

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Thursday, March 20, 2025

Start: 10:07 a.m.

Recess: 5:31 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Rita C. Joseph

Linda Lee

Julie Menin

Chi A. Ossé

Nantasha M. Williams

Other Council Members Attending: Avilés, Brewer  
and Restler

## COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Keith Howard,  
Commissioner at New York City Department of  
Youth and Community Development

Alan Cheng,  
First Deputy Commissioner at New York City  
Department of Youth and Community Development  
(DYCD)

Nevita Bailey,  
Chief Financial Officer at New York City  
Department of Youth and Community Development  
(DYCD)

Angelina Martinez-Rubio,  
Special Counsel at New York City Department of  
Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Darryl Rattray,  
Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Partnerships at  
NEW YORK CITY Department of Youth and Community  
Development (DYCD)

Susan Haskell,  
Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services at New  
York City Department of Youth and Community  
Development (DYCD)

Valerie Mulligan,  
Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Connect at the  
New York City Department of Youth and Community  
Development (DYCD)

Mike Bobbitt,  
Deputy Commissioner Community Development at the  
New York City Department of Youth and Community  
Development (DYCD)

## COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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

Jeremy Halbridge,  
Deputy Commissioner Office of Administration at  
the New York City Department of Youth and  
Community Development (DYCD)

Denise Ramirez,  
Associate Commissioner and Chief Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion Officer at the New York City  
Department of Youth and Community Development  
(DYCD)

Erica Caraway,  
Deputy Commissioner Human Capital at the New York  
City Department of Youth and Community  
Development (DYCD)

Felicia Thornton,  
EEO Officer at the New York City Department of  
Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

Daniel Guillen,  
Assistant Commissioner Youth Services Operations  
at the New York City Department of Youth and  
Community Development (DYCD)

Jess Dannhauser,  
Commissioner of the New York City Administration  
for Children's Services (ACS)

Winette Saunders,  
First Deputy Commissioner of New York City  
Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

Margaret Pletnikoff,  
Deputy Commissioner Financial Services of the New  
York City Administration for Children's Services  
(ACS)

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Caitlyn Passaretti,  
Senior Policy and Advocacy Associate at  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Ira Yankwitt,  
Executive Director, Literacy Assistance Center;  
Member of the New York City Coalition For Adult  
Literacy

Sophie Charles, Ph.D,  
Associate Executive Director, Downstate; Council  
of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA)

Kate Connolly,  
Senior Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood  
Houses (UNH)

Michelle Avila,  
Director of Public Policy at Children's Aid

Dr. Shakeema North-Albert,  
Chief Executive Officer at Covenant House New  
York (CHNY)

Kha'ja Mendheim,  
Member of Youth Advocacy Board at Ali Forney  
Center

Galloway,  
Advocacy Manager at Ali Forney Center

Paula Magnus,  
Deputy Director of Northside Center for Child  
Development

Tricia Mullen,  
Director of Lehman College Adult Learning Center

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Nate Duvall,  
Artist with the Groundswell Community Mural  
Project

Rebekah Kwong,  
Lower East Side Girls Club

Joneé Billy,  
PowerPlay

Mia Lema Lindao,  
Sadie Nash Leadership Project

Isabella Perez,  
Armory College Preparatory

Alyssa Hernandez,  
New York Edge

Cheikhou Diouf,  
New York Edge

Neomi Neptune,  
New York Edge

Isabella Navarro,  
New York Edge

Danny Lam,  
New York Edge

Jazmine Reed,  
Development and Communications Manager at Figure  
Skating in Harlem

Anthony Rowe,  
Project Director for Neighbors in Action at  
Center for Justice Innovation

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Illiana Santiago,  
Staff Attorney for the Community Justice Unit at  
The Legal Aid Society

Rachel Walman,  
Director of Education at The Green-Wood Cemetery

Sebastien Vante,  
Associate-Vice President of Streetwork Project at  
Safe Horizons

Jane DaCosta,  
Executive Director and Founder of Metropolitan  
Equestrian

Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele,  
Associate Executive Director of Youth Services  
for Queens Community House

Joan Kanarkiewicz,  
Adult Education and Administration Coordinator at  
Make the Road New York

Silas Dupigny,  
Senior at Sunset Park High School; Afterschool  
Elementary School Assistant Group Leader for  
Center for Family Life

Emily Versen,  
Program Director at Center for Family Life in  
Sunset Park

Moomina Rahman,  
Groundswell Community Mural Project

Piyali Basak,  
Managing Director at Harlem Neighborhood Defender  
Service

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ysmerlyn Murshed,  
Director of Early Defense at the Center for  
Family Representation

George Kottas,  
Director of Early Defense of the Family Defense  
Practice at the Bronx Defenders

Nila Natarajan,  
Associate director of Policy and Family Defense  
at Brooklyn Defender Services

Psyco Wilson,  
Advocate from Youth Represent

Carlos Caiza,  
Participant in the Arches Transformative  
Mentoring Program (Arches) at Youth Justice  
Network; Member of the Youth Committee at Youth  
Represent

Grace Wang,  
Youth Worker at Chinese American Planning Council  
(CPC)

Joshell Lawrence,  
Youth Assistant Coordinator of Project DOT  
(Project Dream, Own, Tell) at the New York City  
Alliance Against Sexual Assault (The Alliance)

Gregory Brender,  
Chief Policy and Innovation Officer at the Day  
Care Council of New York

Faith Behum,  
Manager of Government and External Relations at  
UJA-Federation of New York

Roberto Rodriguez,  
Teen Center Program Director at Kingsbridge  
Heights Community Center

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Constance Lesold,  
Retired Social Worker; Advocate

Christopher Leon Johnson,  
Member of the Public

Sharon Brown,  
Member of the Public

Alejandra Ng,  
Program Manager for Community Tennis Programs;  
New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL

Daniele Gerard,  
Senior Staff Attorney at Children's Rights

Allison Hollihan,  
Director of the New York Initiative for Children  
of Incarcerated Parents at Osborne Association

Liangliang Han,  
Social Worker with the Center for Family Life;  
Family Enrichment Center, FEC Project.

1  
2 SERGEANT WONG: Sound check for the Committee on  
3 Children and Youth. Today's date March 20, 2025—being  
4 recorded by Danny Huang in the Council Chambers.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: WNYC, are we ready?

6 Good morning, and welcome to the New York City  
7 Council Preliminary Budget Hearing on Children and  
8 Youth. At this time, can everyone please silence your  
9 cell phones? If you wish to testify, please go to the  
10 back of the room to fill out a testimony slip. At  
11 this time, and going forward, no one is to approach  
12 the dais, I repeat, no one is to approach the dais.

13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

15 Good morning, and welcome to the Committee on  
16 Children and Youth. I'm Council Member Althea  
17 Stevens, Chair of Children Services, and today we'll  
18 begin our hearing with the Department of Youth and  
19 Community Development followed by the Administration  
20 for Children Services.

21 I would like to welcome DYCD here. This morning  
22 we will be discussing the Department's Preliminary  
23 Financial Plan, which includes a budget of \$1.2  
24 billion for FY26. The plan includes an additional  
25 \$2.1 million in FY25 and \$5 million baselined

1 beginning in FY26 for an additional 1,508 slots for  
2 the Fatherhood Initiative Program and baselined  
3 funding for \$6 million beginning in FY26 to fund 100  
4 beds for young adults ages 21 to 24 Runaway Homeless  
5 Youth Program Expansion.  
6

7 I would like to thank the Administration for the  
8 increase in the number of beds. It is making sure  
9 that... it's a much needed investment. Thus, I won't  
10 be yelling about it today.

11 However, there are concerns that the increase in  
12 the number of beds is not accompanied by the increase  
13 in the current per bed rate of \$45 to 55,000, as the  
14 cost of runaways... to safely and effectively run a  
15 program. We need to right size the cost for the  
16 funding it is truly needed and necessary.

17 I'm happy to see that the plan included a  
18 restoration of \$19.6 million, a One Shot Funding for  
19 the Summer Rising Program. This funding will extend  
20 the program hours for middle school student programs  
21 all across the school's districts. Unfortunately,  
22 this restoration does not account for the fact that  
23 the original PEG was baselined. For programming to  
24 remain consistent, it's critical that we don't have  
25 to go through this process each year and this

1  
2 restoration is made for all the years of the  
3 program's plan.

4 I want to take a moment to note that I have  
5 over... I now currently have oversight over ACS, and  
6 I have a clear view of how we are failing our middle  
7 school students, because, at this time, we are seeing  
8 a rise in youth offenders in the juvenile justice  
9 system. And we're not seeing the investments that the  
10 young people themselves are asking for. What they are  
11 asking for are things like internships and jobs.

12 We currently have a SYP program that has over...  
13 that has project-based learning, a \$700 stipend, and  
14 a Summer Rising Program that forces students to be in  
15 the classroom half of the day, which they have said,  
16 with their attendance, that they do not want.

17 I hope that we can take time to think about how  
18 we can reimagine workforce development and  
19 programming for what young people are asking for and  
20 not what we think they need.

21 DYCD is preparing a new procurement for COMPASS  
22 and SONYC Afterschool Programs in the next year.  
23 Providers have expressed much concern to me about the  
24 funding for the existing capacity of after school  
25

1  
2 programs, particularly related to the unequal base  
3 rates within COMPASS elementary and middle schools.

4 I hope during this hearing DYCD will be able to  
5 provide the Committee with details about the new  
6 procurement for COMPASS and SONYC Afterschool  
7 Programs we will all like to see. And we would hope  
8 that a new RFP will meet the needs of the CBOs to run  
9 an effective program.

10 Another area of particular concern for me this  
11 year is the status of the federal funding. The  
12 Preliminary Budget includes \$110.4 million for  
13 federal funding for DYCD in FY25. With all the  
14 Executive Orders being issued by the Trump White  
15 House, we can never be sure of what funding is in  
16 jeopardy. But it's likely that some proportion of  
17 this funding will be reduced or eliminated. If the  
18 City is unable to secure this federal funding, DYCD  
19 would have a shortfall that we need to resolve in the  
20 future financial plans.

21 We are also hearing that there have already been  
22 cuts from the federal government that will affect our  
23 RHY (Runaway and Homeless Youth) population, which  
24 will be stopping Section 8 and NYCHA access. I would  
25 like for us to work together to develop a plan for

1  
2 those young people to ensure that they have stable  
3 homes.

4 The Council will continue to champion programs  
5 for youth as a funding priority. The City should  
6 prioritize investments in DYCD programs that provide  
7 leadership, social, and workforce development tools  
8 for young people.

9 The youth today are the leaders, entrepreneurs,  
10 and change makers of tomorrow. It's essential this  
11 budget that we adopt this year is transparent,  
12 accountable, reflective of the priorities and  
13 interests of the Council and the people we represent.

14 I look forward to an active engagement with  
15 Administration over the next few months to ensure  
16 that the FY26 Adopted Budget meets the goals that the  
17 Council has set forth.

18 I would like to acknowledge... All right, well,  
19 at this time, I would like to take the time to thank  
20 staff; I would like to thank the A-Team back in the  
21 district office; Sandra Gray, Financial Analyst to  
22 the Committee; Aliya Ali, Unit Head; Christina  
23 Yellamaty, Committee Counsel; and Elizabeth Arzt,  
24 Senior Legislative Policy Analyst.

2 At this time, I will turn it over to committee  
3 counsel to swear in the Administration, thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, good morning, please raise  
5 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
6 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your  
7 testimony before this committee, and to respond  
8 honestly to council member questions?

9 Keith Howard?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Susan Haskell?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Darryl Rattray?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yes.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Angelina Martinez-Rubio?

16 SPECIAL COUNSEL MARTINEZ-RUBIO: Yes.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mike Bobbitt?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Yes.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dana Cantelmi? Not here? Okay.

20 Valerie Mulligan?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: (INAUDIBLE)

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alan Cheng?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yes.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jeremy Halbridge?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: (INAUDIBLE)

1 COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH 15

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Felicia Thornton?

3 EEO THORNTON: (INAUDIBLE)

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Denise Ramirez?

5 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Yes.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Erica Caraway?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CARAWAY: Yes.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is there anyone else that I  
9 didn't call?

10 Okay, thank you, you may begin. Oh, what's your  
11 name?

12 CFO BAILEY: Nevita Bailey, CFO.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sorry?

14 CFO BAILEY: Nevita Bailey, CFO.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, Nevita Bailey, uhm?

16 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, thank you. Can someone  
18 fill out a slip for her, please?

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Did you guys have an extra  
20 copy of the testimony for me or no? I didn't get it.  
21 Oh, thank you.

22 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, yeah, don't, they'll  
24 tackle you.

25 (LAUGHTER)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good morning, Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth.

I am DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard, and I'm joined today by First Deputy Commissioner, Alan Chang; Chief Financial Officer Nevita Bailey, and Special Counsel Angelina Martinez-Rubio. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget.

Last year, DYCD served an unprecedented 480,000 New Yorkers, up nearly by 100,000 or 26% since the beginning of the administration.

The year also saw another record number of jobs and some enrichment activities for young people, as well as targeted strategies to make the city safer and more affordable. This is largely due to the hard work of our dedicated nonprofit partners and our DYCD staff. Shoutout to our DYCD staff, especially the ones in the room here today.

In that regard, DYCD recognized challenges our partners face due to delayed payments. We are working diligently to review and approve financial transactions, provide training, well as revise and streamline our internal policies where needed to expedite processing.

1  
2       Where possible, we have worked with our partners  
3 to determine the best approach to address their  
4 immediate cash flow needs. We know more work is  
5 needed. We will continue to work with our oversight  
6 agencies and our partners to ensure that this work  
7 happens as expeditiously as possible.

8       We also recognize that our partners and immigrant  
9 communities are fearful of federal law enforcement  
10 and protecting the privacy and safety of those we  
11 serve is at our top priority for DYCD.

12       In response, we've conducted a series of training  
13 for our nonprofit partners and DYCD staff on  
14 procedures developed in conjunction with our city  
15 partners for in person interaction with non local law  
16 enforcement. The trainings generated great interest  
17 with over 4,000 attending and participating in robust  
18 questions and answer, sessions and follow-up  
19 inquiries. Our nonprofit partners with questions may  
20 call our staff. Additionally, DYCD recently  
21 established a hotline for our partners to call after  
22 hours to speak with a DYCD attorney.

23       The Preliminary Budget builds on this progress by  
24 making investment in programs that help elevate the  
25 effects of poverty and provides opportunities for New

1  
2 Yorkers and communities to flourish. We are carefully  
3 monitoring the developments and actions in Washington  
4 D.C., which can have a very serious impact.

5 The budget, as you mentioned, stands at \$1.2  
6 billion. It is comprised of 90.07 in city tax levy  
7 funds, point 16% in intercity funds, 6.24% in federal  
8 funds, and 3.51% in state funding. Part of this  
9 funding goes to one of our most treasured and  
10 successful programs, our Summer Youth Employment  
11 program, SYEP. We are deep into our planning for the  
12 2025 season, and I especially want to thank the  
13 Council for your strong support of this program.

14 Last summer, New York City again provided a  
15 100,000 summer job opportunities for young people  
16 ages 14 through 24 at thousands of work sites across  
17 the city. We are also pleased that 30 city council  
18 members hosted a 24 SYP workers. And for this summer,  
19 we hope that all 51 will participate.

20 Shoutout to you, chair, for making that happen.

21 We released the 2025 SYEP application for  
22 participants and work sites on January 21st, the  
23 *earliest* application release ever. With a focus on  
24 program quality, we believe this early release would  
25 give participants more time to prepare for their

1  
2 summer experience and give providers time to work  
3 with the NYC business and nonprofit community to  
4 develop additional work sites.

5 Today, we have 25 targeted recruitment events in  
6 priority police precincts with the highest incidents  
7 of gun violence. We work with the crisis management  
8 group, service groups, and partnered with NYCHA so  
9 that applicants can make use of their digital van.

10 The online application closed last Friday, and we  
11 are continuing targeting and recruitment to allow  
12 participants with barriers to employment the  
13 opportunity to apply.

14 This year, all SYEP participants will receive at  
15 least two hours of financial literacy education as  
16 required by Local Law 98.

17 DYCD also launched a financial empowerment peer  
18 mentoring pilot in which selected Work, Learn, and  
19 Grow participants will take CUNY courses on financial  
20 literacy and serve as peer mentors during SYEP.

21 Work Learn and Grow, a school year extension of  
22 SYEP, is now serving over 7,000 youth, its largest  
23 class to date with more than one-third of enrolled  
24 youth residing in or attending schools in the six  
25

1  
2 priority precincts identified in the Mayor's  
3 Blueprint for Community Safety.

4 Also, the first time, our CMS providers had the  
5 opportunity to participate in Work, Learn, and Grow  
6 with 19 CMS groups enrolling over 330 participants;  
7 38 Work, Learn, and Grow participants are serving as  
8 youth ambassadors to students in temporary housing  
9 with a focus on migrant youth.

10 These workforce programs will soon be  
11 complemented with a new program the Mayor recently  
12 announced, the Community Resources for Employment and  
13 Development we call CRED.

14 Extending DYCD's portfolio of workforce programs  
15 up to age 40, it will provide tailored support  
16 services, occupational training, and paid work  
17 opportunity to 1,500 underserved New Yorkers by  
18 Fiscal Year 2027.

19 In addition to our SYEP planning, we are actively  
20 preparing for another summer of wide ranging  
21 enrichment programs for the City's Summer Rising  
22 Program in partnership with New York City Public  
23 Schools. Applications for this summer opened March  
24 4th, and will close on March 28th, and we expect to  
25 again serve a 10,000 elementary and middle school

1 students and connect them with fun, hands on  
2 enrichment experience to strengthen skills, develop  
3 interests, and cultivate curiosity.

4  
5 Some example of the programming that will be  
6 offered include drama, yoga, community service,  
7 visual arts, sports, cooperative games, and more,  
8 more, more field trips.

9 In 2023, we introduced Exploring Futures, a new  
10 feature of the program for middle school students to  
11 facilitate early career exploration aligned with  
12 their individual interests and passion. This program  
13 exposed students to a wide array of career paths,  
14 enabling them to navigate and explore fields that may  
15 have otherwise been unfamiliar to them. The program  
16 included visit to CUNY campuses, career connected  
17 field trips, and workplace tours. We look forward to  
18 another year of this exciting program.

19 The Office of Neighborhood Safety officially  
20 joined DYCD in Fiscal Year 2024. This office  
21 included... includes, I'm sorry, the Mayor's Action  
22 Plan for Neighborhood Safety, the Office to Prevent  
23 Gun Violence, and ATLAS. These programs are aligned  
24 with DYCD's mission and improves community police  
25

1 relations and reduce crime, incarceration, and other  
2 contact with the criminal justice system.

3  
4 As promised, when I last testified, DYCD has  
5 worked hard to build support around the ONS team and  
6 CMS providers, especially around quality and  
7 oversight. DYCD has developed, one, key metrics for  
8 systematic reporting on program activities and  
9 outcomes. Two, put in place a comprehensive  
10 monitoring system and regular provider network  
11 meeting for program oversight and coordination.  
12 Three, launched a structured implementation  
13 evaluation. And four, continuously analyzes real time  
14 data from the NYPD to inform operations on the  
15 ground.

16 Over the first year under DYCD, the Cure Violence  
17 providers conducted 15,000 de-escalations and  
18 mediations and supported an average caseload of about  
19 1,600 participants at a time. Additionally, the  
20 transition to DYCD, ONS providers have access to the  
21 Agency's \$6 million of capacity building and  
22 professional development services for programmatic  
23 and organizational support.

24 One highlight of our commitment to the  
25 professional development of frontline staff was

1 through our Family Development Credential, our FDC  
2 program. During spring 2024, 15 credible messages  
3 from ONS programs participated in the program, and  
4 all 15 pilot participant earned their credentials and  
5 received college credits.  
6

7 I am pleased that as part of the Mayor's efforts  
8 to address homelessness, the budget includes \$6  
9 million to add 100 runaway and homeless youth beds to  
10 service homeless young adults, bringing the total  
11 number of beds to 913.

12 Chair Stevens, this is a big win for you, the  
13 Council, advocates, and all young people. We thank  
14 you for your tireless advocacy as always. We look  
15 forward to briefing the Council on how we are  
16 implementing and planning to roll out these new beds.

17 Finally, at the State of the City Address, the  
18 Mayor announced that the City will double the size of  
19 fatherhood... of the Fatherhood Initiative to reach  
20 3,000 fathers in the coming year.

