this hearing started, more than
23 130 survivors have called the police and countless
24 others have suffered in silence.

25 Domestic violence is the main cause of
homelessness in New York City for families with

1 children. Access to safe, affordable permanent
2 housing determines whether survivors leave their
3 abuser and survive. We are submitting written
4 testimony but I want to use this time to focus two
5 priorities for Fiscal Year of 2025, the Budget excuse
6 me.
7

8 We are deeply concerned with HRA's limited
9 capacity, which continues to delay check processing
10 times, slow moves from shelter to permanent housing
11 and impact the success of rental assistance programs.
12 The Administration must address staffing shortages
13 which hinder survivors ability to secure safe housing
14 putting their lives and the lives of their children
15 in jeopardy.

16 Second, we call on the Administration to fund
17 NGBV's microgram program for domestic violence
18 survivors at \$6 million. Flexible funding is a cost
19 savings resources that can help survivors remain safe
20 and stably housed and out of the shelter system. We
21 also support the networks recommendation to improve
22 NYC 1515 with a housing vacancy rate at 1.4 - if I
23 may continue, I just have one more? Thank you. With
24 a vacancy rate at 1.4 percent, the city must develop
25

1 additional congregate units above the original
2
3 commitment of 7,500.

4 New Destiny thanks the Council for the leadership
5 in calling for the \$6 million to better meet the
6 needs of survivors through the microgram program and
7 the \$19.6 million for NYC 1515 in their 2025
8 Preliminary Budget Response. Thank you so much for
9 the opportunity to testify.

10 IRENE BRANCHE: Good afternoon Chairs and Council
11 staff. My name is Irene Branche, I am the Senior
12 Vice President of External Affairs at the Doe Fund.
13 On behalf of everybody at the Doe Fund, I want to
14 thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony
15 today. We're so proud to be a resource and a partner
16 to New York City in addressing this historic
17 homelessness crisis. We reiterate our colleagues
18 support across the city and are really grateful for
19 your work in scaling back PEGs targeted to housing
20 and human services providers, investing in our
21 workforce with a critical COLA increase and
22 recognizing the need for NYC 1515 reallocation. This
23 support helps us do what the DOE Fund does best.
24 Since 1985, we've connected nearly 14,000 New Yorkers

3 experiencing homelessness with full time employment
4 and/or housing.

5 Our men in blue, which many of you recognize for
6 their presence in your districts keep 115 miles of
7 New York City streets clean as part of their
8 transitional work experience. This program doubles
9 the chance of trainees in obtaining employment with
10 an average starting wage 24 percent higher than the
11 minimum and our graduates are 52 percent less likely
12 to recidivate.

13 Beyond, ready, willing and able, the Doe Fund is
14 one of the largest non-profit developers of permanent
15 and affordable and supporting housing that get along
16 with our peers here with nearly 2,000 units in
17 operation or development. With homelessness reaching
18 an all-time high, this work is more important now
19 than ever before and that's why we're here today to
20 call on the City Council to increase funding for
21 homeless services organizations like the Doe Fund.

22 Chair Brannan, my colleagues at HSU and Urban
23 Pathways, I also want to thank you and reiterate your
24 close attention to the issue of nonprofit providers
25 being paid in a timely way for the services we
provide to our unhoused neighbors. These payment

1
2 delays force nonprofits like the Doe Fund to take out
3 lines of credit, as of you've heard and accrue costly
4 interest.

5 I wear a couple of hats at the Doe Fund. In
6 addition to this, I am also our Lead Fund Raiser and
7 so I think often about how I am fund raising from
8 private New Yorkers to offset the cost of debt
9 services to New York City. It's not fair to the Doe
10 Fund or nor our broader community. So, we look
11 forward to the improvements at Passport as described
12 by Commissioner Park. We join our colleagues in
13 encouraging full funding of MOCS and other critical
14 steps to clear the backlog and ensure our ability to
15 deliver services to New Yorkers. New Yorkers like
16 Robert Pullem. I'll be just a minute. Robert faced
17 significant challenges, homelessness, abuse as a
18 child, addiction and severe mental health struggles
19 including PTSD as a result of his military service.
20 He now lives with us in supportive housing where he
21 has stabilized his mental health and is actually
22 becoming an advocate on behalf of the supportive
23 housing community broadly. He's just one of
24 thousands of New Yorkers for whom we provide stable,
25 dignified housing and we look forward to the reforms

1 we've discussed today and to continue partnership
2 with the City Council to continue to transform the
3 lives of our neighbors. Thank you.