21 As you know, the program helps fathers reconnect  
22 and build strong relationships with their children  
23 through one, counseling, two, conflict resolution  
24 training, three, mediation and mentoring. And as a  
25 dad, this is both professionally and personally

1  
2 meaningful and impactful. Shoutout to my kids, Maya  
3 and Tyler.

4 Thank you once again for the opportunity to  
5 discuss the Preliminary Budget. We are pleased to  
6 answer your questions. Let's do it.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're trying to soften me,  
8 right, with the shoutout to the kids? All right, I  
9 see what you're trying to do.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it.

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I knew it would work.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) Everybody knows I'm  
14 a softie for the (INAUDIBLE)

15 (LAUGHTER)

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well thank you guys for  
17 being here, and I'm really excited to dig in. I know  
18 you gave me a special shoutout, but let's give you,  
19 DYCD a shoutout, because I know you guys can't come  
20 in here and tell me what you want, but we all know  
21 that you guys are excited to get those 100 beds  
22 because you guys are the ones that we yell at. So  
23 thank you, to you guys, and we're really excited to  
24 hear about what those plans look like.

1  
2 I said out there this morning, you know, if I'm  
3 gonna yell at people, I also gotta give them their  
4 flowers, too, so we are a team and this is a win for  
5 us. But y'all know I got bigger asks, too, so now  
6 that we got the beds, I got some new asks.

7 DYCD's \$1.2 billion Fiscal 2026 Budget in the  
8 Preliminary Plan is \$166.2 million or 12% less than  
9 the Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget \$1.4 billion. The  
10 difference is mostly due to the \$146.4 million  
11 Council Discretionary Funding that was included at  
12 adoption.

13 What metrics, if any, are used to determine the  
14 funding levels of each of the DYCD programs?

15 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What metrics, if any, are  
17 used to determine the funding levels of each of the  
18 DYCD programs?

19 CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens.

20 DYCD values looking at the quality and impact of  
21 our programs, so we have different metrics whether it  
22 be attendance, enrollment, outcomes for our programs.

23 We are very invested ensuring that we make sure  
24 that funds are spread well.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

1 I forgot, I forgot to acknowledge my colleagues  
2 here. Sorry, guys, I jumped right into the questions.

3 We have Council Members Lee, Avilés, and Williams  
4 who are with us.

5  
6 DYCD Preliminary Plan included funding for two  
7 new needs. Did DYCD submit any new needs that are not  
8 included in the Preliminary Plan? If so, what were  
9 those requests and how would that factor be included  
10 in the plan impacts in operations?

11 CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens.

12 So DYCD's has ongoing conversations with OMB,  
13 we're constantly assessing our programs, but at this  
14 time, there were no additional new needs.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: None? Oh well maybe after  
16 this year we'll have some new needs, right?

17 The Preliminary Plan included an additional  
18 \$325,973 for the Young Men's Initiative in FY26 for  
19 the Men's Program. Last year at this time, the  
20 Department reduced YMI by \$200,000 stating that this  
21 decrease would not have an impact on programs.

22 Why was the additional funding added to the  
23 preliminary plan? Did the reduction that was made  
24 last year impact programming? Are there any new  
25 shortfalls to the funding for this program?

1 Welcome.

2  
3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Good morning, Chair  
4 Stevens.

5 So there are no shortfalls to our YMI portfolio.  
6 The additional funding is supporting some direction  
7 from YMI. Of course, as you know, YMI has a new  
8 Executive Director, James Stratford, who is from the  
9 Bronx.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Y'all really in here today  
11 working it, huh? Let me tell you, they were like,  
12 Althea's gonna be nice today.

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: And he's coming in  
15 with a really good vision of how we can evolve YMI  
16 programming to better connect to young people across  
17 the city. So everything from a college fair that had  
18 close to I wanna say 3,000 young people there about a  
19 week or two ago to some other initiatives that we're  
20 rolling out.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'm happy that we got  
22 some additional money for it this year.

23 The Preliminary Plan included the restoration of  
24 \$19.6 million in FY26, restoring the Summer Rising  
25 Program PEG in FY26 only. The original plan was a

1  
2 baseline reduction, but this reduction is only for  
3 one year of funding.

4 Why is the restoration not baselined? Has there  
5 been any conversations with OMB on what baselined  
6 funding for this program will look like?

7 CFO BAILEY: So as you know the City is facing a  
8 number of different competing priorities. I think  
9 it's a testament to the Administration that they  
10 ensured that the restoration happened early in the  
11 year so that the agencies and providers can  
12 effectively plan for this upcoming summer.

13 But at this time the funding is not the baselined  
14 in our budget.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

16 CFO BAILEY: And we're continuing to work with  
17 them to ensure that we can- if funding is (INAUDIBLE)  
18 baseline, it can happen early enough so that we can  
19 effectively plan for upcoming summers.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know where we can get some  
21 money from, I mean, you were listening to the DOE  
22 hearing I had the other day, there's some money over  
23 there that we probably could use to run an effective  
24 program. But, you know, I think it's about \$80  
25 million over there that we could use.



1  
2 services, and so they fund a number of services  
3 through our agency.

4 What I can also say is that we have not received  
5 any guidance from the federal government that there  
6 will be any impact to these services at this time,  
7 and so we are continuing as is.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But how are you preparing  
9 for it if it does? Because we are in a place where we  
10 have to prepare for the worst.

11 CFO BAILEY: I understand that, but at the same  
12 time there's so many unknowns. So, at this time,  
13 we're just trying to figure out what we can do to  
14 reinforce our existing systems, make sure that staff  
15 are properly prepared, but at this time we really  
16 can't make that decision because if any cut happens  
17 it's a citywide decision, it wouldn't really be the  
18 DYCD. So we're doing all that we can internally to  
19 make sure that we are... our reinforcements and our  
20 foundation are strong so that we can effectively  
21 respond to whatever decision is made.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So even... and while we're  
23 talking about the federal government, know that I've  
24 been getting frantic calls and text messages around  
25 the Section 8 and NYCHA access being cut to RHY-

1  
2 young people. So this is why... that is federal, and  
3 this is why we need to prepare.

4 So could we talk about how you're even preparing  
5 for that piece that is affecting DYCD participants?  
6 And this is gonna affect the program. And also how  
7 are you working with other agencies to ensure that  
8 young people can get access to things like CityFHEPS  
9 now that this is going to be a huge issue?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well all of those  
11 conversations are happening with OMB, because one of  
12 the things that in conversations with OMB is to  
13 understand exactly what the impact was... would be,  
14 and understanding that we have to continue monitor  
15 and just really pay attention to what's happening up  
16 in Washington D.C.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, but this is--  
18 according to the providers, that they had a call with  
19 DYCD, and they were told that this is happening. So  
20 how are we-- because ,like, even saying we're in  
21 conversation with OMB, like how are we preparing for  
22 this? This is, in real time, going to be affecting  
23 our young people if they don't have access, because  
24 we already did not have adequate access to the  
25 CityFHEPS Vouchers-- which if we would have

1  
2 implemented the City Council's Bill, that wouldn't be  
3 the case.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, again, if we're in  
5 conversations with OMB, and internally we are looking  
6 at the impact, and we do not want to minimize the  
7 conversation that is happening, especially on the  
8 ground with our partners in the nonprofit world. I  
9 have gotten calls as well. It's kind of hard to say,  
10 "This is going to happen..." when we haven't seen  
11 any evidence of it happening other than... (CROSS-  
12 TALK)

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you guys did have calls  
14 (INAUDIBLE) the providers... (CROSS-TALK)

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: other... other than the  
16 confusion that happened a month or so ago when emails  
17 or whatever went out, but there has not been any  
18 impact to our knowledge of any of our programs as  
19 Navita Bailey stated.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, I'm confused, because  
21 that's not what hearing. Because I'm hearing that  
22 you, DYCD, had a call with providers that this was  
23 happening, that this was being cut and to say that it  
24 hasn't impacted them yet—okay, the call the call  
25 was—I believe it was relatively this week. So how are

1  
2 we preparing for what we said is happening? Because  
3 this is going to affect them.

4 CFO BAILEY: So, Chair Stevens, I'm gonna defer to  
5 Deputy Commissioner Haskell who can expand more on  
6 what is happening underground for the archway  
7 providers.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, thank you.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Hi, Chair Stevens.

10 I mean, you raise a good point. I think what  
11 Commissioner and our CFO are saying is this is a  
12 developing situation with federal funding. It's not  
13 clear- Navita mentioned uncertainty- it's not clear  
14 exactly what the impact is going to be.

15 We are aware there could be impact to federal  
16 fundings like Section 8, Housing Choice Vouchers for  
17 NYCHA, and all the support housing opportunities that  
18 we seek out for young people in Runaway Homeless  
19 Services. We did flag for RHY providers this week  
20 that there could be challenges seeking support for  
21 housing assistance.

22 But at this time there's no impact to Runaway and  
23 Homeless Services specifically. And we will continue  
24 to seek out all stable housing opportunities for  
25 runaway and homeless who are in our programs.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, this is why I get  
3 frustrated. Because planning for something that you  
4 told providers and having... saying ,like, "Okay, we  
5 don't have the answers now, but let's move forward to  
6 think about a plan," that is all I'm asking. I'm not  
7 asking what's the impact? Obviously there's no impact  
8 because we said it happened this week. But there is  
9 going be an impact. So how are we planning for this  
10 cut? I mean it's going happen, so what does the plan  
11 look like? Or you can say, "We haven't started  
12 planning yet, but we are working on the plan." But I  
13 think to say like there's no impact and try to  
14 emphasize on that, to me it is going to be impacted.  
15 It happened this week. So we could acknowledge that  
16 there is going to be an impact.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Our communication  
18 with providers was flagging the potential for impact.  
19 We still... We don't really know what the impact is  
20 gonna be at this point. We know there's a potential  
21 impact to federal funding on vouchers, but we really  
22 don't have certainty on what that's gonna be. So  
23 we're flagging for them. I believe we can share that  
24 there'll be a pause right now on Housing Choice  
25 Vouchers, but that's not... there's no cut

1  
2 necessarily that we're communicating. We are still  
3 figuring out the full impact of the federal funding  
4 situation.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So are you guys looking to  
6 work with OMB to talk about the CityFHEPS Voucher? Is  
7 that going to be an option?

8 I'm just actually really just trying to push for  
9 us to make sure that we are thinking about what  
10 options and plans we can put in place at our level,  
11 right?

12 We cannot control what we cannot control, but,  
13 for me, planning is the best solution for us to have  
14 moving forward, because we know that there will be an  
15 impact.

16 And when this administration was here last time,  
17 and I'm talking about the Trump administration  
18 because he was here before, RHY was hit the hardest.  
19 And so for me, I would like us to be over prepared,  
20 because clearly we have to make sure that these young  
21 people aren't vulnerable.

22 So ,you know, we know that this is a huge LGBTQ  
23 population. They're ,you know, they're being attacked  
24 regularly. We know that a lot of these folks are  
25 immigrants that are coming here from other countries.

1  
2       So, for me, this is a place where we have to  
3 overly be prepared, and should be at the top of the  
4 bill, because they're the most vulnerable at this  
5 moment.

6       So that's why for me, I'm, like, what is the  
7 plan? And if we don't have a plan, then let's meet to  
8 make a plan. Because there's no way that this is not  
9 gonna be impacted. Because if you're flagging it,  
10 that means we know this is something that's coming  
11 down the pike.

12       So definitely let's make sure, after this, we set  
13 up some time to talk. Because I am very scared for  
14 our young people. And that was one of the things that  
15 I heard from the providers when this administration  
16 came back-- that RHY was hit so hard last time. I  
17 mean, Susan you've been here, you know this was hard  
18 for us this last... the last go around when this  
19 administration was here.

20       So I want us to be overly prepared and think  
21 about how the... we can't pick up everything but what  
22 we can I want us to make sure we do.

23       COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So just want to just say  
24 that we are in conversations with OMB. They are the  
25 lead agency. They are the ones that are guiding us if

1 there are impacts. But, currently, those  
2 conversations with providers are happening in real  
3 time, but they are happening across the city. They're  
4 happening across the city. I am not saying that this  
5 is not concerning to us. Of course this is concerning  
6 to us— on the highest level, but right now we can  
7 only have conversations about exactly how we  
8 maneuver, if we have to maneuver at all, because at  
9 this time we don't see an impact.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So OMB is not the lead  
12 agency. You are. DYCD is the expert in your  
13 development...(CROSS-TALK)

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) funding.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, you are the expert.  
16 And we will not... I will not... Because that's a  
17 problem. You are the lead agency on youth. You are  
18 the ones who need to tell them the things that you  
19 need to do your job. So they're not the lead agency  
20 and that's that... And (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Chair, I said, on funding.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Not even on funding.

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay? I... We are the expert  
24 on youth— youth development, community development.  
25 But on funding, it's OMB.

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CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, you are the expert. And they... You tell them what you need to do the effective programming. That's the problem with the system. They are not the expert. You need to tell them the money and they find the money. And that's the problem. We are always in this cycles, because you... this agency is the expert, and you know what the people need. So if we have people telling me, well, you don't need that for the kids, which is why we sit here and go back forth, you guys are the experts. You guys have been in this work. You know the work. You are the experts. And I don't know why you wanna argue with me about not being an expert...

(CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm not arguing with you...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's weird...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am just trying to clarify...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: to me, but...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am trying to clarify. When we just...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No...

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: discussed over the... Over  
3 the... (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Let's agree to disagree...

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) the year. And  
6 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: DYCD's the expert. And I  
8 want that on the record. Not OMB... (CROSS-TALK)

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In investment...

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I'll tell Josh myself.  
11 So let's move on.

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's all good.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't know why you're  
14 arguing with me about that. Like, you go (INAUDIBLE)  
15 (LAUGHS)...

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I am not arguing.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) The Plan includes  
18 funding for 600... I'm talking about headcount for  
19 634 full-time positions in FY26 for DYCD, an increase  
20 for 46 positions from FY25 Adopted Budget. The  
21 Department Fiscal 2025 January actual headcount is  
22 588.

23 How many vacancies does the Agency currently  
24 have?

1  
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure, I will  
3 take that one. Currently we have 553 full-time staff  
4 on board, so roughly about 50-60 vacancies.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the specific titles  
6 for the additional 46 positions? What programs are  
7 those positions allocated to?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So most of those  
9 are to continue supporting the ONS transition— those  
10 programs over to DYCD. And we also got some headcount  
11 in FY26 for the expansion in Fatherhood and the RHY—  
12 100 beds.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency have  
14 adequate headcount to effectively run each of the  
15 programs and initiatives?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yes, we believe  
17 we do.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are those vacancy  
19 positions that DYCD feels are adequate to be filled?  
20 If so, what positions are included and how many  
21 positions?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So roughly half  
23 of our vacancies, and those additional positions, are  
24 for admin support— so contracting, budgeting, you  
25

1  
2 know, legal, IT. And then the other half are direct  
3 program management.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are some of the main  
5 challenges DYCD experiences in hiring new candidates?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: In some of those  
7 positions there is definitely a lack of qualified  
8 candidates, like in the IT area, even in finding  
9 lawyers. But, for the most part, we are able to fill  
10 ,like, our programmatic positions and some of the  
11 contacting positions.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does the recruitment  
13 look like for some of those more challenging  
14 positions?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sorry, can you  
16 repeat that question?

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does recruitment look  
18 like for some of those more challenging positions?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So the more  
20 challenging positions, we are engaged with ,you know,  
21 there's... with the citywide hiring halls, we're  
22 also...

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have those been effective?  
24  
25

1  
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We've gotten a  
3 few people from there. I don't have the exact number,  
4 but, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so what are some of the  
6 other places that you're looking? Especially, I think  
7 you said what? Lawyers and IT positions, those have  
8 been harder to fill.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We are also  
10 looking at working with CUNY and other local colleges  
11 to find ,you know, upcoming graduates or recent  
12 graduates.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have you looked at ,like,  
14 especially with the IT, have we looked at some of the  
15 nonprofit agencies like Prescola (phonetic)? I know  
16 we do a lot of funding for them. Have you been  
17 working with them? Because I know that part of their  
18 program is also about hiring. Have we talked with  
19 them?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Not that I'm  
21 aware of, but we definitely will look into that.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think especially a  
23 lot of the IT programs, I know that we fund on the  
24 Council side, part of it is job development. So we  
25 should definitely make sure that we're kind of

1 connecting those dots. So after, we can definitely  
2 try to connect you with those agencies...

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure...

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those providers...

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Chair, one of our great  
6 successes is within our college aid program. How we  
7 bring in college students that transition into these  
8 professional jobs. Our IT department is one of the  
9 departments that hosts a significant amount of  
10 college aids. Then as they complete their education  
11 requirements, they transition into employment  
12 opportunities.  
13

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think that those are  
15 the places we should be going and starting. I know  
16 specifically, and I even brought up the Prescola,  
17 because the Council funds for them to train NYCHA  
18 residents. So, I think that would just be a nice fit  
19 if they have young people that they... or not young  
20 people, but people in general, that they can  
21 recommend. And I know that they have a whole alumni  
22 base.

23 DYCD... so this is some contracting issue— DYCD  
24 recently sent letters to COMPASS and SONYC providers  
25 requesting that they sign another contract extension

1 based on contract rates that had not been updated  
2 since 2015. The use of the non-updated rates would  
3 continue to financially strain providers, as the  
4 rates do not account for increased costs and the need  
5 to provide continued services to afterschool  
6 programs.

7  
8 Have those programs been... has there been any  
9 discussion with OMB to provide the release of a  
10 COMPASS concept paper and include a model budget that  
11 will increase the rates for providers with the RFP  
12 process?

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We are in continuous  
14 conversation with OMB. We are in continuous  
15 conversations with our stakeholders. We are  
16 continuous conversations with our providers.

17 As you know, Chair, this the COMPASS program,  
18 afterschool program, it's been 10+ years since we've  
19 had a program model.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I think our concentration is  
22 listening to the providers and having focus groups.  
23 One of those focus groups, we want to make sure that  
24 we are bringing in young people to be able to guide  
25 us on exactly what a new program model looks like.

1  
2 And then, of course, continuously hearing exactly  
3 what new services should be part of the afterschool  
4 programming model. So those conversations are ongoing  
5 as we are trying to really get it right.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't think it takes 10  
7 years though.

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, hey...

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And this is before you,  
10 so...

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: This is before me...

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And...

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But...

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You told me, I believe at  
15 the last hearing, that y'all was gonna have it out by  
16 September.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well things happened.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) I'm just saying.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And... And... And  
20 comments... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That was out of your mouth  
22 because you said you was gonna have a RFP to me...

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you, and what  
24 happened is, things happened, comments came back,  
25 program models changed and investment. I mean 10

1  
2 years ago we weren't talking about mental health and  
3 trauma, uh, in program... (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We were.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: In program models. In  
6 program models... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We... We were.

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Consistently a uniform  
9 investment. And I'm not talking about referral  
10 services. I'm talking about having, you know,  
11 clinical clinicians on staff as part of the program  
12 model. So again those conversations are happening...  
13 (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But what's the delay? So  
15 ,like, really? I think, obviously, I know ,you know,  
16 folks are like. "Okay, at least we have an  
17 extension," but what's the delay? Because 10 years is  
18 a really long time for a program to continue without  
19 any additional financial support.

20 I mean it's bad enough they get paid late, so I  
21 didn't even get there yet, right?

22 And then we're giving them rates from 10 years  
23 ago. And I don't know if you know, eggs are ,like,  
24 what \$15 at this point?

1  
2           So I don't know how much crayons are at this  
3 point. So how are we expecting providers to have a  
4 rate from 10 years ago to be able to provide quality  
5 programming?

6           So let's say we didn't say, alright, we didn't do  
7 the RFP, fine. But what are we doing about the rates?  
8 I think that's an even bigger issue. W want to get  
9 the program model right and all the things, so,  
10 great, fine. How do we then make sure that the  
11 providers have the actual things that they need to  
12 provide the services that we know that our young  
13 people deserve and need?

14           COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Very good question.

15           But we also need to shout out the \$741 million  
16 that went into investment on COLA across the  
17 nonprofit network to help with (INAUDIBLE)...(CROSS-  
18 TALK)

19           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The COLA

20           COMMISSIONER HOWARD: rates...

21           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, that's... well the  
22 COLA is to pay the staff because, they're...

23           COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's an investment. It's an  
24 investment in the system.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, so what about the  
3 other investments that we need?

4 CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, we're working on it.  
5 And I won't say that the money is there, but I think  
6 the commissioner made good point, that we recognize  
7 that salaries have gone up, cost of living has gone  
8 up, things have gone up. As you referenced, eggs have  
9 gone up.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, no, y'all don't  
11 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

12 CFO BAILEY: And, so...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If y'all see the eye rolls  
14 that's behind y'all...

15 CFO BAILEY: It's okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) So many eye rolls.  
17 Because ,like, I think that one, I think it's  
18 offensive to tell people that, "Oh, we gave you a  
19 cost of living adjustment." Because it's not a race.  
20 So that's kind of offensive, which is why I'm sure  
21 everyone was rolling their eyes ,like, please, right?

22 And that is something they should have gotten  
23 anyway that we had to fight for, right? So what  
24 happens is when we have to fight for basic things,  
25 other things fall off the table and understanding

1  
2 ,like, they should get a raise. And it's not a raise,  
3 it's a cost of living adjustment, because the cost of  
4 living has gone up. And that was something that  
5 should have happened anyway.

6 So now we're talking about actual program and the  
7 lack of having, again, you want to extend the  
8 contract, we know that the cost for all of the  
9 services in the programs have gone up. So then how do  
10 we account for that? So do we chip away at the  
11 quality of program? Because that's what ends up  
12 happening.

13 CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, I hear you. We will  
14 continue to push the fight and review and look and  
15 see what we can do to get to the point where we can  
16 release it. At the same time, we continue to work  
17 with our providers, as mentioned there's an ICR  
18 initiative.

19 Currently the City has a number of competing  
20 priorities. The last five years have been eventful.  
21 And so...

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who are you telling?

23 (LAUGHS)

24 CFO BAILEY: So I think that we've all had to  
25 adjust and adapt to the changing environment. So

1 funds have been a little bit more limited, but  
2 recognizing the work that the sector does, as the  
3 pandemic and the many things, show these are  
4 essential workers, are people who do great work in  
5 their community. So recognizing the competing  
6 priorities the City had, they thought at the bare  
7 minimum they would do what they can to at least  
8 provide additional wages to the staff, so they can  
9 get funded for it.  
10

11 We will continue to do the work to provide  
12 additional funding, but our first step was trying to  
13 see what we can do for wages to address what's going  
14 on.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, remember, I want to  
16 also just shoutout the providers because, the City  
17 wouldn't have done that if we wouldn't have been out  
18 here with 3,000 people for two years saying we need  
19 the money. This wasn't like they did it because it  
20 was like, "You guys did a good job..." (CROSS-TALK)

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's a team... it's a  
22 teamwork... it's teamwork. It's with you advocating.  
23 It's with ,you know, Jacques and the Mayor, and  
24 everyone involved making sure that, you know, we're  
25 looking across... and we're taking in... those things

1 in consideration. But it starts with communication.

2 It starts with the exchange. We understand. Trust me,

3 I understand. I'm on meetings with our providers, you

4 know, just really going through their pain and

5 looking at the pain points that we need to land this

6 thing, you know, and I hear you. But those

7 conversations happen the same way that our

8 conversation with the 100 beds that we had at RHY.

9 It starts with a conversation with OMB.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't know if started with

11 a conversation. I think it's sort of me yelling and

12 being a crazy person. But, I guess if we're gonna

13 call that a conversation, we can, but... and ,you

14 know, and bringing my colleagues along to start the

15 fight with me, because they also jumped in last year.

16 And I so appreciate them as well.

17 But, again, we have to make sure— and listen, I

18 don't have a problem going to OMB and telling them

19 that this is unacceptable. But this is a real

20 problem, I think even going into this year and seeing

21 the inflation, and not being able to provide a

22 quality program. Because it does affect the program,

23 and we have to acknowledge that.



1  
2 to push back, and if I gotta go yell about, I will,  
3 but it has to happen.

4 And I think first step, if we're gonna say we're  
5 gonna do this extension because I think it's since  
6 2028, correct?

7 CFO BAILEY: It's a two-year extension  
8 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, it's a two-year  
10 extension. So, at minimum, if we're going to say  
11 we're going to have a two-year extension, there is no  
12 way that we should not be talking about an increase.  
13 But we do need to talk about even rightsizing the  
14 program, because, again, I'm sure when she has  
15 questions, she's gonna ask y'all, how does she get  
16 this done? Because she has programs busting out the  
17 seam in Southeast Queens. And so it's even those  
18 things. So I'm preparing you guys, because I know  
19 it's gonna be her question, so get ready.

20 The current base rate for SONYC program is  
21 \$3,200. Providers are requesting a base increase to  
22 \$4,150 in Fiscal 2026. Will DYCD consider this rate?  
23 If not, why?

24 CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, DYCD does not have the  
25 funds in our the budget to do that at this time.

1 That's a conversation that would have to be with OMB.

2 At this time we cannot commit to that rate.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Don't worry, I'm gonna add  
4 this, I'm gonna go extra myself.

5 Okay, RHY contract issue— They have a similar  
6 issue too, same thing. New York City RHY program  
7 providers recently received a two-year proposed  
8 contract extension for FY26 and 2027, with  
9 indications that the bed rate will be unchanged, with  
10 rates ranging between \$45 and \$55 per bed and no  
11 change in cost of living adjustment.

12 Again, I'm confused about that. I don't know why,  
13 they said that they didn't get the COLA.

14 CFO BAILEY: So, Chair Stevens, my office sent an  
15 email out to all of the providers, and we did a  
16 number of follow-up emails and outreach to them.

17 If they are still having an issue, I would  
18 recommend that they reach out to our help desk and  
19 they'll follow up.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Because I, myself, was  
21 confused. I didn't understand. I didn't call y'all  
22 yet, so sorry Andrew, I forgot.

23 But they did say that, so you're saying to call  
24 the help desk, because (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)  
25

1  
2 CFO BAILEY: Go to the help desk, and they'll  
3 follow up. We'll have someone follow up. (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, I see some of  
5 them out there. Go to the help desk. Call right now.  
6 Somebody's at the help desk now.

7 All right, some of the providers are proposing  
8 the rate of \$70,000 per bed. What is the Agency's  
9 thought on this adjusted rate proposal for the RHY  
10 beds? Are you gonna say, "That is not in our budget  
11 right now, you have to speak to OMB?"

12 CFO BAILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

14 CFO BAILEY: But, yes, that is correct...

15 (LAUGHTER)

16 CFO BAILEY: It's not in our budget. We're not  
17 funded for that. In fact...

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, I'll add that to  
19 the questions. I will go to OMB.

20 Has DYCD met with providers to discuss the 2026  
21 and Fiscal Year 2027 proposed contract extension?

22 CFO BAILEY: I'm gonna defer to our Program Unit.  
23 So what unit are referencing?

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: RHY.

25 CFO BAILEY: RHY?

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's Susan? Hello. Deputy  
3 Commissioner Haskell will answer that question.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, there you go.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yes. We... well, the  
6 confirmation about the contract extensions went out  
7 by email. And several RHY providers asked for a  
8 discussion, including to some of your points about  
9 their requests for bed rates.

10 Commissioner and some of our Finance leadership  
11 joined the meeting to hear their concerns. The  
12 commissioner asked them to share all the detail that  
13 they had. That has been shared with us, and we're  
14 reviewing that, and we're discussing planning another  
15 meeting to walk through their scenarios, but to  
16 answer your question, yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, so you've been meeting  
18 with them to talk about that. I mean I've already  
19 talked about it already. I'm really concerned about  
20 the RHY, especially with the federal stuff that's  
21 going on. So let's continue to have conversations.  
22 And I know they're concerned about even the bed rates  
23 of not being...

24 And I have a question, why are the... why is  
25 there a range between \$45,000 and \$55,000 per bed?

1  
2 Why isn't everyone getting the same rate? That's a  
3 \$10,000 difference.

4 CFO BAILEY: I'm unaware of the rates being at  
5 that low. I think that some of these rates are coming  
6 in for a time when we got an RFP and ICR and COLA...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?

8 CFO BAILEY: But there are no... there should be  
9 no rates at that lower rate. The base should be  
10 around in the 50s. So we can look more into it, but  
11 I'm unaware of rates starting off with that low.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Well...

13 CFO BAILEY: We can follow up offline.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that's where I was  
15 confused, but what's the difference between the  
16 rates? Do we know why the rates are a varying?

17 CFO BAILEY: Because timing of procurement. Timing  
18 of procurement and initiatives are already included  
19 in the funding. But it's very few contracts that  
20 actually have differentials.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So do they have different  
22 requirements? So we... so you get paid a different  
23 rate to do the same work?

24 CFO BAILEY: Yes, because it's incidentals like  
25 ICR, which is like the additional funding that

1 happens throughout the term of contract. So some of  
2 those things caused variations regarding the rate, as  
3 well as different timing of procurements.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And this is one of the  
6 things that I'm always really concerned on in the  
7 city around the difference in the contracts. Because  
8 then when we hear from young people where some  
9 programs are proven to provide some things and others  
10 can't, it literally provides inequities in the  
11 program.

12 CFO BAILEY: Mm-hmm.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we definitely have to get  
14 to a place where we are providing consistency because  
15 it's not fair— where ,like, some folks are able to  
16 do... like, maybe they are able to provide more  
17 services or amenities, and then others can't because  
18 the rates are different. So we definitely have to  
19 talk about what equity looks like. Because, to me, it  
20 isn't really fair.

21 CFO BAILEY: Chair Stevens, I will just also add  
22 there are other providers who also get in kind  
23 contributions.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?  
25

1  
2 CFO BAILEY: So, while some (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-  
3 TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, yeah... (CROSS-TALK)

5 CFO BAILEY: (INAUDIBLE)

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And some of them fundraise  
7 and are able to have... So all of that already taken  
8 into consideration... so we should also just think  
9 about, like, when we have these contracts, what's the  
10 inconsistency? So if there's a new contract that  
11 comes out at a different rate- a.k.a when we think  
12 about Summer Rising and then Cornerstones. Those  
13 rates are different, too. And I yell about that, too.  
14 But, I didn't get there yet. Did not get to Summer  
15 Rising yet. But that's one of the big issues, because  
16 it creates competition when it kind of doesn't need  
17 to. So at least at the city level we should be  
18 consistent.

19 I'm gonna ask a couple of more questions and then  
20 I'm gonna pass it back.. I'm gonna pass it to my  
21 colleagues, and then I have more questions,  
22 obviously.

23 Commissioner, you talked about the Community  
24 Resource for Employment Development, CREED, that's  
25 what it is?

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COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: CRED

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, CRID?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: CRED, like credit

(INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: CRED?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Cred on the streets?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh...

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You came up with that, didn't you? (LAUGHS) What's the funding for provider, I mean what's the funding for this? And could you talk more about it? I know you started to talk a little bit about it because I know this is a new program. Can you talk a little bit more about this? What's the like funding rate for this?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, Deputy Commissioner Mulligan is going to talk and give you the and give you the essentials- but long and short of it is, uh, there was a gap in service areas when we surveyed our workforce programs. And we realized that the gap was we weren't doing a real good service for people, participants ages 24 to 40. Especially those who were justice involved or linked to a criminal justice system. You want to talk about the (INAUDIBLE)

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Great, hi, Chair  
3 Stevens.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hi.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So we're really  
6 excited about the CRED program. We have eight  
7 providers who have gone through the RFP process.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who are the providers?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I can rattle them  
10 off right now.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We've got Cases,  
13 Common Point, JCC of Staten Island, Queens Community  
14 House, Renaissance Technical Institute, United  
15 Activities Unlimited, Youth Justice Network, and  
16 Brownsville Community Culinary Center.

17 So you'll hear from that list, it's a good mix of  
18 folks who have been in our portfolio before, and some  
19 new folks who are really excited to start working  
20 with.

21 Our team has been on the ground working with each  
22 of those groups to launch these new programs, because  
23 they're really something different for DYCD up to age  
24 40 like Commissioner referenced.

1           Each program is going to be really comprehensive.  
2  
3       So offering job training, supportive services,  
4       referrals, paid internships, job placements at the  
5       end of all of that. We have programs in construction,  
6       culinary, entertainment, health, technology,  
7       transportation. It's a really exciting opportunity  
8       for us, because, like the commissioner said, we kept  
9       hearing that after 24 there's no DYCD workforce  
10       program for that really critical population. So this  
11       is really going to be the place where we're able to  
12       build out those services.

13           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the funding the  
14       program?

15           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I want to defer to  
16       our Fiscal Team to rattle off the...

17           CFO BAILEY: Funding in FY26 is around,  
18       approximately \$27 million.

19           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How are you collaborating  
20       with other agencies like HRA and things like that?  
21       What does that look like?

22           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah, we have been  
23       really busy talking to all of these agencies, sharing  
24       the program with them so they understand what it's  
25       going to be. We've met with Department of

1  
2 Corrections, MOCJ, HRA, SBS, all of our partners. And  
3 we're working on building intentional referral  
4 pathways with each of them.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And our CMS groups as well.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Oh, and of course  
7 the CMS groups are all really excited for this. One  
8 of the really cool innovations of having the ONS team  
9 in DYCD is we've been able to work with them, work  
10 with their providers. Many of them are in our  
11 portfolio now doing Cure Violence, uh, Work, Learn  
12 Grow, Cure Violence, SYEP with us. And so they are  
13 very aware of this program. As soon as we told them  
14 it was launching, we immediately started collecting a  
15 list of referrals from them.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And shoutout to Commissioner  
17 Liddie over at DOC. We met with her as well, her and  
18 her staff, to create pathways as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, and have you worked  
20 with ACS as well, because I... okay. All right, I'm  
21 going to pause here and I'm going to turn it over...

22 I also would like to acknowledge that Council  
23 Members Menin and Joseph have joined us, and I'm  
24 going to turn it over to Council Member Avilés for  
25 her questions.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, Chair. Good  
3 morning or afternoon, whatever time of day it is.

4 Okay, well, first I want to start by thanking the  
5 DYCD team. I know, again, you're doing an enormous  
6 amount of work for the City, and we appreciate that.  
7 And while we have complicated questions and issues to  
8 tend through, we do appreciate the work of every  
9 staff member in the agency.

10 So let's start with- I'd like to talk about adult  
11 literacy funding. The Preliminary Plan includes \$43  
12 million in Fiscal Year 2025 and \$12.8 million in  
13 Fiscal Year 2026 for the literacy program.

14 The difference between the Fiscal Year 2026  
15 Preliminary and Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted is a  
16 decrease of \$20.3 million. Can you explain the  
17 difference?

18 CFO BAILEY: Difference, next year's budget is  
19 primarily associated with the one time funding that's  
20 not included in the budget. As you know, was one time  
21 funding that happened typically in a budget, and that  
22 is primarily driving the reduction between years.

23

24

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: How much and what  
3 percentage of funding for the DYCD RFP contracted  
4 adult literacy programs comes from federal funds?

5 CFO BAILEY: I don't have that in front of me. I  
6 can get back to you afterwards and give you that  
7 information.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, thank you.

9 The Preliminary Plan also includes federal  
10 funding of a \$105 million in Fiscal Year 2026. With  
11 the current federal hostile policies that we've  
12 talked about earlier today, how does DYCD intend to  
13 fill this gap if federal dollars are cut?

14 CFO BAILEY: As I mentioned to Chair Stevens, it's  
15 a larger conversation. That's something that we have  
16 to have at OMB because there's a number of competing  
17 priorities and things to determine. At this time we  
18 have not received any notification that there'll be  
19 reduction to CSBG which is the funding source to help  
20 support our literacy programs. So as of right now,  
21 we're continuing as is.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: As is?

23 So last week we heard that the Federal Department  
24 of Education's Division of Adult Education and  
25 Literacy was dismantled. And it's clear, uh, it is

1  
2 unclear whether the federal WIOA Title II Adult  
3 Education and Family Literacy Act funding will  
4 actually be restored.

5 How does DYCD plan to support the continuation of  
6 adult literacy services currently provided by the  
7 community based organizations through the State Adult  
8 Education and Family Literacy funding if the  
9 providers are gonna be losing this funding?

10 CFO BAILEY: I'm going to defer to our Deputy  
11 Commissioner Bobbitt who will speak to the  
12 programmatic implications of these changes.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Council  
14 Member, for the question.

15 As our CFO and commissioner indicated earlier in  
16 the conversation, we're in constant communication  
17 with OMB. The possible enormity or scope of cuts of  
18 federal funding are not yet known, so it's hard for  
19 DYCD to take a clear position. But I think as Chair  
20 Stevens and the commissioner agreed, we would  
21 continue to be in in consultation with the Council as  
22 well as OMB about the potentialities.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: We do we do appreciate the  
24 challenges of the uncertain environment, but it is  
25 certainly a little disconcerting that we are facing

1  
2 pretty eminent cuts and we have no semblance of a  
3 plan yet.

4 In terms of- I'd like to segue a little bit to  
5 the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative. The Preliminary  
6 Plan Includes, excuse me, the current budget for  
7 DYCD's Immigrant Opportunities Program totals \$14.1  
8 million in FY25. The funding drops to \$7.1 million in  
9 FY26.

10 For context, at adoption, the programs were  
11 budgeted for a total of \$1.1 million. What is the  
12 reason for this initial increase in FY25 and then  
13 sudden decrease in 2026?

14 CFO BAILEY: Council Member Avilés, are you  
15 referring to our Immigrant Services Program?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: The Immigrant Opportunity  
17 Initiative. The IOI.

18 CFO BAILEY: IOI. Is this a Council funded or  
19 discriminatory...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: No, this is your... This  
21 is your initiative. It started at \$1.1 million,  
22 expanded again to \$14.1 million and then has dropped  
23 to \$7.1 million. Wild flows up and down.

24

25

1  
2 CFO BAILEY: I will follow up with you afterwards  
3 and give your more information about the disparities  
4 within that budget.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. So we'd like to know  
6 that. We'd also like to know what is the relationship  
7 between DYCD 's IOI program and the Council's funded  
8 IOI program? If you could speak to that? We'd also  
9 like to know, given the drastic rises and falls,  
10 (TIMER CHIMES) if there is going to be any impact on  
11 services and programs. And certainly, let me just  
12 check- and we would like to know specifically what  
13 the DYCD IOI's programs are, uh, what the funding  
14 covers... what programs the funding covers.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're definitely going to  
16 have to get back to you. Because that program is not  
17 familiar to us. We think that's the, uh, Commissioner  
18 Castro's program. But we can get back to you to  
19 definitely tell you whether or not we have any sort  
20 of relationship with that program.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Yeah, we certainly  
22 find the up and down quite alarming, given the needs  
23 in services that continue to expand.

24 But, thank you, Chair, and I will be back for a  
25 second round. I have so many more questions.

1                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

2                   COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, I can? Oh, amazing,  
3                   thank you.  
4

5                   In terms of for services for immigrant families,  
6                   the Preliminary Plan also includes roughly \$3 million  
7                   for Fiscal 2026 for services for immigrant families.  
8                   Can you provide a breakdown of the services that are  
9                   provided with this funding?

10                  DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Council  
11                  Member.

12                  The Immigrant Families Model provides holistic  
13                  services to individuals and families of any  
14                  composition, so that could be case management,  
15                  practical supports. If members of the family are  
16                  unhoused or seeking education or seeking employment,  
17                  really it can run the gamut, and this program's  
18                  operating in all the boroughs.

19                  COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you know how many  
20                  providers are funded through this program?

21                  DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: My recollection is  
22                  it's five. Hold on, let me turn around— four at this  
23                  moment.

24                  COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Four? And how many people  
25                  have been served through this program in Fiscal 2025?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Approximately 300  
3 families.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, I'm sorry, I missed  
5 that.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: That's all right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Is there... do you  
8 anticipate a continuing number of service at that  
9 level?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: We do anticipate  
11 that. As you may recall, we released a concept paper,  
12 and thank you, Council Member Avilés, as well as  
13 Chair Stevens, for giving us feedback.

14 But we don't have a concrete timetable as to when  
15 we will release the RFP. So for the immediate future,  
16 we'll be maintaining the service levels and the model  
17 that's presently in place.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Good. Love to hear if any  
19 of that feedback was integrated into any new  
20 iteration or not.

21 In terms of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the  
22 Preliminary Plan includes \$336,000 for five full-time  
23 positions in Fiscal 2026.

24

25

1  
2 Are these positions designated to MOIA, or are  
3 they new staffing who will cover DYCD immigrant  
4 related services?

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Although I would love to  
6 have additional staff, that doesn't reflect in our  
7 headcount.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So are they...

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: They...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: belong to MOIA?

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Those are MOIA's, yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'll talk to Commissioner  
14 Castro.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, and I guess, for the  
16 record, we'd like understand the details on the roles  
17 and responsibilities for those positions. So...