4 REVEREND TERRY TROIA: Good afternoon.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Make sure your mic's on.

6 REVEREND TERRY TROIA: Thanks we don't have this
7 technology on Staten Island. Good afternoon Chair
8 Brannan and Deputy Speaker Ayala. My name is Terry
9 Troia. I work for Project Hospitality. We're an
10 interfaith effort. We serve homeless and hungry
11 people in the Borough of Staten Island.

12 We thank the Council first for its great
13 contribution to the Just Pay Campaign and the nine
14 percent over the next three years that we hope our
15 workers will be able to see and we're grateful to the
16 efforts of DHS to really put all hands-on deck to try
17 to get funds owed to nonprofits like ourselves to
18 make up for what we have been laying out now for
19 years. I want to first begin as an interfaith effort
20 serving hungry people that we are absolutely opposed
21 to any cuts to the community food connection program
22 because we have lost so much money in state funding
23 on food and we have so many more people in our
24 pantries across our borough and I am sure across the
25

1
2 pantries in the City of New York and CFC is a very
3 important piece of being able to put food in peoples
4 bags to take home for their families.

5 I wish to share with you that we really need DHS
6 to get money to us on time in some timely basis and I
7 think the Doe Fund just said it probably more clearly
8 than I can. We need to streamline contract
9 registration, budget amendments. We need timely
10 reimbursement of invoices. We did not see the
11 workforce enhancement initiative funds. We didn't
12 get any of that from the past years and I'm not sure
13 what we're really actually going to ever see going
14 forward but we've taken out, the last time I was
15 here, we had taken out \$2 million in loans. We're
16 now at over \$3 million in loans for which we are
17 paying the interest monthly and we've got the asylum
18 seeker shelters on Staten Island open but we haven't
19 seen any money since we've opened them in 2022 except
20 for the first two months advances.

21 We really need DHS, DSS and MOCS to be adequately
22 staffed and resourced in the 2025 budget to be able
23 to respond to the backlog of needs and to the backend
24 of needs that we as nonprofit community partners
25 experience while we're out on the streets doing the

3 boots on the ground work of finding safe shelter and
4 getting people into a safe space.

5 So, we just ask, we just say it's not happening
6 and we thank them for every effort that's being made
7 but we're dying out here and we're small potatoes
8 compared to many other providers. Thank you for your
9 time and for your attention to our needs as we serve
10 the people that you ask us to serve. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
12 Okay, our next panel, Mary Fox, Raun Rasmussen,
13 sorry, I can't read it. Shani Adess, . Sophie
14 Dalsimer, and Sarita Daftary. Sarita Daftary, Mary
15 Fox, Raun Rasmussen, Shani Adess and Sophie Dalsimer.
16 [04:33:15] - [04:33:23] You could start.

17 MARY FOX: Thank you Chair Ayala and the
18 Committee on General Welfare for the long-standing
19 support for the legal services for the Working Poor
20 Coalition. My name is Mary Fox and I am the
21 Associate Director at Housing Conservation
22 Coordinators. One of the five members of the legal
23 services for the Working Poor Coalition that also
24 includes Camba Legal Services, MFJ, Northern
25 Manhattan Improvement and Take Root Justice. The
Coalition was created with support from City Council

1 over a decade ago to address the civil legal needs of
2 working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose
3 income is slightly higher than the poorest New
4 Yorkers thus rendering them ineligible for free legal
5 services.
6

7 Legal services and working poor services are
8 critical, allowing working New Yorkers to maintain
9 financial independence and preserve economic
10 stability in communities across New York City. In
11 Fiscal Year 2024, this initiative was funded at
12 \$3.455 million from the City Council with each of the
13 coalition members receiving \$455,000. In Fiscal Year
14 2025, we are seeking a \$600,000 allocation from City
15 Council, which includes a full restoration of the
16 \$455,000 allocated in FY24, a \$600,000 allocation to
17 each of the five coalition partners would support
18 critical legal services in the areas of employment,
19 immigration, consumer benefits, housing and other
20 civil practice.