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I will refer to Commissioner  
19 Castro.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: That's a lot of referring  
21 going on. What's the point of the hearing if we  
22 don't...

23 To quickly segue on SONYC and COMPASS programs,  
24 we talked a little bit about the request from  
25 providers. I know on January 30th, almost 60

1 providers sent a letter to the Mayor, to OMB, and to  
2 DYCD sounding the alarm about the underfunding,  
3 chronic underfunding of afterschool programs and a  
4 continuation of a 10-year-old contract.  
5

6 So the cost of those services are going up and up  
7 and up, and we are not reimbursing at even comparable  
8 rates. I think it's actually less than half of the  
9 true cost of these services are being covered. How is  
10 DYCD addressing this issue?

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I have met with the with if  
12 not all, but most of the nonprofit partners that have  
13 sent the email and the letter.

14 Again, we continue to talk to OMB about the  
15 concerns that the nonprofit sector and our COMPASS  
16 and SONYC are experiencing. Those conversations are  
17 very robust. We're bringing a lot of concerns from  
18 the sector. We have concerns. OMB has concerns as  
19 well. But that's the nature of the engagement. We  
20 have not landed yet. But those conversations are  
21 constantly and will continue to be ongoing.

22 Our Deputy Mayor, Ana Almanzar, has been meeting  
23 as well. Just expressing, you know, City Hall's  
24 opinion to the sector and understanding the concern  
25 of the sector as well.

1  
2       So the conversations are happening at the highest  
3 level. But as I told the chair, we understand that  
4 it's an old model, it's an old program model. And we  
5 understand the pain that the sector is going through.

6       But again it starts with everyone continuing to  
7 communicate and share what those pain points are.

8       COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I think the sector has  
9 been pretty clear what the pain points are. I guess  
10 the short of it is while we appreciate your  
11 understanding and your communication with the sector,  
12 the City has to dedicate the resources. If it is in  
13 fact prioritizing our youth across New York City,  
14 then this program needs to get some additional  
15 funding. And I'm sure you probably agree with me, but  
16 we need more money. I know you can't say that, but we  
17 are gonna say it, because continuing to renew  
18 contracts at a 10-year-old level and then expect  
19 continued quality services is both unfair and  
20 unrealistic. So I want to...

21       COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Definitely hear you.

22       COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I hear you, I know you do.  
23 I know you can't say you need a lot more money, but  
24 we are going to (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Don't worry, we can say it  
3 for them.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: (LAUGHS)

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They need more money.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So one last thing, in  
7 terms of timely reimbursement for services rendered,  
8 one of our critical agencies, Center for Family Life,  
9 is waiting for a total of \$3.4 million in  
10 reimbursement. In Fiscal 2025, they have... excuse  
11 me, they... hold on. In Fiscal 2024, they have  
12 invoices totaling more than \$500,000; Fiscal 2025,  
13 invoices totaling \$980,000, totaling \$1.9 million  
14 that they are waiting for services that have been  
15 rendered, receipts that have been put in, and still,  
16 two years later, looking at increasing demands  
17 waiting for this money. What is going on?

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We're working with our  
19 nonprofit partners to make sure that we're resolving  
20 issues. Some of those issues are being led by Mayor's  
21 Office of Contracts. But they're working in  
22 partnership with us. I can honestly say that the  
23 Mayor's Office of Nonprofit has also been leading the  
24 way as well, making sure that providers understand  
25 that yes there are there are problems in the system

1  
2 and we're working with those problems. We are  
3 providing white glove treatment to those  
4 organizations who reach out, to my understanding, and  
5 those, uh, Center for Family Life is a really... they  
6 really have amazing programs. They're a very good  
7 partner of ours. I have not gotten a phone call from  
8 them, but I will reach out to them (INAUDIBLE)...

9 (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, I want to correct  
11 something for the record. They have contract  
12 registration and approval on PASSPort totaling \$1.9  
13 million— in addition to the \$500,000 for Fiscal 2024;  
14 in addition to the \$980,000 in Fiscal 2025, which  
15 totals actually \$3.4 million in funding that should  
16 be reimbursed.

17 With all due respect, Commissioner, white glove  
18 treatment, if you owe me \$3.4 million, that is not  
19 white glove treatment.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, the other thing is the  
21 complexities on why there is a system problem. But  
22 what we've been doing across the board, is making  
23 sure that we case manage those who are having  
24 problems across the board.

1  
2 And again, Center for Family Life, they are  
3 running one of our programs. They're a really good  
4 provider, and I'm just concerned that I haven't  
5 gotten a phone call, a letter, or any  
6 correspondence... (CROSS-TALK)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Well, I'm here right now.

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And I'm pointing it out.  
10 And I'd love to get a very clear time frame of when  
11 this is gonna get repaired.

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Because they are a great  
14 provider, and they want to do their best, and they  
15 work well with DYCD. But... (CROSS-TALK)

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We will have an answer to  
17 you...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: \$3.4 million  
19 outstanding... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Council Member, we will have  
21 an answer...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: is obscene...

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: before the end of the day.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

25 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay?

1 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: All right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member  
5 Avilés. And we will be having a hearing on  
6 contracting in conjunction with Contracts in April,  
7 so make sure you get that hearing as well.

8 I just had a follow-up question around adult  
9 literacy. The Adult Literacy RFP funding has been  
10 contracted. Is there any NFT competition still  
11 pending for the contracts for the Adult Literacy?  
12

13 CFO BAILEY: There are two left.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: There's two still pending?

15 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, thank you.

17 Okay, I'm gonna pass it over to Council Member  
18 Lee. But I want to give my mom a special shoutout,  
19 who is watching this hearing on TV right now.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And she told me I was really  
22 doing a good job. So shoutout to my mom for watching.

23 Okay, passing it over...

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Oh, you touched our hearts.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) You started, and my  
3 mom turned on the TV to watch.

4 So, passing this over to Council Member Lee...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hello to Althea's mom.

6 I was just listening to Council Member Avilés'  
7 questions, and my heart started beating, because as  
8 someone who ran a nonprofit for 20+ years, I have to  
9 say there were times where we had to think about  
10 foregoing pay for a lot of our senior staff, because  
11 we were waiting on these contract payments. And it is  
12 a very real serious thing, and to not be able to pay  
13 our staff, and to know that me, as the head of the  
14 organization, have to provide for their livelihood,  
15 it's a lot of pressure. And I know there's a lot of  
16 issues around the contracting, so I'm glad to hear  
17 that we're going to have a hearing on the contracting  
18 with DYCD. But one note is that as an ED, one thing I  
19 can say is, I think also it's important to make sure  
20 that the (INAUDIBLE) have all the same training and  
21 that they understand. Because I had multiple DYCD  
22 contracts, so from one (INAUDIBLE) to the other,  
23 they're like, how can I say, the bouncer in that  
24 moment where they have all the power and authority to  
25 let you into that club, where it's like in that

1  
2 moment they have the ability to say, okay these  
3 documents are sufficient versus not, and a lot of  
4 time there's inconsistencies in what they're asking  
5 for. So, that's one point of a barrier that I would  
6 like to personally say, I think in my own personal  
7 experiences, that's been something that's been a  
8 little inconsistent. And... (CROSS-TALK)

9 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, I love that... the love  
10 the fact that you said that, and I love the fact that  
11 you bring real experience to it.

12 This is the reason why the Mayor's Office of  
13 Nonprofit was created to make sure that there's  
14 uniformity across the system and across the agency.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, that was after my time,  
16 unfortunately, as a ED, but it would have been nice  
17 to see, yeah.

18 And just going along with that whole theme, just  
19 out of curiosity, do you guys have internal meetings  
20 looking at the outstanding contracts that are sort of  
21 on hold?

22 You know, when I worked at the hospital they  
23 would look at outstanding bills, payments. So do you  
24 guys have those regular meetings internally?

1  
2 CFO BAILEY: Hi, Council Member Lee. I'll speak  
3 for that, Nevita Bailey, CFO.

4 So I can tell you that there are weekly meetings  
5 on contracting...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

7 CFO BAILEY: we have them weekly where we get  
8 reporting. I can tell you that there's... everyone at  
9 DYCD is committed to getting paid... people getting  
10 paid and registered.

11 We can expand on CFO, but I can also tell you  
12 that there are complexities. They can be delayed  
13 submission of documents from providers. They can be  
14 outstanding insurance documents. I think that it's a  
15 shared experience with both providers and staff. A  
16 lot of our staff are chasing providers for a very  
17 long time to get documents, and so I think that it's  
18 a shared experience. We're all in it together, and  
19 we're all working on it together.

20 I think that DYCD is working where possible, if  
21 contracts are registered, giving out advances to  
22 ensure providers get cash flow. We have a CNO in  
23 house that if a provider is experiencing immediate  
24 crisis, we can be able to rapidly respond.



1  
2 before they get to you guys if their documents are  
3 updated or not. I get flags for that ,like, so I know  
4 very clearly what the status of my organization is if  
5 there's outdated information which prevents me from  
6 even that next step of going to you guys to get the  
7 payment.

8       So then I just want to make sure that that is  
9 also happening where- because a lot of times when I  
10 would ask the contracting agencies or the staff you  
11 know at DYCD, you know... but it's on PASSPort, I  
12 know I'm up to date, so why are you guys asking me  
13 for these documents again? So I just also want to  
14 make sure that on your end it's going both ways,  
15 right?

16       And then just switching really quickly, for the  
17 contracts in general for DYCD, how much advance  
18 percentage do you guys give?

19       CFO BAILEY: That is on a case by case basis. I  
20 think overall for the City we have a flat rate that's  
21 30%. Depending upon the program area available  
22 funding, that makes adjustments. I think for our  
23 Summer Rising portfolio, we gave additional  
24 substantial advances...

25       COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

1  
2 CFO BAILEY: because of delay in funding. So for  
3 our Summer Rising portfolio, almost 90% of their  
4 funding has been given out to them so that we can...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Ninety?

6 CFO BAILEY: Yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

8 CFO BAILEY: And that is not typical, so that is  
9 not something that should be expected on an ongoing  
10 basis. But given the delay that we did, it was DYCD's  
11 commitment to ensure that we try to minimize cash  
12 flow issues we did that. So that's why I'm saying for  
13 the examples that you bring up, there could be layers  
14 to them. So that's why I'm saying (TIMER CHIMES) it  
15 is much better to get more expansive responses  
16 offline.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Sorry, Chair, can I  
18 keep going for a couple more questions?

19 Okay. So, for COMPASS and SONYC, uh, what are the  
20 number of community based versus school based  
21 programs? Do you guys still do the community based  
22 after school as well as the school based?

23 CFO BAILEY: There are school based and community  
24 based programs, (INAUDIBLE) to defer. About 85% is  
25 our portfolios based in footprint in schools...

1 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

2 CFO BAILEY: and 50% are community based.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And is this accurate  
4 where the last contract was in 2015? Because I  
5 remember applying for those grants. Was it 2015? Oh  
6 my god, okay.

7 So, I obviously don't want to, you know, keep  
8 reiterating this point, but I can't emphasize enough  
9 how important it is to look at those rates and see  
10 what we can do. Because I think when we look at the  
11 actual cost per student versus what is being given in  
12 the contracts, there's like a 50% discrepancy there  
13 in terms of where the salaries and expenses should  
14 be. So I just wanted to reemphasize that point which  
15 I know Chair Stevens has already done. So I also echo  
16 those sentiments.

17 And just really quickly, do you also provide  
18 afterschool programs for students that have ID and  
19 DD, the disabilities?

20 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then for those, do  
22 you oversee them with a different agency like DOHMH?  
23 Because I know they have some of those programs, but  
24 is that also? Okay.

1 CFO BAILEY: No.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Then, in those  
3 instances, I would imagine, do you see the same if  
4 not more, I would say, staffing challenges or issues  
5 around how to address the students that have special  
6 higher needs, or? And what is the (INAUDIBLE)...  
7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 CFO BAILEY: Deputy Commissioner Haskell...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: for that?

10 CFO BAILEY: will speak to the students with  
11 disabilities in the afterschool portfolio.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I'm sorry?

13 CFO BAILEY: Deputy Commissioner Haskell will  
14 speak to the students with disabilities... (CROSS-  
15 TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, for...

17 CFO BAILEY: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so that's my other hat,  
19 is Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction Chair.  
20 So, I just really... (CROSS-TALK)

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Right, excellent.  
22 We... in all our afterschool programs and other  
23 programs, we have a range of young people with  
24 varying abilities and different needs including  
25

1 intellectual and developmental disabilities. We don't  
2 have separate regulatory structure or infrastructure  
3 or contract structure even for those programs. But  
4 one of the things that is unique about out of school  
5 time, whether it's Beacon or Cornerstone or COMPASS,  
6 is that young people in an after school environment  
7 can really come with the skills that they have and be  
8 served as part of a project based community in terms  
9 of the activities they sign up for.

11 Staffing has been a challenge across the board  
12 coming out of COVID. We're really seeing...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: uh, get to a better  
15 place with that. But I think the structure of  
16 afterschool is uniquely equipped to suit young people  
17 of different needs.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And do you also have to  
19 follow under- I'm assuming you work with the state  
20 OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental  
21 Disabilities) as well on that, or is it totally  
22 separate?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We don't work  
24 closely with the state...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: OPWD on that. We  
3 have the same regulatory structure for school-aged  
4 child care programs, and a young person needs to be  
5 able to be served within that regulatory structure to  
6 participate in our afterschool programs.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then in the first,  
8 just switching gears to the Beacon, first four months  
9 of Fiscal 2025, the Beacon Community Centers program  
10 served 34,310 youth and 6,972 adults, an increase of  
11 6% for youth and 7% increase for adults when compared  
12 to the same period in Fiscal 2024.

13 So has the Agency seen a continued increase in  
14 Beacon Community Center usage this fiscal year  
15 compared to last year? So what has that increase been  
16 if there has been one?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Thank you for that  
18 question. Can you say specifically which part of the  
19 Beacons that you're talking about an increase? Could  
20 you say that again? This is in the PMMR data you're  
21 looking at?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Okay, great, go  
24 ahead. If you don't mind, can you ask again?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

1                   So it was about 34,310 youth and then 6,972  
2  
3 adults, so an increase in 67% respectively. So just  
4 wanting to know if you've seen similar increases in  
5 this fiscal year.

6           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Those increases are  
7 from this fiscal year, I think...

8           COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

9           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: that you're pointing  
10 out, from the July through November period.

11          COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

12          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We can get back to  
13 you, dig into that information a little more  
14 detailed.

15          COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

16          DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: There was an  
17 expansion of some summer services, including the  
18 Summer Safety Plan Initiative that may have  
19 increased, in particular that July through August  
20 period, and that may account for some of those  
21 increases.

22          COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and then just similarly  
23 in the PMMR, the English Literacy program, in the  
24 first four months was revised from 4,881 to 8,533.

25          So what was the reason for that increase?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: The literacy  
3 programs are my colleague. I'm gonna...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: change over.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, uhm...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Holdup, oh, wait, she's going  
8 to give me (INAUDIBLE) I'm sorry...

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay...

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sorry, Council  
11 Member, can you just restate the last...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, yeah, sure, the English  
13 Literacy program, it was revised from 4,881 to 8,533.  
14 So just wanted to know what was the reason for the  
15 difference in the enrollment numbers?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: There's two elements  
17 regarding the update to literacy participants, one is  
18 registrants must reach 12 hours of instruction to  
19 become considered enrolled. So there'll be a change  
20 in the name of participants as students reach the 12  
21 hour threshold. And the new income eligibility proofs  
22 were finalized in October of last year, so some  
23 providers were holding data entry to ensure new  
24 enrollments would be satisfied.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you.

1 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You all done? Thank you.

3 I know we were talking about contracting, and  
4 Council Member Riley sent me a question to ask around  
5 organization not being paid.  
6

7 His question is, the Game Over Foundation, which  
8 has been funded by the 12th District council member  
9 to run a youth program in the Northeast Bronx. The  
10 organization has reported not receiving any payment  
11 for the past two fiscal years and is now facing  
12 fiscal challenges that may prevent them from  
13 continuing their program.

14 What is causing this delay and what steps are  
15 being taken to resolve it?

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I believe that's  
17 discretionary program.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is discretionary  
19 funding. And I know that that has been a bigger delay  
20 than even some of the contracting. So that's even  
21 separate from that. So have you have they reached out  
22 about this, and where you guys at with this?

23 CFO BAILEY: We will look more into it. I see a  
24 deputy commissioner Bobbitt coming up.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can come back, Bobbitt.

1  
2 Chair Fariás Bobbitt you can come up to speak  
3 to... who is better well versed on a discretionary  
4 portfolio.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Chair,  
7 for the question. I'll have my team look into it  
8 today. I will say there are ongoing conversations  
9 with providers. We make a point of having routine  
10 provider meetings. And, basically, everyone in the  
11 discretionary portfolio, we try to make ourselves  
12 available when problems arise. So I'll flag that now  
13 and bring it back to the team.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I know specifically  
15 the discretionary funding has been even more delayed  
16 than the contracting. And the contracting has been  
17 the priority to get out and so...

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's a complexity in that  
19 whole process, in the whole system. One of the good  
20 things that are happening is the Working Group with  
21 capital council finance you know happening on a  
22 deputy mayor level. I participated in some of those  
23 meetings, and I do believe a 100% that the  
24 recommendations and the fixtures to the system is  
25 gonna show improvement across the board.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, mean I gotta say it  
3 just because it's a budget hearing. The procurement  
4 process in New York City is just out of control and  
5 ridiculous at this point. And I know even with even  
6 asking the contract questions to some of you guys  
7 sometimes, and I don't give you a lot of credit, it's  
8 not fair, because a lot of it is out of the control  
9 of the agencies, but we do have to continue to push  
10 forward to figure out where the systemic issues are,  
11 because it's a problem that we're not paying people.

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And 100%. And that's why  
13 ,you know, I just wanted to put some light at the end  
14 of the tunnel with the Working Group that's  
15 happening.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, we had a Working  
17 Group before, and we pretty much cleared up the  
18 backlog (INAUDIBLE) forward... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But everybody's at the table  
20 and everybody's talking through systematic issues  
21 and... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That was the...

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: the (INAUDIBLE)...

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: that was the work... we had  
25 a Working Group before when we cleared up the

1 backlog. And we're back to... even worse off...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: But I'm talking specifically  
4 about discretionary.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: When they had the Working  
8 Group before, it was cleared, and we're back in the  
9 same position. So I don't know if a Working Group was  
10 where we need to be. I think that it's a systemic  
11 issue, and we need to be looking at reforming real  
12 policy and not just trying to fix the issue. It  
13 clearly needs long term solutions, because,  
14 literally, when was it, but I'll give the credit  
15 again, it was like two years ago, the backlog was  
16 almost cleared out, and now here we are again and the  
17 same thing.

18 So that means that it's a systemic issue. So it's  
19 not a Working Group because they had a Working Group.  
20 So clearly we need to make some legislative changes  
21 and some real investments into the MOCS system that  
22 often gets overlooked and underfunded, which isn't  
23 you guys. So it's not my fight, that's Julie Won's  
24 fight, so I'll leave it there.  
25

1  
2 I'm going to turn it over to Council Member  
3 Williams at this time for her questions.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, I just want to say  
5 that I know the chair holds you all accountable at  
6 these hearings, but she's very protective of this  
7 agency. Even when members like myself are quite  
8 critical, she helps us to understand a lot of the  
9 complexities.