21 We continue to see that working poor New Yorkers
22 who can barely make ends meet face catastrophic
23 consequences as a result of their civil legal
24 problem. Not being paid for overtime, not being paid
25 for work they did at all, identity theft, frozen bank

1
2 accounts, the consequences of these problems lead to
3 other problems including increased risk of eviction
4 and foreclosure. Our legal service organizations
5 represent New Yorkers in all five boroughs on
6 consumer, foreclosure, immigration, benefits,
7 employment and housing matters. This Council's
8 funding for legal service of the working poor is the
9 only funding that specifically targets the civil
10 legal needs for working people to ensure continued
11 self-sufficiency.

12 I'm just trying to keep it under two. I'll be
13 really quick. Uhm, sorry, if we are not able to meet
14 the legal needs of many people who are seeking our
15 help, particularly those whose lives continue to be
16 upended by the housing crisis, inflation, the human
17 consequences will be dire. Immigrant families will
18 continually live in uncertainty and fear. Children
19 whose families have been wrongly denied unemployment
20 benefits, public assistance or denied SNAP benefits
21 will go hungry. We urge City Council to fully invest
22 in civil legal services initiatives overall and for
23 the legal services of the working poor allocation in
24 particular.

25

3 This year in FY25, our coalition is just sped
4 fully asking City Council to enhance the allocation
5 of each coalition partner from \$455,000 to \$600,000.
6 Thank you Council.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 SHANI ADESS: Thank you for the opportunity to
9 testify. I'm Shani Adess, the Vice President with
10 New York Legal Assistance Group. I'm going to focus
11 my testimony today on our ask that the city increase
12 its investment to critical, legal and social services
13 as well as address policies that were designed to
14 help our communities but are increasingly becoming
15 difficult to access. As to the later for example,
16 HRA delays in processing recertifications and
17 applications for SNAP and cash assistance continue to
18 leave our clients without benefits to feed and care
19 for their families. While there is a reduced backlog
20 as they testified today, our clients continue to face
21 barriers, including an inability to get through for
22 phone interviews or failing to get documents properly
23 indexed, leading to improper denials and inadequate
24 benefit levels. Additionally, we agree with the
25 prior testimony calling for expanding eligibility for
programs like City FHEPS. This is critical as the

3 city grapples with increasing homelessness and lack
4 shelter capacity.

5 In addition, we're calling for continued and
6 increased investment in funding legal services. We
7 urge continued and increased funding for immigration
8 legal services that addresses both the short term and
9 long-term needs of our newly arrived neighbors as
10 well as long standing immigrant communities in New
11 York. Over the last two years, innovative
12 programming has developed to expand access to
13 services for our newly arrived New Yorkers.
14 Maintaining and expanding programs that center
15 community education, screening and prose applications
16 are critical. This though is just a first step
17 towards stability. The city must also heavily invest
18 in programming that provides full representation to
19 individuals with complex cases or folks whose
20 applications were filed but now face the next stage
21 in the process and are navigating complex systems.
22 We ask for funding through the variety of existing
23 city programming through PSVP, IOI, Action NYC, and
24 Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, something that
25 was cut last year despite increasing referrals over
the past year after the funding was cut.

3 Finally, we applaud the city for recent changes
4 including the human services COLA and allowance
5 clause amendments. However, providers like NYLAG
6 continue to face delays in contract registration and
7 payments which undermine our ability to provide
8 critical services.

9 Uhm, I will end here and say that we thank you so
10 much for the city for partnering with us to ensure
11 that our communities thrive and thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify.

13 SOPHIE DALSIMER: Good afternoon Council Chairs
14 and Staff, my name is Sophie Dalsimer and I am a Co-
15 Director of the Health Justice Program at New York
16 Lawyers for the Public Interest or NYLPI. NYLPI is
17 privileged to be a part of the City Council's
18 Immigrant Health Initiative, and we thank you for
19 that support. We are also proud to serve on Speaker
20 Adams' New Arrivals Strategy Team as part of the
21 Health Cohort.

22 Today, I am here to ask the Council to continue
23 your support by restoring and enhancing funding for
24 the Immigrant Health Initiative, which has saved
25 lives and improved health outcomes across the city.
Through direct immigration representation,

3 litigation, community education, non-legal advocacy
4 and strategic partnership with public hospitals and
5 volunteer doctors, NYLPI improves health outcomes,
6 increases access to healthcare and educate the
7 community healthcare providers and legal service
8 advocates.

9 We provide advocacy and representation to
10 everyone from long term and newly arrived immigrant
11 New Yorkers with serious medical conditions or
12 disabilities to asylum seekers who identify as
13 transgender, gender expansive or those living with
14 HIV and non-citizen New Yorkers who are detained in
15 immigration custody without adequate access to
16 healthcare. The improved access to health insurance
17 and healthcare has had life changing and often life
18 saving effects on the lives of our clients and often
19 result in cost savings for the city, the state, and
20 our safety net healthcare system when people are able
21 to resume work and productive lives.

22 In the last year, we conducted nearly 150
23 comprehensive health and immigration assessments,
24 provided direct legal representation for over 60
25 people, helped over 50 previously uninsured or
underinsured individuals obtain or maintain health

3 insurance and successfully advocated on behalf of
4 seven undocumented immigrants who have received life
5 saving kidney transplants.

6 We also, the volume— excuse me. We also
7 connected more than 50 detained individuals with
8 volunteer doctors to provide medical advocacy in
9 hopes of securing their release from custody. The
10 volume of recently arrived immigrants has only
11 increased the need for initiatives that champion
12 immigrant rights and facilitate access to services
13 including healthcare and legal assistance to meet
14 this critical need, NYLPI is seeking a \$550,000
15 allocation in Fiscal Year 25 from the Council's
16 Immigrant Health Initiative. This request includes a
17 restoration of the prior \$435,000 plus an enhancement
18 to support the increasing need. The city must
19 continue to uphold access to healthcare for all New
20 Yorkers and we thank you again so much for your
21 support.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

23 SARITA DAFTARY: Good afternoon Chair Brannan and
24 Deputy Speaker Ayala. My name is Sarita Daftary, I
25 am Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our
members who are survivors of Rikers and their family

3 members. We're one of the organizations leading the
4 campaign to Close Rikers and thank you for the
5 opportunity to testify today. I want to thank the
6 Council for including in your preliminary budget
7 response, a call for the Administration to allocate
8 \$19.6 million to progress the 1515 supportive housing
9 program toward its target of 15,000 units and a call
10 for the Administration to allocate an additional \$6.4
11 million for justice involved supportive housing to
12 fulfill the city's commitment to establish 500 JESH
13 units JISH units. Just one month of DOC overtime
14 would fully fund these investments.

15 When New York City adopted a plan to Close Rikers
16 in 2019, this included a commitment to reallocating
17 resources that have for decades been
18 disproportionately directed to policing and
19 incarcerating Black, brown, and poor people, at the
20 expense of funding crucial services like housing,
21 healthcare, employment opportunities and more. Mayor
22 Adams has instead pursued budget policies that have
23 increased the jail population, and then acts as if an
24 inflated jail population is natural and inevitable,
25 instead of a result of his refusal to scale up the

1 solutions we need to close the pipelines that are
2 feeding Rikers.

3
4 Supportive housing has the potential to address
5 two things that are funneling so many of our
6 community members into Rikers, unstable housing, and
7 mental health needs. The Independent Budget Office
8 reports that 33 percent of people admitted to Rikers
9 in 2023 were unstably housed, and the Comptroller's
10 Office reports that 20 percent of people currently
11 held at Rikers are diagnosed with a serious mental
12 illness. That portion of the jail population has
13 grown by 50 percent since January 2022.

14 The Corporation for Supportive Housing found that
15 approximately 2,589 people held at Rikers over a one-
16 year period need supportive housing but have not been
17 able to access it. Filling this dire need for
18 supportive housing would do much more to build strong
19 and safe communities than Rikers ever could, and it
20 would also save an estimated \$1.3B each year.

21 The City's legal and moral obligation to Close
22 Rikers is also an obligation to fully fund supportive
23 housing. In the written testimony that we submit,
24 you'll see a budget analysis from the Campaign to
25 Close Rikers with additional budget priorities. If

1
2 the Council cannot achieve these restorations and
3 investments through negotiations with the Mayor, we
4 urge you to use every power you have, including
5 passing a budget amendment, to secure the resources
6 our communities deserve. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.
8 Okay, now we have on Zoom, Tiera Labrada.