10 I just was talking to her about a complexity,  
11 because I am currently doing an initiative with NYU  
12 around mental health outcomes and student success,  
13 and we just had a session yesterday, and some of the  
14 schools who also double and work at the Afterschool  
15 Program, run the Afterschool Program and expanded  
16 program, talked about how some of the healing  
17 modalities that we're talking about need to transfer  
18 over into after school. So even if a student may not  
19 present in a particular way, but maybe they are  
20 struggling with some type of mental health challenge,  
21 or maybe they have an IEP or something to that  
22 effect, the commentary was that the training that the  
23 staffers have to go through is not comprehensive and  
24 does not give them the appropriate skill set to deal  
25 with a wide range of issues that we are seeing. And I

1 know it came up in this hearing, especially post  
2 COVID- and she just shared with me a whole bunch of  
3 things just now- but I'll just ask you, on the  
4 record, like, outside of potentially dismissing ,you  
5 know, a scholar from a particular program, what other  
6 resources, solutions are we doing to provide support  
7 for the providers so they can appropriately, like,  
8 service the student so they're not getting kicked  
9 out?  
10

11 You know, I know you have these unique programs  
12 for folks who deal with this population, wonderful  
13 population, we love them, but I'm just wondering,  
14 because I know there are a lot of other students who  
15 are ending up in regular after school programs.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mental health and trauma are  
17 one of the highest priorities in DYCD. And to the  
18 fact that we've actually created a unit within DYCD,  
19 the Office of Mental Health Support, to make sure  
20 that we're coordinating not only internally program  
21 areas, but also externally to make sure that those  
22 that are really in the space, like the Mayor's Office  
23 of Mental Health, uh, the Department of Health and  
24 Mental Hygiene, and New York City Public Schools, you  
25 know, all of our stakeholders across the board that

1  
2 we're that we're coordinating and sharing resources  
3 to make sure that those... that the young people are  
4 receiving, at the highest level, treatment and  
5 opportunities to be able to have clinicians and have  
6 services that they can really just really commit to  
7 and we can commit to them.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, they didn't  
9 reference any resources, they referenced some  
10 training. So I guess there's a little something that  
11 you all try to do, but the commentary was that ,like,  
12 income... his person is a program director, but  
13 they're also ,you know, a DOE employee, right? So  
14 they're getting a certain set of training that's  
15 still not enough, right?

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: But it's more than what  
18 is actually required at the Afterschool level and  
19 this is for all students across the board.

20 So like I want to acknowledge that he mentioned  
21 that there's some type of something, maybe a DOH  
22 state training or something that folks are required  
23 to do, I'm not sure. Yeah, but he just he said it  
24 it's it does not go far enough to providing support  
25

1  
2 for the employee to properly care for the young  
3 person.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, and I hear you, and I  
5 appreciate you bringing that up. I think that the  
6 investment in mental health actually is on the  
7 mayor's highest list. When we... about a year ago we  
8 had town hall meetings with young people across the  
9 six precincts with the highest level of gun incidents  
10 and shootings. And one of the two things that came  
11 out of that hearing that young people stated to us is  
12 one, concern about police interaction, and number  
13 two, their mental health and trauma.

14 But one of the things that one of the young  
15 persons told to at the time, Dr. Fassad (phonetic)  
16 was peer to peer. And (TIMER CHIMES) we started to  
17 take a look at that, uh, to say... to see exactly how  
18 we can pass that on to the providers and create those  
19 opportunities to do peer to peer counseling and train  
20 providers and train our young people to be able to  
21 take on that part. Because the young person was very  
22 clear, and he, you know, and I remember it like it  
23 was yesterday, and really approached Dr. Fassad and  
24 said, "I'm not gonna talk to a clinician. I'll go  
25 through the routine, but I would rather talk to my

1 friend as opposed to someone who's social worker."  
2 that was vitally important for us to hear. So we've  
3 been creating focus groups. We've been, again,  
4 meeting with our stakeholders to make sure that the  
5 investments and the training are actually happening  
6 across our program areas.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Chair, can I get a  
9 little bit more time? The commissioner has a lot to  
10 say.

11 (LAUGHTER)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Took up my time for my  
13 question. I was trying not to be rude, was trying to  
14 let him get his points out. Okay, thank you, Chair.

15 So the other questions that I have, I'll just ask  
16 more after school questions since she lined me up for  
17 that.

18 So afterschool providers report having ongoing  
19 difficulties with staff recruitment and persistent  
20 staffing shortages that impact their ability to meet  
21 contractual obligations.

22 So how is the Agency planning to support  
23 providers to pay competitive wages and address the  
24 long standing issue of CBO staff turnover? I know you  
25 are about to issue an RFP soon. Oh the hope, okay.

1  
2 So just wanted to know if you're taking those  
3 things into consideration in terms of how you're  
4 crafting the RFP itself.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: One-hundred percent. We're  
6 highly engaged with our nonprofit partners looking at  
7 the salary levels. We've been doing surveying across  
8 the board, meeting with providers, Deputy  
9 Commissioner Haskell and her team, constantly  
10 engaging. And yes, it's you know, I think we  
11 mentioned previously that across the sector there is  
12 concern that we're not being competitive and  
13 competitive with the salary. So we see that. We're  
14 working and hopefully ,you know, if and when the RFP  
15 and the concept paper and all of that... (CROSS-TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: If and when...

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: goes out... When all of that  
18 comes to play, we'll be able to right size some  
19 salary. That's the hope, that's the goal.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And I know you may  
21 not take that into this particular thing I'm gonna  
22 ask into consideration when you're crafting an RFP, I  
23 mean, I guess you could, because you do have waitlist  
24 numbers so you do know how certain programs are doing  
25 in comparison to other programs across the city. And

1  
2 my question that I had asked the chair yesterday was  
3 around this. And I kind of compared it to the 3K  
4 issue where you have some programs that are beyond  
5 capacity and then you have some programs that have  
6 reduced numbers. I know in the PMMR it kind of shows  
7 that there's been a slight reduction of participants  
8 in some of the afterschool programs, but how are you  
9 ensuring that the communities that need the  
10 afterschool programs actually get the support, the  
11 number of spots that they need, in comparison to  
12 communities, maybe there's an under utilization of an  
13 afterschool program, and like making that assessment  
14 and thinking about how you award contracts and the  
15 number of ,you know, slots a particular program can  
16 have ,like, all of this seems like some type of  
17 methodology that you have crafted based off of  
18 whatever data. If you have that information that'd be  
19 great to know. But just wondering, as you look  
20 forward to this new iteration of COMPASS and SONYC,  
21 how are you ensuring that we're rightsizing programs  
22 by community need? Because that was another thing,  
23 that was another one of their complaints, that they  
24 don't have enough seats, and there's no real clear  
25 way to increase the seats.

2 And I was educated by the chair because I was  
3 about to go crazy. And she was like, no, they have  
4 all these complexities.

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: See, she cares about you  
7 guys most of the time...

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We care about her... and we  
9 care about her.

10 So 100% understand we do have an extensive  
11 program evaluation team that evaluates how  
12 organizations are doing. Our first initial response  
13 is capacity building. How do we provide governance?  
14 How do we provide structure to those organizations  
15 that appear to be struggling— for a variety of  
16 different reasons? And the chair has been  
17 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm not even talking  
19 about...

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) very complex...

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: organizations  
22 struggling. I'm talking about ,like, programs that  
23 don't have enough seats in comparison to the need.  
24 You know, like somebody told me...

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There, yeah, there's...

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: "Oh, the parents line up  
5 so early. The line is around the corner."

6 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There is... there are  
7 waiting lists, yes, absolutely. There are waiting  
8 lists across the board. So, again, that does tie into  
9 capacity, right? So, yes, we have waiting lists in  
10 most if not all of our programs. I'm really  
11 understanding... trying to understand the question on  
12 our MMR, because... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, how do you expand  
14 the seats?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Because our MMR... Our  
16 MMR...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Because, there's...  
18 there's theories, which the chair educated me on,  
19 there's theories that certain afterschool programs  
20 are struggling, right? Like some... but for whatever  
21 reasons, maybe it's the infrastructure issue with the  
22 CBO, maybe they just ,you know, they don't have their  
23 numbers up in terms of participants. And then there  
24 are other afterschool programs...

25 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure...

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: that have extensive wait  
3 lists. So how are you, like...

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So those contracts are very  
5 certain, right? So if a CBO has a 100 slots, right,  
6 and another CBO has 50 slots, those are all  
7 contracted numbers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes, so that's my... My  
9 question is as you look forward to the next iteration  
10 of a new contract... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We will look at the  
12 numbers... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: how are you ensuring  
14 that the contracts, the RFPs, reflect that? Like you  
15 seem.... you have... It seems like you have a lot of  
16 data, right? So...

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How are you using the  
19 data that you have to make the programs make sense in  
20 certain communities that have... and I know, we're  
21 never gonna have enough money to service all of the  
22 things.

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm.

24

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So I'm just trying to  
3 understand, though, is there any assessment being  
4 made...

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: to right size that  
7 across communities?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes, 100%, yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member  
12 Williams.

13 Just a couple of things, too, and I'm gonna  
14 mention Summer Rising quickly, but I'm actually gonna  
15 be leaving a lot of that to Chair Joseph today.

16 But there was one thing that's about Summer  
17 Rising that I did appreciate, is we did expand to  
18 ensure that we were working with young people with  
19 disabilities. That's the one thing that I do like.

20 But even with talking with Council Member  
21 Williams yesterday, I do think it is true— a lot of  
22 times afterschool program, all the kids are just  
23 folded in. But in the same way during the school  
24 year, it would be nice to have the same type of  
25 training and supports because in Summer Rising, we

1  
2 have paras all of a sudden that we've asked for  
3 years. We have all these different access... so just  
4 thinking about, when we're thinking about this moving  
5 forward with the RFP, I hope that if it's important  
6 for this Summer Rising program (UNINTELLIGIBLE), that  
7 is just important in these other programs to be  
8 thinking about.

9       So I just want to make sure that was on the  
10 record. Because it is just very interesting how we  
11 make exceptions for things or ,you know, new  
12 initiatives that come up. So ,you know, that was the  
13 one thing that I (UNINTELLIGIBLE).. Maybe a couple  
14 other things after Summer Rising, but that's one of  
15 the one things that I do appreciate about that we  
16 open it up to make sure that more young people had  
17 access. So I hope to see those things moving forward.

18       And, then, Commissioner, you had spoken about  
19 peer to peer training and stuff like that. Somebody  
20 passed the legislation around that. I don't know  
21 who...

22       COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (LAUGHS)

23       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS) but there was like  
24 a package of some people doing that good work. Three  
25 of them are sitting here of the package.

1  
2 But I just wanted to know, how are you guys  
3 utilizing some of that stuff that's gonna be coming  
4 up? And have you guys been working with DOHMH?

5 I know that the emphasis was on schools, but most  
6 of our programs are in schools, and how are we gonna  
7 make sure that young people are accessing this peer  
8 to peer curriculum that they will now have? And how  
9 do we plan on using it in our programs?

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And, absolutely, I think  
11 that we are still in the beginning stages of the  
12 actually buildout...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: because what's key to us is  
15 training, uh, and making sure that young people, if  
16 they are involved in the peer to peer, it can be  
17 through Work, Learn, and Grow, it can be through any  
18 one of our school based programs, that they are  
19 trained.

20 One of the things that we don't wanna do, and  
21 we're very concerned about, and you know this as  
22 well, is trauma bonding, right? Which is... which is  
23 which is real. So we have to... we have to build it  
24 up with that mindset, understanding that although  
25

1  
2 it's a peer to peer model, we do not wanna create  
3 another problem across the board.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. Absolutely. But, you  
5 know, just making sure that we're thinking about this  
6 will be another tool in the toolkit, which is why we  
7 have it now, that we can have young people sign up  
8 for. And it is a training so that they can do the  
9 peer to peer work and have access to it.

10 So we should definitely think about how we can  
11 use that in our programs...

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: because it's not just gonna  
14 benefit DOE schools, it's about the climate.

15 So they have access, they'll be able to take it,  
16 and we should think about integrating it and using it  
17 in our model, too, since it's out there.. (CROSS-  
18 TALK)

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And... And when we... When  
20 we land on a draft, we will definitely touch base  
21 with you and the regular other council members to get  
22 your input as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, okay. I want to turn  
24 it... Okay, all right, I'm gonna turn it over to  
25 Council Member Joseph.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair, good  
3 afternoon, how are you? Good to see you all.

4 I'm gonna talk about Summer Rising. In the  
5 Preliminary Budget, we saw \$19.6 million in the  
6 Fiscal for 2026 program to enhance the hours for  
7 middle school students, right? That was a big win for  
8 us last year when we decided to make it Monday  
9 through Thursday, and what was gonna happen to that  
10 middle school crowd? It was huge, but please explain  
11 why the decision was made to enhance the hours for  
12 middle school students. I know why, but folks want to  
13 know why.

14 CFO BAILEY: I think it's creating a space safe  
15 space for (INAUDIBLE) so that ,you know, we can  
16 ensure that we minimize any issues and they're  
17 productive and continue to expand and build upon what  
18 they learned during the summer, minimize learning  
19 loss.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Absolutely, tutoring we  
21 know that. But the original PEG reduced the...  
22 eliminated Fridays and weekday hours. What would the  
23 enhanced hours be like for middle school students?  
24 What does that look like?

25 CFO BAILEY: The PEG we... (CROSS-TALK)

1 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Other than the learning loss?

2 CFO BAILEY: Yeah, the... So, the PEG expanded the  
3 work... the weekday hours to 6:00 P.M., as well as  
4 added hours for Friday, and so it was a full  
5 restoration.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Full restoration of the  
8 Friday hours?

9 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And that's what we were  
11 all fighting for.

12 Families and CBOs has also expressed concerns  
13 that there needs to be more options within the Summer  
14 Rising program, especially for some students with  
15 middle school. Some students say, "I want to go for  
16 enrichment, because I don't need the academic  
17 portion," right? We have our students that are going  
18 to the next grade, they don't need that.

19 How do we make it they so want to come, they want  
20 to go, because when we did this hearing last year, we  
21 saw a drop in 500 kid... a 100,000 kids apply, and  
22 then for some reason it starts dropping off.

23 How do we retain the students?

24 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Uh-huh? Uh-huh.

1  
2           COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I appreciate you being an  
3 educator and asking those questions. We are having  
4 conversations and continued conversation with our  
5 partner over at New York City Public Schools to make  
6 sure that activities, learning are happening  
7 continuously throughout the day. That a young person  
8 should not think about, "Hey, you know what, I'm  
9 getting stuck in some academic part for the morning,  
10 and then," you know, "Then it's fun in the in the  
11 afternoon."

12           DOE, the public schools, have been open to having  
13 those conversations. I believe the chancellor and her  
14 team had mentioned that as well. I also wanna  
15 highlight the chancellor for the survey that that was  
16 performed that showed that ,you know, it's a positive  
17 experience to be in Summer Rising as well.

18           As we continue to talk about Summer Rising, and  
19 I'm looking sideways to Chair Stevens, because I know  
20 she's gonna say something, but as we continue to look  
21 to improve...

22           COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: She knows about it...

23           COMMISSIONER HOWARD: to improve the Summer Rising  
24 experience, you know, from the very launch until  
25 where we are now, we've seen major changes. And I

1 think we just need to continue to communicate, to  
2 talk with the parents, to talk with you about what  
3 those changes need to be as we continue to build on  
4 that program model. And New York City Public Schools  
5 have been open to those conversations.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: As they should. I would  
8 love to see a lot of project based learning for our  
9 students in middle school during the early morning,  
10 it doesn't have to sit down, let's do a lot of  
11 project based learning in the morning until they go  
12 and they have the fun.

13 So, real life experience, let them design what's  
14 the solution for the next problems in the world. So,  
15 project based learning, I would love to see that  
16 incorporated for middle school students in the  
17 morning versus just sitting at their desk all day  
18 long in crowded classrooms.

19 I visit sites, 30 kids in a classroom during  
20 Summer Rising- I also talked to the chancellor about  
21 the class sizes that I'm seeing ballooning during  
22 Summer Rising.

23 And, how do, uh, your students with IEPs that are  
24 mandated to have related services in the afternoon  
25 part of the evening, do they have a para, do you

1  
2 follow their IEPs, what is being done for students  
3 with disabilities in the afternoon portion of Summer  
4 Rising?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That's a great  
6 question. Every Summer Rising student who has an IEP  
7 gets an accommodation plan for the summer, which is  
8 gonna outline the services that they need to  
9 participate fully in both the morning and the  
10 enrichment parts of Summer Rising.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And what about the ones  
12 that require a one to one para as well? How does that  
13 work?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That would be  
15 recommended in their accommodation plan and our  
16 partnership with the Office of Students with  
17 Disabilities would help facilitate those resources.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I know we're also working  
19 on transportation in the evening, because I know our  
20 students who take the bus normally cannot stay for  
21 the afternoon portion because of bus contracting  
22 (TIMER CHIMES) because it's the contract, it's not  
23 you. It's the contract. Is there any work being done  
24 around that?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We have... Any participant in Summer Rising who's staying to the end of the day can use rideshare as an alternative to the busing.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: But some of the rideshares require a parent ride with them.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So how are we... how is that working?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Uh, it...

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: That's still in the works?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: It's an alternative to busing for young people who want to stay for the full day.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: So what is the percentage of parents, if you have data, that are satisfied with the Summer Rising program? A lot of our low income families have also expressed a lot of concern not being able to get their children enrolled. We saw a huge barrier. What changes are you making to implement, to increase parents who technology may not be at their fingertips to have access to enrolling their children and Summer Rising?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Actually I am going  
3 to call on my colleague, Daniel Guillen, to talk  
4 about some of the supports we're giving for parents  
5 and some of the improvements that we've made to the  
6 enrollment system to help both families and CBOs do a  
7 better job. Uhm...

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: He has to be sworn in.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You have to swear him in.  
10 All right, thank you. Thank you for being honest.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand.

12 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
13 and nothing but the truth in your testimony before  
14 this committee, and to respond honestly to council  
15 member questions?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: I do, yes.

17 All right, good afternoon, Chair Joseph. As you  
18 know the recruitment process is not just a  
19 centralized process, it's work that happens on the  
20 ground. So we're anticipating not just our CBOs, who  
21 do amazing work in connecting those families who have  
22 technological issues, but also our parent  
23 coordinators, and New York City Public Schools Family  
24 Welcome Centers to ensure that there's alternative  
25

1  
2 ways to making sure that they can apply using the  
3 MySchools.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And families that English  
5 is not their first language, how are you providing  
6 language access and support for those families as  
7 well?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, the website  
9 itself has the ability to translate to many different  
10 languages, not just necessarily to English. So, with  
11 having the family Welcome Support Center, along with  
12 parent coordinators and school leaders and CBOs, to  
13 be able to navigate that system through the languages  
14 that they need in order to enter the information.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And, in the hearing we had  
16 around Summer Rising, one of the things we heard  
17 around was vacancy, staff vacancies, low attendance  
18 and support for students with disabilities. How are  
19 you changing that system this year? What does that  
20 look like this year?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, are you  
22 speaking in relation to the system or just across the  
23 board?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: The Summer Rising itself.  
25

1  
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Okay so if we  
3 could start with the low attendance rates...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Mm-hmm.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So it is worth  
6 noting that Summer Rising not a mandated program  
7 except for a select few. Historically, this allows  
8 this level of flexibility for families to take full  
9 advantage of the program as they need. One of the  
10 things that we are keeping in mind is that this is a  
11 full process, right, from when the app is open to the  
12 start of the program. There are phases, and there's  
13 different levels of engagement right, centrally  
14 through New York City Public Schools and DYCD, but as  
15 well as the CBOs. So when a parent, their family is  
16 selected, there's a parent orientation. We want every  
17 parent to take full advantage of that, whether it is  
18 happening in person or Zoom or with any type of level  
19 of conversation, so they can learn about the program.

20 This is also about trust. Right? You're leaving  
21 your child in stranger's hands. You wanna use the  
22 time between a child is selected and that start date  
23 to engage with that family. Because if you feel that  
24 you can trust someone, then you're gonna show up.  
25 Right? And we know, because the data showed, we

1  
2 learned last week from New York City Public Schools,  
3 that when you attend 20 or more days, there is some  
4 growth academically. So there's some value in showing  
5 up, and I think it's important that that got out  
6 there. And not only that, that our CBOs play an  
7 important factor in that process as well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We know.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Because what  
10 happens in the afternoon is very valuable. And we  
11 believe that if we continue to push this model and  
12 the results start coming out, they'll really feel  
13 more confident that I should keep my child here a  
14 little bit longer than I normally will.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How long does it take  
16 someone to get off the waitlist once, let's say, you  
17 waitlist them— and I may have family vacation  
18 planned, and you put me on a waitlist, how long does  
19 that take to get off the waitlist so that family can  
20 plan around Summer Rising?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Well, what's  
22 important here is that there is a phase between  
23 selection and the start date in which a family may  
24 decline the position. So that wait list is active the  
25 next day after selections are made. So meaning a

1 parent may not have gotten called the first day, but  
2 maybe a week later, now the list starts to move  
3 because maybe I am gonna go on vacation now- I  
4 applied early in March, but guess what, I'm gonna go  
5 to the islands for the summer. So now a parent has  
6 the ability to decline, and now that next child,  
7 right, thinking about the prioritization to get the  
8 highest need young person there, can say, now I'm a  
9 part of that program.  
10

11 So a lot of the list can start moving even as  
12 early as the notifications happen in the spring. So  
13 in the summer, we know it's a very short window, but  
14 that happens a lot more locally, which is much more  
15 true to what happens on the ground, right? School  
16 leaderships, CBOs, are seeing who's showing up, they  
17 know their waitlist, they'll be able to filter and  
18 navigate and fill in gaps by the grade levels, which  
19 is a new feature within MySchools as well, which  
20 makes that process move a lot faster.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is there a plan to hire  
22 more paras in the evening? Has that been a challenge  
23 to get paras in the afternoon portion of the  
24 programming?  
25

1  
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So, what's good  
3 about the collaborative nature of New York City  
4 Public Schools and DYCD is that we have escalation  
5 protocols. So, when there were instances that there's  
6 no staffing available, we're able to connect with  
7 that office and Central to be able to address those  
8 issues, because we want to make sure that those  
9 services are readily available for young people.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Is there a plan to lower  
11 the class sizes this year as well?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: That is a great  
13 question— that is a great question that we would have  
14 to work with New York City Public Schools  
15 understanding all the space that we have available to  
16 open up more classrooms and buildings.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And what are some of the  
18 issues you saw last year that New York City Public  
19 Schools, I know they're not here, but DYCD can say  
20 hey, we're gonna work on this to improve this area?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Uh, I think...  
22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: (INAUDIBLE) you can talk  
24 about the curriculum that you've been having  
25 conversations with them about.