9 TIERRA LABRADA: Sorry about that. Hello Chair
10 Brannan and Deputy Speaker Ayala and members of the
11 Council. My name is Tierra Labrada and I am the
12 Associate Director of Advocacy at the Supportive
13 Housing Network of New York. Thank you so much for
14 the opportunity to testify here today.

15 First, I'd like to thank the Council for
16 supporting the networks in my NYC 1515 Reallocation
17 Proposal by signing on to the Dear Colleague letter
18 circulated by Mental Health Chair, Council Member
19 Linda Lee. 1515 is the primary mechanism for
20 supportive housing development in the city and it's
21 failing to meet its target. This means that critical
22 units are not being brought on line that could house
23 New Yorkers as you just heard a lot of my colleagues
24 mention.

3 As part of our reallocation proposal, we're also
4 seeking to expand NYC 1515 eligibility to include
5 individuals exiting institutional settings and
6 survivors of domestic violence. Again, an immense
7 thank you to those of you who signed on and for
8 Council Member Linda Lee and her team for their
9 collaboration and support on this initiative.

10 Next, we also want to thank the Council today.
11 The Council and the Administration for heeding the
12 calls of the Human Services sector by agreeing to a
13 cost-of-living adjustment. The proposed three-year,
14 three percent wage increase will help these essential
15 workers support themselves and their families that
16 they continue to provide critical services to some of
17 New York's most vulnerable residents. However,
18 there's a caveat. They must ensure that the
19 nonprofits that employ these workers are paid on time
20 for the services they provide. You just heard a lot
21 of my colleagues here talk about MOCS under funding
22 and the time that it takes for contracts to be – uh,
23 for providers to be reimbursed. They are
24 significantly under financial strain due to the
25 city's affiliate to reimburse them for contractually
mandated services. Some providers are still awaiting

3 payment for these services provided in 2018 with
4 millions of dollars in arrears.

5 As proposed, the Executive Budgets significant
6 cuts to MOCS would exacerbate this already untenable
7 situation. We urge the Council and Administration to
8 restore funds to personnel and non-personnel services
9 to avert further harm.

10 The network is also a steering committee member
11 of the current crisis intervention today.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

13 TIERRA LABRADA: One more second. Advocating for
14 a peer led nonpolice mental health crisis response
15 system, the current city pilot program, be heard
16 omits peers from response teams. We ask that the
17 Council adopt the best practices in futures of the
18 CCIT NYC model by focusing on placing trained peers
19 on the Be Heard's Response team as well as fully
20 restore Be Heard's PEGs, cuts. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
22 James Dill.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 JAMES DILL: I'm Jim Dill, Executive Director of
25 Housing and Services INC. We are a permanent
supportive housing provider serving 715 households to

1 build congregate and scattered site settings in
2 Manhattan, and the Bronx. We are members of the
3 Supportive Housing Network in New York and support
4 all of the networks advocacy points for this hearing.
5 First and foremost, we would like to thank the
6 Council for both including provisions for a
7 reallocation of the NYC 1515 resources in the
8 Preliminary Budget Response and for instituting the
9 COLA over the three years for the human services
10 sector. We are so grateful for Council Member Linda
11 Lee's Dear Colleague letter calling for the
12 reallocation and for all who signed on.

14 The reallocation will address crucial trends in
15 the provision of program supportive housing and
16 vastly help this bold and absolutely necessary
17 initiative to meet its ambitious objectives. We are
18 also so very grateful for the COLA that will provide
19 encouragement to our dedicated but chronically
20 underpaid essential workers.

21 We do echo concerned about the proposed cuts to
22 MOCS. The FY24 migration of contractor links to
23 Passport has created a backlog in contract payment
24 processing and acute cash flow problems for all
25 struggling providers. It is imperative that MOCS,

3 DHS, DOHMH and HASA receive sufficient funding to
4 resolve Passport migration issues, have the resources
5 become proficient in the new system and get contract
6 payments flowing to cash strapped providers.

7 We will submit written testimony. We thank you
8 for your time today and once again, we thank you so
9 much for the reallocation and so much for the COLA.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
11 Juan Diaz.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 JUAN DIAZ: Thank you Chair Ayala and Chair
14 Brannan and all the members of the Finance and
15 General Welfare Committees for holding today's
16 Executive Hearing. My name is Juan Diaz and I'm a
17 Policy and Advocate Associate at Citizens Committee
18 for Children. A multi-age of children advocacy
19 organization. CCC is a co-convener of the Family
20 Homeless Organization as well.

21 The City Marshal has conducted over 13,000
22 evictions in 2023 and as of stay in shelter continue
23 to be unacceptably long. We know as well that
24 preventive service and shelter providers are
25 struggling with previously instituted contract
reductions and delayed payments from the city. We

1
2 applaud the City Council's work and support of the
3 enhancement of COLA for the human services workforce
4 and funding restoration to essential programs such as
5 the shelter community school coordinators. However,
6 the City Administration should do much more. We
7 therefore urge the City Administration to support
8 critical investments such as: Restoring the \$2.5
9 reduction to DHS, HRA, and nonprofit contracted
10 agencies that were implemented in the November 2024
11 budget modification. Investing an additional \$37.9
12 million annually to enhance home base homeless
13 prevention programs to reduce caseloads, improve
14 services and staff retention. We also ask for
15 funding in implemented City FHEPS eligibility
16 expansion which would significantly prevent entrance
17 into and expediting exits from shelter. Also,
18 investing \$45 million for the Vacant Unit Readiness
19 program, to make over the 5,040 vacant NYCHA
20 apartments for low-income families with children.

21 Lastly, we urge the City Administration to fund
22 previously adopted initiatives included but not
23 limited to the prevailing wages for security guards,
24 behavioral health services, and [INAUDIBLE 04:50:36].

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3 Thank you and thank you for your time and
4 consideration.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have
6 Hannah Mercuris.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 HANNAH MERCURIS: Hello, my name is Hannah
9 Mercuris and I am a Senior Policy Council at the
10 Center for Family Representation. Thank you to the
11 Council and to the Community Members for hearing our
12 testimony today. CFR is grateful for the opportunity
13 to submit testimony to the New York City Council on
14 the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget and for your support of
15 CFR. We urge you to ensure that this year's city
16 budget adequately funds critical legally mandated
17 representation to parents who were prosecuted by the
18 Administration for Children Services and maintains or
19 increases Council discretionary funding for those
20 initiatives that support legal services for indigent
21 New Yorkers. As you've heard many times today, those
22 legal services are incredibly critical.

23 CFR is the countywide assigned indigent defender
24 provider offering interdisciplinary legal
25 representation to parents being investigated or
prosecuted by ACS in Manhattan, Queens or the Bronx.

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3 We have represented more than 2,000 clients in the
4 last Fiscal Year.

5 Over 90 percent of our clients are Black, brown
6 or people of color. CFR employees an

7 interdisciplinary model of parent defense assigning
8 each client an attorney and a social worker. Our
9 teams are also supported by parent advocates.

10 Parents who have themselves been investigated and
11 prosecuted by ACS and who can support clients from a
12 place of empathy and understanding. Our

13 interdisciplinary teams are able to address the
14 underlying issues that lead families into this
15 system, connecting families to quality mental health
16 treatment, substance use disorder programs, basic
17 necessities and educational services for their
18 children to ensure that families remain together or
19 are reunited as quickly as possible.

20 We are requesting your support and urging the
21 city to provide \$425,000 for our Home for Good
22 program, which offers holistic support for parents
23 and youth, \$155,000 in Dove funding to provide
24 enhanced social work services for clients who are
25 survivors of domestic violence, and \$825,000 for the

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3 Right to Family Advocacy Program, which offers
4 representation -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

6 HANNAH MERCURIS: ACS investigations and at
7 administrative hearings to amend and seal reports
8 with the State Central Register. I know that many
9 other people are prepared to testify today and we
10 will provide more information about CFR in our
11 written testimony. Thank you so much for your
12 support and for continuing to serve indigent New
13 Yorkers.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Hannah. Now we
15 have Joel Berg.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 JOEL BERG: Hi, I'm Joel Berg, CEO of Hungry Free
18 America. We're headquartered here in New York State.
19 Thank you so much Chair Brannan and Deputy Speaker
20 Ayala for having this vital hearing and I also want
21 to thank the civil servants who testified today. We
22 don't always agree with them. I certainly don't
23 always agree with their bosses but they're
24 extraordinarily responsive to advocates and services
25 providers most of them, so I appreciate that.