1  
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Yeah, I think one  
3 of the things that we want to highlight is that  
4 summer learning happens everywhere, right?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Right.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: And I think, as  
7 the commissioner mentioned before, over the past  
8 couple of years, we've seen New York City Public  
9 Schools being more amenable and understanding that  
10 enrichment happens all day. So we do know that New  
11 York City Public Schools intends to implement some  
12 enrichment activities during the day and connect with  
13 CBOs on how that works, right? Because our CBOs, they  
14 know how to run enrichment. They do it very well and  
15 how we can collaborate together, offering  
16 sustainability projects, financial literacy classes—  
17 for all grades— on top of what already CBOs offer in  
18 the afternoon. And we hope that is another driver.  
19 And we're looking forward to experiential learning  
20 that happens outside of the classroom as well, a.k.a.  
21 more trips that happen during the day which will also  
22 drive more attendance.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you,  
24 Chair.

25 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, Council Member  
3 Joseph.

4 I have a couple of Summer Rising questions. I  
5 know you mentioned parent orientation is a  
6 requirement, but what happens when a principal denies  
7 parent orientation? I actually had a couple of  
8 complaints from parents last summer where the  
9 principal did not allow for parent orientation to  
10 happen. And the principal themselves wouldn't even  
11 meet with the parents. So what happens in those  
12 instances?

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So in any  
14 instance where there is a disconnect with  
15 partnerships between both our central offices, we  
16 have those escalation protocols at the district, the  
17 school level, to be able to engage school level folks  
18 to ensure that these events happen. The benefit as  
19 well that ,you know, if it can't happen in the  
20 physical space for ,you know, scheduling or capacity  
21 reasons, we can also have Zoom options for families  
22 because we do know working parents, they get home...

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But the issue isn't with the  
24 parents and them having the option, the issue is that  
25 the principal is telling the CBO that they can't do

1  
2 it, then it gets shutdown. So what does that look  
3 like, especially when it's a requirement on the CBO  
4 side and not the DOE side. So how do we mitigate  
5 that? I mean, obviously, if they called me and I  
6 started to be a crazy person— but how do we mitigate  
7 that? Because that is a factor, and I had a number of  
8 parents complaining that they couldn't meet with the  
9 principal, and they didn't let them have the  
10 orientation. So then the CBO was doing one on one,  
11 which I, uh, shoutout to them, but that was just  
12 unfortunate.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Well, we want to  
14 avoid those types of incidents this year. So as we  
15 hear of them, because it shouldn't be happening,  
16 CBOs and principals work on a collaborative planning  
17 tool, which should include all phases of pre-planning  
18 and startup to the program and parent orientations  
19 play a huge factor.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I'm aware, and that was  
21 a huge issue, so I just wanted to make sure. And I  
22 know at the last week's hearing on DOE, they cited  
23 that attending Summer Rising showed an increase.  
24 However, the kids that also attend our Cornerstones  
25 see the same increase. Just want to point that out,

1  
2 because I want it to be clear that, like you said  
3 yourself, education does not just take place in the  
4 class. And even one of suggestions, I'm thinking, I  
5 don't... we've been talking about trips. Teachers  
6 could go on trips. I don't know why they don't do it  
7 during the day. I don't know why all of a sudden  
8 during the summer they can't. They can do a trip  
9 during the day, because the CBO is gonna be there  
10 regardless. So maybe that's one of the things that we  
11 can push for, Council Member Joseph... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And that's actually one of  
13 the things that Daniel and Susan have been actually  
14 talking with our partners over at New York City  
15 Public Schools. And I believe when I was listening to  
16 the testimony of the chancellor and her team, they  
17 did acknowledge that that school trips can happen  
18 during the day.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They can, but we know that  
20 that don't be happening, which is why they happen on  
21 Friday.

22 But I will say this, I did speak to the  
23 chancellor afterwards, and she said she heard all of  
24 my concerns, and she did not know that I had such a  
25

1  
2 disdain for this program. So she wants to sit down to  
3 go through some things.

4 I have... and I do, because, again, even at the  
5 last hearing, even things that our side does well, we  
6 should be in charge of ,like, recruitment and  
7 application and those things. (UNINTELLIGIBLE) I'm  
8 not going reiterate that right now.

9 All right, the United Neighborhood Houses  
10 evaluated the Summer Rising program and found that  
11 37% of CBO staff respondents are reporting that  
12 applicants and registration process is still  
13 challenging. And 35% of the CBO staff respondents  
14 identify a lack of coordination between DOE, DYCD,  
15 and CBOs— and the CBO has another challenge they  
16 facing for Summer Rising. Has the Agency had a  
17 discussion with the providers regarding this concern  
18 and related to Summer Rising programs?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So yes, so we've  
20 done a number of things. First and foremost, we know  
21 that we wanted to make sure that CBOs had access to  
22 the same MySchool system. So that was something we  
23 were able to accomplish last year. Meaning that  
24 school principals and our CBO site directors were  
25 able to see the exact same portal.

1  
2 One of the enhancements we made was filtering the  
3 wait list by grade level, because we know that if two  
4 kids from second grade went out, but the wait list  
5 only had kindergarten through first grade and weren't  
6 able to go down that list. So we were able to work  
7 with New York City Public Schools...

8 UNKNOWN: (Sneeze)

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: Bless you...

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Bless you. It's cold in  
11 here, right?

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We are freezing!

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I don't know what's going  
15 on.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Like, I'm just trying... I'm  
17 freezing to death, I'm sniffing. Thank you, I'm  
18 sorry, continue...

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: So yeah, so we  
20 definitely made those enhancements to make sure that  
21 it's a lot more fluid.

22 Another key component was making sure that CBOs  
23 had access to MySchools and making sure that through  
24 our DYCD Connect portal, that all you needed to do  
25 was update your contacts there, and that data would

1 then transfer into MySchools so you'd be able to get  
2 into the system as well.

3 So those were two major, you know, it's kind of  
4 in the weeds. It's what (INAUDIBLE) the work, but it  
5 makes it much easier for the CBOs to navigate the  
6 system.

7 We also host ongoing sessions for all programs,  
8 not just Summer Rising, (INAUDIBLE) based as well, on  
9 all summer programming content, but it's also  
10 inclusive of the training, the portal, having access.  
11 We have a set team in place to connect with every  
12 single CBO. If they have any technical issue, they  
13 should be reaching out to us directly. They know who  
14 we are. We bother them all the time, we send them  
15 thousands of emails. So if there's any particular  
16 issue that a CBO has with the system, they should be  
17 reaching out to us and we can troubleshoot  
18 immediately.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So is the information  
20 transported over to DYCD Connect? Is that a seamless  
21 process or does the CBO still have to enter it into  
22 the system?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: They wouldn't  
24 have to enter it into the system...  
25

1                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

2                   ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER GUILLEN: They should be,  
3 already as a process itself, updating DYCD Connect  
4 whenever you know a site director changes or any  
5 contacts has to be updated. Meaning you have a new  
6 cell phone number, you should be updating that. And  
7 then that data is then being able to transfer over,  
8 so that they can log in seamlessly into MySchools and  
9 be able to see their portfolio of applicants.  
10

11                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, I have some in the  
12 weeds questions that I'm not going to do right now,  
13 because I have questions about some (UNINTELLIGIBLE)  
14 and I'm not going to do that to you now. I call you  
15 later about it.

16                  Council Member Brewer?

17                  COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I do  
18 want you to know that all the Summer Youth Employment  
19 Program students have all been hired in my office. So  
20 thank you very much. They're all excellent.

21                  My question is, because we're in budget season,  
22 and I've been in budget season for the last 20 years,  
23 30 years, 40 years.

24

25

1  
2 My question is, how many contracts do you have in  
3 total? You have them more than anybody else, any  
4 other agency. And what percentage are paid on time?

5 CFO BAILEY: Well, Chair... Council Member Brewer,  
6 we have about 1,400 contracts in our agency for FY25,  
7 we had 1,455; FY26 we are looking at 1,367; the drop  
8 is primarily attributed to the discretionary  
9 portfolio. So you can say we have about a baseline of  
10 about 1,400 contracts in our agency.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But how many are  
12 paid on time, 1,400? No...

13 CFO BAILEY: I can't say that many are paid on  
14 time at this time.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Can you give me some  
16 percentage or...

17 UNKNOWN: It's zero.

18 CFO BAILEY: Well, right now we're in a transition  
19 year, so I can't speak to that. We're in a transition  
20 year from PASSPort and we're all transitioning. So  
21 the reporting is still not available for us to be  
22 able to effectively determine cycle time.

23 But, anecdotally, I will not sit here and state  
24 that all of our invoices are not are paid on time,  
25 that's just not accurate.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Do you, uh, how  
3 about from last year? In other words, how about from  
4 FY24? Do you have that?

5 CFO BAILEY: Twenty-four, typically prior the  
6 transition into the past, but our invoice turnaround  
7 time is five to seven days.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. All right, this is  
9 the biggest issue. You know that. So you're gonna let  
10 us... let the chair know what we can all do to try to  
11 improve the on time payment? You'll let the chair  
12 know? It is the issue. It's out in the streets. It's  
13 at Fairway. It's at the (INAUDIBLE)... it's  
14 everywhere. So we all want to help, but it it's  
15 really gotta improve.

16 CFO BAILEY: We agree.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's it? Okay, great.

19 So we're gonna call this the lightning round,  
20 because I have a whole bunch of questions, and we  
21 still have another agency. Let's keep the answers  
22 short.

23 All right. So we are going to go into ONS. Is  
24 Darryl coming back up?

25 UNKNOWN: Yes, is.

1                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yep, let's go.

2                   Okay Neighborhood Safety has a budget headcount  
3                   of 48 in Fiscal 2026, but a current actual headcount  
4                   of 23 as January.

5                   Has there been any change to the actual headcount  
6                   since January?

7                   According to the to the reporting provided to  
8                   council from DYCD, the Cure Violence Program with ONS  
9                   has an actual headcount of 11. Is this an accurate  
10                  headcount for the program?

11                  FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah, the  
12                  headcounts are accurate. I did allude earlier that we  
13                  are getting some of those in FY26, so that's why  
14                  they're not on board.

15                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. There's a total of 24  
16                  contractors and providers for the Cure Violence  
17                  Program citywide. The greatest number of contracts  
18                  and largest funding is in Brooklyn. Has there been  
19                  any expansion of sites in Brooklyn since 2024? If so,  
20                  which precincts and sites?

21                  DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Since 2024? No, we  
22                  haven't expanded any of the contracts.

23                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And is there a specific  
24                  reason why the biggest funding sources are in  
25

1  
2 Brooklyn? Because it's a... because it's big, is  
3 that...

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I mean, of course,  
5 geographically, but also population density- and  
6 those are the areas that were identified and  
7 precincts by having the greatest need, if you will,  
8 to place some of those programs and contracts.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: There's a large number of  
10 vacancies in ONS as a result of hiring. Is there an  
11 issue with having experience to fill these critical  
12 positions? Are you having an issue filling them?

13 (PAUSE)

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, are  
15 you referring to provider staff or agency... DYCD  
16 agency staff? (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Agency... the agency staff.  
18 Because you do have a headcount issue. So, are you  
19 having issues?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, Chair Stevens,  
21 so we do have some vacancies that we're waiting for  
22 approval to hire on. In addition to that, we are  
23 going to get additional paras and headcount come next  
24 fiscal year.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the permission...  
3 what are the vacancies there that you need permission  
4 to hire for currently? Do you have those?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: For the program  
6 staff, I want to say we have two initiative  
7 managers... Actually I have it here. Nice. Two  
8 initiative managers, one program assistant, and then  
9 two borough managers.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

11 So I'm gonna go into some questions around one of  
12 the reductions that we had last year. The CJU  
13 (Community Justice Unit) Budget was cut and ,you  
14 know, because we were in a economic crisis.

15 DYCD now, is there a fiscal ,like, we are out of  
16 the fiscal emergency, do you think there's a  
17 possibility for us to restore the CJI funding at the  
18 past levels this year?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, are  
20 you referring to the Legal Aid...

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah...

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Society? Okay, I'm  
23 sorry...

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm, I'm sorry.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: You said CJ...

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yeah, it's the  
4 division within, I'm sorry...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, mm-hmm.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, yes. And as we  
7 testified before, that cut came at a time when the  
8 City's budget was in dire straits...

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: and we had to make  
11 drastic budget cuts in that November. It was cut by  
12 \$2.5 million, as you know.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Which left us with  
15 \$2.5 million of a contract with Legal Aid.

16 The team has been working with them closely on  
17 the work that they do. And it's very important work  
18 to our providers across the system.

19 I could tell you now that the work they've been  
20 doing, they've provided legal services to over 325  
21 cases of legal services, which include  
22 representation, advice, briefing services. They've  
23 done workshops across the city connecting with our  
24 CMS providers. Attendees to those workshops have been  
25 over 3,900.

1 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So they are... they  
3 are still doing very vital work across the city. And  
4 we work with them closely to actualize whether or  
5 not, uh, how the cuts (INAUDIBLE) affecting.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean they are still  
7 doing the work, but they still need the funding. So  
8 just thinking about when the CMA organizations rely  
9 on CJI legal services to meet community needs and  
10 support their mission to eradicate gun violence.

11 So what is DYCD's plan to ,you know, either fight  
12 for it or try to get this restored? Because this is  
13 something that works hand in hand, and the overall  
14 mission around CMS, and we don't want to just have  
15 piecemeal. So what are we doing around that?

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So I had the opportunity to  
17 really see their services up close and personal in  
18 terms of the way they have supported not only the CMS  
19 system but our participants across the board. As  
20 Deputy Commissioner Rattray said, their support and  
21 their service is vital to what we're doing. Those are  
22 going to be ongoing conversations that we're gonna  
23 have with OMB.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.  
25

1  
2 And I guess the last question I'll just ask  
3 around this is ,you know, CJI was critical in the  
4 Public Safety Plan. And public safety has been a key  
5 aspect. So just thinking about, for the last year,  
6 how do we continue to sustain public safety and talk  
7 about reducing gun violence without this?

8 So I know you said you're gonna have  
9 conversations with OMB, definitely will add this to  
10 my list of things to go and talk to them about as  
11 well. But I do think this is something that we do  
12 have to talk about, because as CMS is building out,  
13 and we know it's reducing gun violence- I believe the  
14 comptroller put out a report recently around it-  
15 Council put out a report around CMS's work as well.  
16 So we want to make sure that, as it's building out,  
17 that we are not leaving out critical pieces, and just  
18 also just ensuring that ensuring that, uh, now that  
19 it's under DYCD, we don't want it to be like, oh it's  
20 over there now, and it's messing up.

21 So I want to make sure that we have all the tools  
22 that are necessary for us to be successful in what  
23 was given to us and not just piecemeal. So I will  
24 leave it at that.

1  
2 I guess Deputy Commissioner Haskell is gonna come  
3 up, because we're gonna be moving on to Runaway  
4 Youth. Thank you, Darryl, for your services.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (LAUGHS) Thank you,  
6 Chair Stevens.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I want to talk a little  
8 bit about the additional 100 beds that we have and  
9 some RHY stuff.

10 So the Preliminary Budget includes a baseline of  
11 \$6 million for the 100 additional beds for young  
12 people ages 21 to 24. Is the funding significant  
13 enough to meet the needs of the RHY programming?

14 CFO BAILEY: Yes it is. We are grateful for this  
15 funding, as you mentioned, and we're hopeful that  
16 ,you know, we'll be ready to move forward and  
17 implement it.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have we already identified  
19 the providers that are going to be implementing these  
20 100 beds?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Not yet. We...  
22 Senior Director Samantha Dawkins began immediately  
23 engaging with our providers to understand where  
24 there's capacity both in existing programs and for  
25 new programs...

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CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm>

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: and so we're in the midst of those negotiations with providers now and hope to land a plan soon.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's your anticipated date to have these 100 beds online?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We will roll out the 100 beds throughout FY26. It's our goal to open some of them immediately. And as we're in conversations about available sites and how close they are to state certification, we'll understand better what that timeline is going to look like. They'll roll out over the course of the fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. How are you like divvying up the beds when you're thinking about it, and will there be ,like, an even distribution amongst boroughs or are you starting with providers? Could you talk a little bit about that process as well?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I think we'll see—based preliminarily on our discussions, I think we'll see a nice distribution across the boroughs, and yeah for different populations.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And...

1  
2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I also want to make  
3 sure, because we also have a conversation with the  
4 providers about capacity...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

6 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. And I will say this,  
8 listen, when I was out here advocating for the beds,  
9 we were also talking to providers at the same time to  
10 make sure that this could be a fast turnaround.

11 So I want that to be on record too. This was not  
12 coming out of anywhere. Everyone was on board and  
13 knew that I was yelling about this. So my hope is  
14 that the providers are prepared.

15 Well, I know that they are prepared, because we  
16 talked about this beforehand. So whatever support you  
17 need from me, let me know so we can continue to make  
18 sure that this happens.

19 And just the last question on this is, just  
20 thinking about with the additional beds, are there  
21 specific places we already kind of see gaps that we  
22 want to try to use to fill these 100 beds? Whether  
23 it's like boroughs or ,you know, locations? Are we  
24 thinking about that, too? Like, there was like great  
25 need maybe, like, oh, in the Bronx, they didn't have

1  
2 enough beds, let's start there. Was that is that  
3 being taken into consideration?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We are definitely  
5 looking at utilization and demand in terms of how to  
6 finalize where these beds go.

7 On the first hand, our plan is to fund homeless  
8 young adult beds for the older youth, noting that  
9 there's a high need there and we have just 60 beds  
10 funded right now.

11 The other thing we're seeing is high demand for  
12 male beds, so we're taking that into consideration.  
13 So we will absolutely be looking at meeting the needs  
14 of the specific demographics.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you so much.

16 So we're gonna move on to Saturday Night Lights.  
17 I don't know if you want to come back up, Mr. Darryl.  
18 I'm making sure you get all your steps in today. And,  
19 Val, if you want to get ready, SYEP is coming up  
20 after that.

21 (LAUGHTER)

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, all right, you know how  
23 much I love this program, Darryl. I'm being  
24 facetious.

2 All right, what's the attendance for the Saturday  
3 Night Lights Program in Fiscal 2024?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Great question. In  
5 FY 2024 we had a total enrollment of 8,830  
6 participants.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said 8,000 what?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Eight hundred and  
9 thirty.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Eight hundred and thirty.

11 All right.

12 Have there been changes in the number of borough  
13 site locations for the SNL programs? I believe there  
14 were some additional add-ons for that.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So we had one  
16 program that dropped out. So we're currently at 135  
17 locations across the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm. What was the  
19 program? Why did they drop out? And where was it?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I need to get back  
21 to you.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What borough was it in?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: It was a Manhattan  
24 based program.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. All right. What is the  
3 DYCD's Fiscal 2025 budget for SNL programs?

4 CFO BAILEY: Hi.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

6 CFO BAILEY: Budget is approximately \$5 million.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: \$5 million? I just want to  
8 point out...

9 CFO BAILEY: A little bit lighter, around \$4  
10 million.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: \$4 million?

12 CFO BAILEY: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to point out, I  
14 asked the attendance, and I know you gave me what the  
15 enrollment was. But you think I didn't pick up on it,  
16 it took me a minute, but what was the attendance  
17 before... (CROSS-TALK)

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair, Chair  
19 Stevens, I... Let me get back... Let us get back to  
20 you the average attendance. I... We have those  
21 rates...