3 A key point today is that we really got to take
4 this as a crisis it is. When we define something as
5 a crisis, we address it. When we don't, we don't and
6 1.3 million New Yorkers including one out of every
7 five children live in homes that can't afford enough
8 food. I too oppose any cuts in the Community Food
9 Connections program and I point out how minimal that
10 program is, even if the Council would provide the \$60
11 million proposed by advocates, that equals only
12 \$46.00 worth of food per year for every food insecure
13 New Yorker. That's why we simply must get on
14 the stick to do more to help people access federally
15 funded benefits. We have a very rich Uncle named Sam
16 and if we're begging the federal government, the
17 president and congress to do more to fund New York
18 City, why aren't we doing better to accessing federal
19 benefits. We need to fully fund the New York City
20 Benefits Initiative, fully fund organizations like
21 Hunger Free New York City that are doing this vital
22 work of helping people access benefits. We need to
23 get the Mayor's Office to finally implement the My
24 City Portal to allow multiple applications for
25 multiple benefits, which the Mayor has been promising
for years. We need to not just occasionally meet the

3 30-day requirement of federal law for applications
4 but do that each and every day. That 30-day
5 requirement goes back to 1977 before email, before
6 internet. It is insane that we're not getting people
7 benefits in day one.

8 I know DOE isn't under this hearing but I just
9 point out New York City still has the lowest school
10 breakfast participation rate out of any big city in
11 the United States. Half the kids who get school
12 lunch do not get school breakfast. That needs to be
13 fixed. That would bring in millions of food dollars
14 every year to hungry families. And lastly, there's a
15 lot of focus on -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

17 JOEL BERG: Contracts being paid after being
18 registered and I just point the biggest delay that
19 some people has pointed out is the more than a year
20 it takes to get registered to begin with. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Joel. Now we
22 have Amy Blumsack.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 AMY BLUMSACK: Hi, thank you. Hi, good afternoon
25 Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala. Thank you so much for
the opportunity to testify.

3 I represent Neighbors Together. My name is Amy
4 Blumsack. Neighbors Together is a community-based
5 organization located in central Brooklyn. We serve
6 hot meals. We provide stabilizing services and we
7 also do community organizing and policy advocacy with
8 our members. We serve over 100,000 meals per year to
9 approximately 12,000 plus individuals a year. They
10 come from across the five boroughs and over 60
11 percent of them are homeless or unstably housed. We
12 also have been doing robust work with voucher holders
13 for many years now. We're direct services and
14 organizing in policy work.

15 So, it is with that expertise that we come here
16 to say that we really are thankful to the Council for
17 recognizing the need and importance of City FHEPS
18 vouchers that function properly and that it is our
19 recommendation that City FHEPS needs to be funded at
20 a level that meets the need every year, and that you
21 know we continue to push for the Administration to
22 create a better functioning City FHEPS system. That
23 means more staff at DHS and HRA, more staff at Home
24 Base so that there will shortened wait times, faster
25 application processing. We need to really fix the
many administrative barriers that slow down accessing

1 City FHEPS and using City FHEPS and we really need to
2 reverse the PEGs to DHS and HRA. Uhm, additionally,
3 we need to fund CCHR at \$18 million total and this
4 means an additional \$4.4 million dollars specifically
5 for the Law Enforcement Bureau. They do critical
6 work to help voucher holders get housed. They have
7 helped house so many of our members because source of
8 income discrimination is rampant. We really rely on
9 them when we need them to have the funding they need.
10

11 Also, I think it's critically important -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

13 AMY BLUMSACK: That staff attorney's get paid
14 more. The pay for staff attorneys at CCHR can't
15 compete with the market and so we're not able to hire
16 people as we need. The very last thing I'll say is
17 we also support \$60 million for CFC. We've seen a 63
18 percent increase in service utilization of our
19 community café in the past year alone and we're just
20 one of hundreds of emergency food programs. So,
21 thank you for your support and thank you for the time
22 to testify.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Amy. Okay, with
24 that this day one hearing of the FY25 Executive
25

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Budget Oversight Hearings has concluded. Thank you
everybody for testifying. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 31, 2024