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: But I don't have  
24 them with me.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm, like, wait a minute, am  
3 I crazy? No, that was enrollment. I didn't ask that  
4 but, okay. So you'll get back to me with the  
5 attendance percentages?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Absolutely.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it. I know... I know  
8 where to find you, too. I know you where you work at.

9 What were the overtime costs associated with this  
10 program last year?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair Stevens, I'm  
12 assuming that you're referring to NYPD overtime  
13 costs?

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, what was that? You  
15 don't know?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I'm not... (CROSS-  
17 TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah.

19 UNKNOWN: You're not privy...

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just say you don't know.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I'm not familiar...  
22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, it's not (INAUDIBLE)  
24 got it.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (INAUDIBLE) the  
3 overtime.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Got it.

5 Other than attendance, how does DYCD measure the  
6 success of the program?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Great question. I  
8 mean, from the programmatic lens, you know, our  
9 program managers go out, assess the programs, how are  
10 they doing with recruitment, retention, quality of  
11 services, implementation? Essentially, are they  
12 trying to create a vibrant program and community  
13 within that space that they're in? And a safe space  
14 where they're also connecting with NYPD as well.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And I also want to add this,  
16 that we heard you from previous testimonies. So there  
17 is, and there's going to be... there's a survey that  
18 we've completed and some numbers that we have  
19 associated with the program. We're still going  
20 through the... what that assessment is and what the  
21 data is showing us. We would love to read you in on  
22 that when we finalize the numbers.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. I mean, that was  
24 one of the things that I've been hoping and  
25

1  
2 hollering about for the last couple of years, just  
3 around the evaluation of this program because...

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Two-and-a-half years.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, fine, two... No,  
6 it was three years.

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Okay, three years...

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is three years, because  
9 the whole time...

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Two-and-a-half years of my  
11 tenure... (CROSS-TALK)

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You wasn't here, right?

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: He wasn't here, right. It's  
15 not my fault he wasn't here. I, it's been three  
16 years, no. But... And it's really about, like, how  
17 are we measuring the success of this program? Because  
18 honestly, if we like, zoom out, right, if we're  
19 looking at DYCD, we're zooming in, and it's, like,  
20 okay, we're serving the kids. But when we zoom out,  
21 and then I see that we are increasing in gun violence  
22 and juvenile folks ending up in jail, it's, like,  
23 okay, so is this program serving what we need?

24 Because you stated that we're at like maybe \$4  
25 million for this... (CROSS-TALK)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we're between \$4 and \$5 million, is this doing what we actually want it to do, is always going to be my question. So we need to have data to back this up. Because I don't... (CROSS-TALK)

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't think that we are, because...

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do and, again, we're going through the numbers, we're going through the survey, we will be able to read you into exactly what the data is showing us.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. But, again, if I'm zooming out, and with the great leadership of my Speaker, who gave me ACS and DYCD, I'm able to evaluate on a whole different level than I have in the past. And the numbers that we are at, literally, I was at Crossroads yesterday, it's full to capacity. And it's crazy, and, so, for me, I'm thinking, I don't want to talk about what they do when they're after, I want to talk about prevention. And this is what... this is why I said, you're the expert, and not Jacques, because you have to come up with a

1 solution for them not to come there. So, for me, that  
2 is really what the driving force is.  
3

4 And, again, young people, what they saying they  
5 want? Jobs, not programs. So thank you Mr. Restler  
6 (sic) for your time. You can now leave the dance. I'm  
7 looking for Ms. Valerie. Please come to the front of  
8 the delegation.

9 (LAUGHTER)

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I'm gonna start my speech  
11 off real quick.

12 SYEP, obviously, we love this program, but we  
13 have to reimagine youth employment in the city. We  
14 just have to. It just... it just can't continue to be  
15 this way because again, even in the Crossroads  
16 yesterday, they're like, "Miss, when I get out I need  
17 a job," and da, da, da, and we are not offering that  
18 to them.

19 So we... it's a program that we obviously love  
20 and we want to keep, but we also need to, at the same  
21 time, walk and chew gum, reimagine workforce for  
22 young people because this is not enough.

23 And I know we've extended Work, Learn, Grow, but  
24 it still has restrictions there, and I think  
25 holistically, I mean, I met with the chancellor, I

1 met with her also yesterday, and we talked about the  
2 things that they're doing around workforce  
3 development. So I really think that we all just need  
4 to come to the table to really come up with a  
5 comprehensive plan to talk about how many internships  
6 we can provide, how many jobs we can provide and all  
7 the things, because I am concerned.

9 We are building out a facility at Horizon to add  
10 additional beds, which means we are... if we build  
11 it, they will come. Which means young... more young  
12 people will be in secure detention.

13 Our close to home programs are busting out at the  
14 seams. So this is a problem, and we have to  
15 understand we are in a crisis. Because we know that  
16 once they get touched by the juvenile system, they're  
17 going to stay there, and they're going to be in a  
18 revolving door.

19 So we as, a collective, have to come up with a  
20 real comprehensive plan because every single young  
21 person is like, "Miss, I need a job. You don't want  
22 me to be on the street? Give me a job." And they're  
23 like... and I don't know why nobody wants a minimum  
24 wage job, but that's some other story.

1  
2 So, hello, welcome to the dais. What is the  
3 target number for SYEP slots for 2026?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So we're aiming to  
5 serve over a 100,000 across the whole system. Some of  
6 those slots live with DOE and CUNY, so DYCD is aiming  
7 to serve over 97,000 in our system.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency have plans  
9 to increase the slots for youth ages 16 to 24? No,  
10 right?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Increase over...  
12 no.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Okay I think it's, no.

14 How many providers manage the SYEP slots?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We have 65 unique  
16 providers who hold 177 contracts across them.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How would the Agency respond  
18 to federal administration's threats to cut off  
19 funding for DEI supporting organizations? Have the  
20 providers expressed concerns about the modifications  
21 to their DEI?

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So we are moving forward, we  
23 have not in any form or fashion rolled back any DEI  
24 initiative in DYCD.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Have you had any talks? I  
3 know maybe agencies...

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: are feeling some type of...  
6 Go head?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We haven't had any concerns  
8 with DYCD when... in terms of our program and DEI. We  
9 have been in communications with our nonprofit  
10 partners to let them know that they should not have—  
11 although; they do have concerns that we are  
12 supporting them and we're moving forward with our  
13 programs.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, I agree. That's  
15 ridiculous, and I know we've been winning in the  
16 courts, but I know that does not mean providers do  
17 not still feel uncomfortable, especially some  
18 organizations who are a lot more vocal about the work  
19 around diversity, equity, and inclusion. So I think  
20 we just all need to work together and...

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And we will continue. And  
22 just ,you know, shoutout to our providers who are  
23 doing SYEP Pride, that's one of the initiatives that  
24 the Mayor had introduced in his State of the City  
25

1 about a year and a half ago, and we still continue to  
2 be able to push that program.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Recently DYCD implemented a  
5 new policy to de-enroll SYEP employees, uhm,  
6 enrollees who did not complete the Key Work Readiness  
7 Tasks prior to July 1. This policy was initiated in  
8 efforts to reopen those slots for those applicants.  
9 How many students did the agency de-enroll in Fiscal  
10 Year 2025?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So I can get you  
12 all of that info offline. I don't want to misspeak.  
13 But I will say that we were really excited about the  
14 policy, because what we had seen in the past was that  
15 after we enrolled a young person, a lot of times they  
16 weren't showing up for the job, they weren't  
17 completing the work readiness training, and that slot  
18 was essentially going unfilled. So what we able to do  
19 last year was have several thousand more students  
20 participate in SYEP and fill slots when other young  
21 people didn't show up.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is the agency tracking the  
23 applicants that are already de-enrolled?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah absolutely. I  
25 have it for you. I can get it for you offline.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The deadline for the  
3 application submission was March 14, 2025, how many  
4 applicants... applications were received?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So that was the  
6 public deadline, but we are still actively recruiting  
7 in our special initiatives so I don't have a final  
8 number for you yet. I will say that, what I've seen  
9 so far, is the numbers are really big. We have a lot  
10 of interest in the program this year. I expect that  
11 we will far exceed— I've already seen we've exceeded  
12 the application number that we had last year, and I  
13 think it's going to keep growing.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does DYCD include feedback  
15 from the youth who attended the SYEP program and its  
16 evaluation of the program?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Absolutely. Every  
18 program year, we do two surveys in the middle of the  
19 program and at the end of the program, and ask all  
20 sorts of questions from, did you feel supported  
21 through the program, did you enjoy your employment  
22 experience, how was the pre employment training?

23 I mean we have a whole host of questions I could  
24 show you this (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do you use that to  
3 continue to build out the program?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Yeah, we... my team  
5 goes deep into that every year. Everything from what  
6 we include in the pre-employment training portions,  
7 the curriculum, and content- takes that into  
8 consideration, and our conversation with employers  
9 and what we think young people need.

10 I mean a perfect example is that we saw that  
11 young people really wanted to be out in person and  
12 working, so our numbers have moved in that direction.  
13 We have more and more in person placements ,you know,  
14 coming out of COVID, than we'd had over the last few  
15 years in response to what young people are telling us  
16 they want.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So this is one of the...  
18 even with SYEP, one of my bigger pet peeves, which is  
19 the SYEP project based learning program for youths 14  
20 and 15, and they only gets \$700 for the summer. Has  
21 there been any consideration by the Agency to  
22 increase the stipend?

23 CFO BAILEY: At this time, no, Chair Stevens,  
24 there has not been any discussions regarding  
25 increasing the stipend.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What was enrollment for 14,  
3 15 years old last year?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Last year we had  
5 over 25,000 young people enroll in the younger youth  
6 program.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Did they all complete it? Do  
8 you have numbers of ,like, who stayed and who didn't?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I can get that to  
10 you, but the vast majority have completed at least  
11 half of the hours, got half the stipend, most  
12 completed the whole program.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, \$700 really low. I  
14 eggs is \$15, y'all.

15 In the last committee hearing in Fiscal 2026  
16 budget... wait, hold on... All right, back. Okay I'm  
17 going to jump to COMPASS and SONYC.

18 DYCD is preparing a new procurement for COMPASS  
19 and SONYC afterschool programs in the next year,  
20 making the first since 2015. What conversations has  
21 the Agency had with advocates regarding the redesign  
22 and reimagining youth programming? The SONYC Program,  
23 I know we talked about not having the RFP, but as  
24 we... I mean not, having a concept paper, but as we  
25 are building it out, what are we talking to programs

1  
2 about? I know you said that you were having focus  
3 groups. You had a couple of focus groups in prep for  
4 this. Just trying to see if are there other  
5 conversations that's going on to prepare for the  
6 concept paper that'll be coming out and stuff like  
7 that. Are we doing anything else?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: There's just ongoing  
9 conversations around program models.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: On going conversations.

11 I have some questions regarding the Fatherhood  
12 program. What type of outreach has DYCD made to reach  
13 the young men that are currently part of the  
14 Fatherhood program?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Thank you, Chair.  
16 For the concept paper, which came out a while ago,  
17 and as you know the request for proposal is out in  
18 the street. The Agency conducted a number of focus  
19 groups and interviews. So we talked to current  
20 participants, formerly served participants, as well  
21 as providers and advocates in New York City and  
22 elsewhere, actually. So we did solicit feedback from  
23 younger as well as older dads.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency track the  
25 outcome of men who exit the program?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: We do. We do, uh,  
3 initially, during their term of service, and at the  
4 close of their term of service in the program, we ask  
5 about their satisfaction with the program and if they  
6 (INAUDIBLE) the outcomes of the program.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many men are enrolled in  
8 this program?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Currently... oh, I  
10 forgot my paper. Give me one second.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No worries.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: The current model  
13 serves 1,500 dads a year. And I just wanna to see if  
14 I have the current enrollment, I think we're at about  
15 1,300 and so for this year- 1,350.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirteen-fifty?

17 Where are the programs currently being provided?  
18 And do you have a breakdown by borough? And if you  
19 don't have it, can you send it?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: I can follow up with  
21 you. We have programs in every borough, but I can  
22 follow up with you and give you (INAUDIBLE)...

23 (CROSS-TALK)

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And if you... possible if  
3 you can break it down by council district, if not,  
4 we'll take just the boroughs.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the attendance  
7 rate... Oh, well, you'll get back to me. Because,  
8 uhm, when you send it over, if you could send over,  
9 like, the attendance rate for each of the locations  
10 and things like that.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: Sure.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do you quantity the  
13 success of this program?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: There's one key  
15 measure, which is the self-reported success of the  
16 dads themselves. So when they enter the program,  
17 they're asked a series of questions, which we take as  
18 a baseline, what they characterize as the nature of  
19 the co-parenting relationship with whoever has  
20 custody of the children, how much time do they spend  
21 with the children, how much treasure or child support  
22 owed or arrears have they been able to contribute?  
23 And as they spend time in the program, we look to see  
24 for movement along those measures.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The additional \$2.1 million  
3 in Fiscal 2025, and \$5 million in the out years for  
4 the program, indicates the needs and success of the  
5 pilot program. Has the Agency had conversations  
6 regarding implementing a similar program for mothers?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BOBBITT: You want to reply?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yes we have. And one of the  
9 things that was important to us in building the RFP  
10 and the concept paper was to include mothers in the  
11 conversations.

12 We're gonna be leaning heavily on coparenting and  
13 just really looking at the toolbox that's needed to  
14 have a successful coparenting between the custodial  
15 or noncustodial dad and the mother.

16 So, yes, and we're gonna continue to hear the  
17 voices of the mothers as well to make sure that every  
18 voice around is being heard.

19 I also want to emphasize this, uh, that we're  
20 looking and we're engaging in young men who are 18  
21 and under. Because we think that's also a level of  
22 complexities that we have not engaged in past, which  
23 we will be engaging in the future.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I wanted to just say, I'm  
25 really just happy to hear that the Fatherhood program

1  
2 is thriving. I know we had a hearing about this, I  
3 think probably was like a year or so ago, when we  
4 talked about this. Too often fathers are overlooked  
5 in this process, and there's not a lot of services  
6 and supports for them. So I think that this is a  
7 great initiative. I think also looking at teen  
8 parents is also important. I was a teen mom, and  
9 understanding that there was not a lot of services  
10 that were provided, not a lot of places to go, it's a  
11 lot of just figuring the things out. So I do think as  
12 this is building out, I think the coparent strategy  
13 is important.

14 One of the things that I've been trying to take  
15 on since I got an office in my district specifically  
16 is doing more parent groups and parent sharing.

17 Parents are struggling right now, especially when  
18 they don't know how to reach their young person, and  
19 they're working, and all these things.

20 So there is a need for this. So whatever supports  
21 you guys need from me around building things out, you  
22 guys know I'm a thought partner, but I do think that  
23 this is an important issue and topic. And even when  
24 we're thinking about lack of supports around, you  
25 know, not even lack of supports, but the lack of

1 things that we have offered when we are talking about  
2 young people. If we're not helping and supporting the  
3 parents, sometimes it's null and void.  
4

5 So I'm really happy that this Father's Initiative  
6 is building out. Now we're talking about mothers.  
7 And, honestly, just having a whole system around  
8 parenting, I think, is necessary and a key piece that  
9 has been missing. So as this is building out, I would  
10 love to be a part of it and continue the good work...

11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And in addition to that, the  
13 family dynamic, right...

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: because we know if we're  
16 dealing with a young person who is 18 and under,  
17 or... I just recently was part of a teen group over  
18 at Marcy Projects in Brooklyn, and we met with a few  
19 young people, 16-year-olds, 15-year-olds who have one  
20 and two children. Then family dynamics also extends  
21 to the legal guardians as well. Right? Because the  
22 legal guardians are also struggling with resources  
23 and help.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yep. So whatever I can do to  
25 be supportive, and if we need to get more money,

1  
2 because that's what I do best, let me know. Because,  
3 honestly, I think this is a big... a big missing  
4 piece. Because even when I'm going to community  
5 meetings and talking about public safety, I have  
6 parents who are like, "My kid is out of control. I  
7 don't know what to do."

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Mm-hmm

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And sometimes they just need  
10 a support network and a place to go to have these  
11 conversations. So I think this is a necessary and an  
12 important piece.

13 I'm just gonna have a couple more questions about  
14 Train & Earn and then we're be done. Look at that-  
15 look at that! We might be done early.

16 How many providers are in the Train & Earn  
17 program? I know I've been having you all go back and  
18 forth. They should have probably organized it. You  
19 know what, don't worry. Next year I will organize it  
20 to make sure you all sit there and so you don't have  
21 to go back and forth but...

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: It's okay, you're  
23 keeping us on our toes.

24 So we recently did an RFP, we made 18 awards to  
25 train and earn providers.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which boroughs and districts  
3 have the highest attendance rates for this program?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I will get back to  
5 you on the specifics. But broadly we're in ,you know,  
6 where you would expect us to be Brooklyn, Bronx, but  
7 there are programs in all five boroughs.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many young adults are  
9 currently enrolled in the Train & Earn Program?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We are in the  
11 process of enrolling. Our enrollment goal is 1,369  
12 this year. I think we have between 300 and 400 right  
13 now, but it's actively enrolling, so that should go  
14 up every day.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How do attendees learn about  
16 this program?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So first and  
18 foremost, our providers are the point of contact for  
19 young people. So they're all on the ground  
20 recruiting. And we're working internally with our  
21 Communications Team to share that the program is  
22 recruiting— always. So, it's on our social media.  
23 Uhm...

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How would you rate the  
3 success of the program? And are there metrics that  
4 you are measuring to show its success?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Absolutely. So  
6 Train & Earn is funded by WIOA, and WIOA comes along  
7 with some really specific measures that we're  
8 constantly looking at. So measurable skills gains for  
9 every participant in the program, job placements at  
10 different points in time after they exit the program,  
11 uh, credential attainments. All of those things are  
12 things that we measure and then course correct.

13 But, of course, this is a brand new set of  
14 providers so they're just starting to enroll their  
15 programs now.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: You're welcome.  
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that. Ya'll made it  
20 through. We're all done - for now.

21 Oh, wait! Oh, look, someone is back. You snuck in  
22 there. Almost, sorry, well, it isn't me. Make it  
23 quick, because, I mean...

24

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Make it quick, okay. And,  
3 in fact, you may have asked this, so forgive if is  
4 this a repeat.

5 Actually two things. Wanted to put on the record  
6 that the... we know that the Council's IOI record,  
7 uhm, the Council's IOI Initiative is \$2.6 million, is  
8 managed by HRA. And so the \$14.1 million, DYCD IOI  
9 Program is different. And I know you're gonna get  
10 back to me, but I just wanted to state that for the  
11 record.

12 The other quick question, which you may have  
13 answered, so forgive a repeat, but would DYCD be able  
14 to supply the Council with a copy of their  
15 Preliminary Racial Equity Plan? Did we talk about  
16 this?

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We did not, and it's  
18 surprising that chair didn't even ask that.

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: She has to be sworn in.

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: I was sworn in.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: She was? Okay.

22 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Thank you for the  
23 question.

24 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

1  
2           ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Yes. We will be  
3 happy to provide a copy of the preliminary plan once  
4 it is released. We've been working with The Mayor's  
5 Office of Equity and Racial Justice to finalize the  
6 plan, which our agency plan, and all agency plans,  
7 will be integrated into the citywide plan.

8           COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And would you be able to  
9 describe at all how the work of the Agency works to  
10 reduce or perpetuate racial inequity?

11           ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: That is the  
12 mission of DYCD. That is the focus of all of our  
13 initiatives.

14           COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I know you're...

15           ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: (INAUDIBLE)...

16 (CROSS-TALK)

17           COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I know a little ahead of  
18 other agencies and started that work in earnest like  
19 agency wide many years ago. So I do recognize that,  
20 but we would definitely like to see the report and  
21 certainly how you are measuring kind of the metrics  
22 of that.

23           ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER RAMIREZ: Absolutely, happy  
24 to share.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I think that's it. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well thank you, and I'm sure  
5 Chair Williams will be happy that you asked that  
6 question. And we do want to see the report, and this  
7 is a citywide report, because I believe, at this  
8 point, we are 465 days late with that, but that is  
9 not your fault, because you said you did your part.

10 So thank you for doing your part, and thank you  
11 for showing up here today, and we're really happy,  
12 and I'm happy that you guys got through it. People  
13 are smiling. And thank you, and we will take a  
14 short... we will take a 10 minute recess until we go  
15 back to ACS. Thank you. (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

16 PANEL: Thank you.

17 (PAUSE)

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon and welcome  
19 back to today's scheduled programming. I am Council  
20 Member Althea Stevens, Chair of Children and Youth.

21 The second part of the day's committee hearing is  
22 on Fiscal 2026 Primary Preliminary Budget and the  
23 2025 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the  
24 Administration for Children Services better known as  
25 ACS. Thank you, Commissioner Jess Dannhauser, for

1 joining us today. We've also been joined by okay,  
2 none of the other members are here yet. Oh, look at  
3 that, Lincoln's here. Y'all ought to watch out for  
4 this guy. If he's here, it's to start trouble. Not my  
5 fault. Just telling you.  
6

7 (LAUGHTER)

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Following testimony and  
9 questions with ACS we'll be from hearing public  
10 around three, so we've enough time.

11 Thank you for all the advocates and community  
12 members who have joined us today. I will keep my  
13 comments here brief and request that the commissioner  
14 keep his oral testimony brief, so we can move through  
15 questions to the from the council members.

16 ACS Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget is \$2.8  
17 billion and \$39.2 million greater than the Fiscal  
18 2025 Adopted Budget.

19 The Preliminary Plan includes increased  
20 investments in foster care and several youth  
21 programs, but does not restore previous cuts  
22 including programs such as Close to Home and  
23 preventive services.

24 I was delighted to see that the data in the PMMR  
25 showed a 21% increase in low income child care

1  
2 vouchers enrollment in the first four months of  
3 Fiscal 2025 when compared to Fiscal 2024.

4 Due to the successful outreach and more efficient  
5 application process, ACS also saw an increase in the  
6 number of families entering child welfare prevention  
7 services as compared to prior years, which means they  
8 are getting vital support services they need.

9 Juvenile justice is an area of ongoing concern to  
10 the Council and myself. According to the PMMR, ACS  
11 saw an average of daily population of juvenile  
12 detention rise 22% in the first four months of Fiscal  
13 2025 compared to the same period during Fiscal 2024.  
14 Juvenile detention increased by 32% between those  
15 same periods, driven by an increase in arrest  
16 including ones related to gun violence.

17 I would like to learn more from ACS's strategy to  
18 stabilize the juvenile justice system and ensuring  
19 that trauma informed, community based treatment is  
20 provided whenever possible, as well as what ACS's  
21 vision is for keeping the city's kids on the right  
22 track out of the juvenile justice system.

23 You'll be happy to hear in my last hearing I  
24 talked a lot about how DYCD also needs to play a  
25 critical role in this this process. And I look

1 forward to meeting with everyone for us for us to  
2 really come up with some real concrete solutions as  
3 we are seeing these numbers progressing.  
4

5 I also look forward to hearing from ACS in  
6 dealing with its staffing issues, as well as capital  
7 upgrades and conditions at the two secured detention  
8 facilities, Horizon and Crossroad- and thank you guys  
9 for hosting us at Crossroads yesterday.

10 I look forward to discuss the budget actions  
11 including the Preliminary Plan Performance Metrics,  
12 including the PMMR, ACS Capital Plan, and a vital  
13 program such as Close to Home, prevention services,  
14 childcare, and foster care.

15 I am particularly interested in here how ACS is  
16 strategizing to meet the multifaceted needs of at  
17 risk families across the city, and working to  
18 increase the utilization of preventive services that  
19 ensures the health, safety, and stability of families  
20 and children. It is the Council's responsibility to  
21 ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent,  
22 and accountable to all New Yorkers. As the chair of  
23 Children and Youth Services, I will continue to push  
24 for accountability, accuracy, and ensure that the  
25

1  
2 budget reflects the needs and interests of the City's  
3 youth.

4 At this time, I would like to thank the committee  
5 staff for their help preparing for this hearing,  
6 Saiyemul Hamid, Julia K. Haramis, Christina  
7 Yellamaty, Elizabeth Arzt, and the entire A-Team back  
8 at the district office.

9 At this time, I will turn it over to committee  
10 staff to swear people in... Oh, so, we have Council  
11 Member Restler, and Council Member Joseph has joined  
12 us again, thank you for coming back. And now I will  
13 turn it over to counsel to swear the folks in.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, good afternoon. Please  
15 right hand.

16 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
17 and nothing but the truth, in your testimony before  
18 this committee, and to respond honestly to council  
19 member questions?

20 Jess Dannhauser?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Winette Saunders?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Margaret Pletnikoff?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good afternoon, My name is Jess Dannhauser, I'm the Commissioner of the New York City Administration for Children's Services. I'm joined today by our First Deputy Commissioner, Winette Saunders, and Margaret Pletnikoff, who is the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Finance.

Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the members of the Children's Youth Services Committee for holding today's hearing on our Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026. I appreciate the opportunity to share the important work we are doing at ACS to keep children safe and provide support to youth and families.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the ACS team, as well as our colleagues and partners at the provider agencies, for the incredible work that they have done this past year. We have made substantial progress and I'm grateful.

Supporting and uplifting families and communities so that they have the resources, information, and services they need to thrive is critical to our mission. Our prevention providers, community partnerships, Family Enrichment Centers, and Office of Child Safety and Injury Prevention do this in

1 every community of the city each and every day. These  
2 supports, along with child care assistance, enable  
3 children and families to be safe and well.  
4

5 Over the past year, the number of children  
6 enrolled in childcare with the support of an ACS  
7 issued voucher has increased by 37%. ACS has made a  
8 particularly robust effort to expand access to  
9 childcare assistance for families with limited  
10 incomes that are engaged in work, school, training,  
11 and to families that are unhoused.

12 Compared with October 2022, when ACS opened  
13 applications citywide, the number of children  
14 enrolled in care with costs offset by a low income  
15 voucher has climbed from 10,683 to 62,555 as of the  
16 February.

17 We also streamlined our application processes,  
18 reducing application processing time to an average of  
19 15 days.

20 We are now advocating at the state level for the  
21 funding needed to maintain these gains. We appreciate  
22 the Council's support in this effort.

23 This past year we also implemented our school-  
24 based early support prevention model. This new model  
25 aims to provide families with meaningful and

1  
2 effective support while avoiding unnecessary child  
3 protective investigations by more easily connecting  
4 families in need to services and resources.

5 The school-based early support programs aim to  
6 address stressors— academic or behavioral— that may  
7 impact the child's well-being, help meet families'  
8 concrete needs, and strengthen social connections and  
9 engagement with the school community. All of which  
10 reduce the likelihood of future child welfare  
11 involvement.

12 Each of the provider agencies offering these  
13 programs has identified at least three partner  
14 elementary and or middle schools in their district  
15 and must maintain a presence in each school.  
16 Providers are also required to collaboratively co-  
17 design at least four school-based offerings per year  
18 that reflect the needs and priorities of the school  
19 community. Connecting families to our free, voluntary  
20 continuum of prevention services that are available  
21 to all New York City families is essential. We've  
22 spent this past year continuing to get the word out  
23 about our support line, which gratuitous promotion  
24 coming, can be reached at (212) 676-7667.

1  
2       Calls to the support line have increased about  
3 600% from about 500 inquiries in 2023 to over 3,500  
4 inquiries in 2024.

5       We have continued to collaborate with our sister  
6 city agencies including New York City Public Schools,  
7 Department of Homeless Services, and Health +  
8 Hospitals to both get the word out that the support  
9 line and ensure that they know how to access services  
10 for families without the need to make a report to the  
11 SCR (New York State Central Register). We have  
12 trained over 19,000 mandated reporters across  
13 schools, shelters, hospitals, and afterschool  
14 programs.

15       For example, ACS and New York City Public Schools  
16 have trained more than 12,000 school staff over the  
17 last 18 months about when it is necessary to make a  
18 call to the SCR because of concerns about child  
19 safety, and when it is more appropriate to seek  
20 support for a family through other means. As a result  
21 we have seen a steady reduction in the number of  
22 reports from education and child care reporters, down  
23 11% last year, a similar reduction in the number of  
24 reports that include allegations of educational  
25 neglect.

1  
2 In recent years ACS has also substantially  
3 reduced the number of families for whom it seeks  
4 orders of supervision in family court. As a result,  
5 the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 enabled ACS  
6 to shift staffing from the Family Services Unit to  
7 our Family Preservation Program. At FPP, child  
8 protective staff provide families with intensive,  
9 short term, one-on-one support to address risk to  
10 children without the need for court intervention—  
11 Caseloads are no more than four at a time.

12 The program is now in every DCP (Department of  
13 City Planning) borough office and has seen  
14 significant expansion from serving just 63 families  
15 in Fiscal Year 2024 to two 243 families in 2025, and  
16 we expect much more in the year to come.

17 Earlier this month, we released a concept paper  
18 for the community partnerships anticipating new  
19 contracts to begin January 1, 2027.

20 Since 2007, ACS has partnered with community  
21 coalitions in 11 communities. In 2024, the  
22 partnership supported over 33,000 community  
23 residents. Most of the partnership's work is  
24 conducted through community-facing programming and  
25 events where community members access information,

1 resources and referrals. The 11 partnerships are made  
2 up of roughly 400 member organizations and  
3 individuals, each bringing distinct resources and  
4 expertise.  
5

6 Members of the partnership engage in  
7 collaborative planning and social capital building,  
8 including through monthly coalition meetings where  
9 members make connections, share information, and  
10 receive updates about new local and citywide  
11 programs.

12 Since their inception, the partnerships have come  
13 to be known as hubs for information sharing,  
14 coordinated planning, addressing individual family  
15 needs and referrals to support.

16 As described in the concept paper, our vision for  
17 the future is to maintain community partnerships in  
18 the same 11 communities. This will allow the new  
19 contracts to build on our coalition infrastructure  
20 developed over the last years.

21 We also plan to enhance the leadership role of  
22 the community ambassadors as community assets who  
23 both co-lead engagement events and help connect local  
24 residents to resources and information; to deepen  
25 partnerships outreach to focus on quality over

1 quantity through a close understanding of families  
2 needs and providing connections to resources using  
3 warm handoffs; deepen the partnerships impact by  
4 focusing on recruitment and retention of coalition  
5 members; high quality service referrals, enhance the  
6 partnership's capacity for capturing qualitative and  
7 quantitative data to demonstrate their reach and  
8 impact on the families.  
9

10 The partnerships, I have to say, have been  
11 particularly effective in welcoming new New Yorkers.

12 There's no more important mission than keeping  
13 children safe from harm. For ACS safety means  
14 protecting children from the harms of abuse and  
15 neglect, as well as from the harms of avoidable  
16 separation from their families. It is our obligation  
17 to get it right every time on every case and to learn  
18 the right lessons when we do not. To do this we need  
19 to nurture a wide ranging organizational culture of  
20 learning and improvement. We refer to it as safety  
21 culture.

22 To help our CPS make the best possible decisions  
23 for children and families, we provide expert coaching  
24 to assure strong and supportive staff supervision,  
25 strengthen our training academy to teach essential

1 skills, reduce caseloads so staff have time to work  
2 closely with families and children, and launched a  
3 new Leadership Development Institute to teach leaders  
4 how to build a culture where accountability thrives,  
5 not blame.

7 Each week more than 500 staff assemble for child  
8 stats sessions, we had nearly 700 this morning, where  
9 we review key performance indicators and dive deep  
10 into case practice, helping us make improvements in  
11 each local child protection office and implement  
12 system wide changes when necessary.

13 Every month we also publish a data report, called  
14 the ACS Flash, so that advocates and other  
15 stakeholders are aware of and can hold us accountable  
16 for our outcomes.

17 We've seen more children remain safely in their  
18 families over the past several years. For those  
19 children who were not safe at home and were placed in  
20 foster care, we have increased our rate of timely  
21 reunification while lowering the number of children  
22 who need to reenter care.

23 We see signs that staff are feeling this shift in  
24 culture. In the midst of staffing challenges across  
25 human services, we have seen the opposite here with

1 steady improvements in the number of child protective  
2 specialists retained. Today we have nearly 200 more  
3 on active duty handling child protective responses  
4 compared to two years ago, helping us maintain case  
5 loads well below national standards.

6  
7 Moreover, when a critical incident involving a  
8 child occurs, we focus relentlessly on learning from  
9 that tragedy to identify ways to prevent others from  
10 being at risk in the future. ACS investigates every  
11 fatality of a New York City child that is reported to  
12 the state hotline with allegations of possible abuse  
13 or maltreatment. We complete a comprehensive review  
14 of every child fatality where the family was known to  
15 ACS within the last decade.

16 The review includes an analysis of case records,  
17 and for more recent cases, Human Factors Debriefings  
18 with involved staff to identify and implement  
19 potential system improvements. This approach is built  
20 on methods common in the medical field and other  
21 safety intensive industries.

22 I recently convened a new multidisciplinary  
23 review panel to bring experts external to ACS into  
24 the fatality review process to help identify systemic  
25 solutions that will enhance ACS's ability to protect

1 children and deliver high quality services. The panel  
2 includes a group of esteemed experts and child  
3 welfare stakeholders. It includes those with lived  
4 experience folks (INAUDIBLE) in child abuse,  
5 pediatrics, mental health, law enforcement, accident  
6 prevention, parent advocacy, community based services  
7 and more. The panel gives us a formal pathway to  
8 incorporate their expertise and strengthen practice  
9 policy information sharing and more. I'm grateful to  
10 our fellow city agencies who have joined that panel  
11 including the medical examiner, the Department of  
12 Health, the NYPD and others.

14 We hope this panel will also help New Yorkers  
15 better understand our work as we promote systemic  
16 transparency and system accountability. Their work  
17 and recommendations will be incorporated into our  
18 Annual Public Fatality Report.

19 When children and youth come into our care,  
20 either through foster care or the justice system, ACS  
21 is focused on ensuring that they and their parents  
22 get the services and supports that they need. For  
23 families with children in foster care, have  
24 strengthened our trauma informed approach. For some  
25 children entering foster care, this starts with our

1  
2 newly renovated intake, family visiting room, beauty  
3 bar, comfort shop, and cell phone cafe at the  
4 Children's Center, all developed with the goal of  
5 reducing trauma. Nearly half of children entering  
6 foster care are placed in the care of a relative or a  
7 close family friend, which both reduces the trauma of  
8 removal and assists with timely reunification.

9 Foster parents are now trained using TRIPP  
10 (Trauma-Responsive and Informed Parenting Program)  
11 training model, which supports caregivers' knowledge  
12 and ability to respond to the needs of the youth in  
13 their care.

14 We're also taking important steps to better  
15 connect youth to appropriate and stable housing when  
16 they leave foster care. In 2023, there 269 successful  
17 housing move ins, and in 2024, we increased it to 320  
18 youth, a 19% increase.

19 We have been contracting with Anthos|Home, a  
20 housing navigation and stability provider that helps  
21 youth and families with housing vouchers find  
22 apartments, get leases, move in, and then maintain  
23 their housing over the course of that first year.

24 We've also strengthened support for young people  
25 in care including major expansions of programs like

1 Fair Futures and College Choice so that youth in care  
2 can thrive into their adulthoods. In 2024, more than  
3 4,000 youth benefited from Fair Futures coaching and  
4 or tutoring. Of the 2,000 young people coached for  
5 more than 90, 92% achieved at least three positive  
6 outcomes, such as reconnecting to school, grade  
7 promotion, graduation, enrollment in college or  
8 vocational training, or successfully engaging in a  
9 job or internship.  
10

11 In 2024 participation in the ACS College Choice  
12 Program, where tuition, housing and a daily living  
13 stipend are given to foster youth attending college,  
14 doubled from the program's inception just two years  
15 ago, with over 400 youth enrolled in the fall  
16 semester.

17 As I turn to juvenile justice, I just want to  
18 thank you, Chair Stephens, Council Member Joseph, and  
19 Council Member Nurse and your staff for coming to  
20 Crossroads yesterday and engaging with young people  
21 so fully.

22 We've been seeing similar education success in  
23 our juvenile justice programs. In the 2023-2024  
24 school year, 50 students in secured detention  
25 graduated with high school diplomas, GEDs, or

1  
2 completed middle school. Twelve additional youth have  
3 already attained either a Regents diploma or GED in  
4 this academic year. Many of these youth are now  
5 enrolled at either Hostos or Borough of Manhattan  
6 Community College, completing live college courses  
7 while in secured detention facilities and earning  
8 transferable college credits. These education  
9 achievements are the result of a close collaboration  
10 between ACS, New York City Public Schools, and other  
11 partners to maximize school attendance, engagement,  
12 and achievement.

13       During the 2024-2025 school year, ACS continued  
14 to expand its academic opportunities including  
15 tutoring, assistance preparing students for regents  
16 and high school equivalency exam, and offering credit  
17 bearing college courses.

18       Together with the school liaisons in our  
19 detention facilities, the school-based team is  
20 responsible for encouraging young people to attend  
21 school and engage in other educational services. This  
22 has significantly improved student engagement,  
23 student attendance, exam completion, and graduation  
24 rates at both facilities.  
25

1 ACS continues to fund as well as to leverage  
2 funding received from the Young Men's Initiative to  
3 provide daily tutoring services to students in secure  
4 detention to improve their engagement in school  
5 literacy, as well as students' attitudes towards  
6 learning.  
7

8 Our workforce partners, Bard Prison Initiative,  
9 that you saw yesterday, and the Children's Village  
10 provide on-site tutoring to youth at Crossroads and  
11 Horizon. Bard and Children's Village tutors  
12 collaborate closely with Passage's Academy  
13 administrators and educators to identify youth in  
14 areas where they may need additional supports.

15 While serving older youth charged with more  
16 serious crimes certainly poses additional challenges,  
17 as noted by Nunez monitor experts in their most  
18 recent report, ACS has achieved compelling reductions  
19 in the frequency of youth violence, continues to  
20 develop and implement strategies to improve overall  
21 security. Specifically, despite the increased census,  
22 violence is down, supportive programming has  
23 significantly increased, restorative work with youth  
24 is making a difference, and we are seeing improved  
25 educational outcomes for youth in detention,

1 including more high school graduations, GED  
2 attainment, and college participation— on March 6,  
3 202, 137 youth at Horizon and 136 youth at  
4 Crossroads— today it's a total of 275 young people.

5 Secured detention currently holds a youth  
6 population that is nearly six times what it was  
7 before Raise the Age as ACS has absorbed this  
8 population of youth charged with committing offenses  
9 at 16, 17 years old who would otherwise have been  
10 detained on Rikers Island and youth can remain with  
11 us until age 21. As a result, the youth in secured  
12 detention are on average older, face more serious  
13 charges, and experience longer lengths of stay than  
14 before Raise the Age, with 99% of the young people in  
15 secured detention facing charges in the adult system.

16 We're also taking important steps to be able to  
17 address capacity issues in secured detention. OCFS  
18 (Office of Children and Family Services) has issued a  
19 waiver approving our capacity to 310 youth. We're  
20 also working with DDC) Department of Design and  
21 Construction) to build an annex at Horizon, which  
22 would not only create additional capacity but would  
23 provide the youth in our care with a state of the art  
24 facility with a commercial kitchen, new dining halls,  
25

1  
2 healthcare suites, staff lounge, more educational  
3 vocational classrooms, and a three-story outdoor  
4 recreation platform.

5 In addition to meeting the needs of justice  
6 involved youth in detention, we are focused on  
7 meeting their needs in the community so that they  
8 never come to detention.

9 This year we assumed responsibility for MOCJ for  
10 the Assertive Community Engagement and Success, ACES,  
11 run by CASES, which serves some of the highest high  
12 risk youth aged 16 to 24 in Harlem and the South  
13 Bronx, by seeking to relentlessly engage them in a  
14 three to four year behavioral change and skill  
15 development program.

16 Given the success of programs like College Choice  
17 and Fair Futures, as part of the State of The City,  
18 Mayor Adams announced the Youth Safety and Success  
19 Initiative. As seen in the Preliminary Budget, Youth  
20 Safety and Success is nearly a \$40 million annual  
21 investment in programs aimed at supporting youth in  
22 foster care and those at risk of justice involvement.  
23 This initiative is comprised of five components that  
24 include the expansion of successful programs and the  
25 creation of one new one.

1  
2 For youth in foster care, the initiative will  
3 provide funding to expand College Choice to over 500  
4 youth. In addition, it will create a new program,  
5 Career Choice Workforce Ready, which builds off the  
6 success of College Choice, connecting young people in  
7 foster care who choose not to go to a two or four  
8 year college with similar financial, social, and  
9 academic support, as well as vocational and job  
10 readiness trainings. The funding will also enable us  
11 to expand Fair Futures to serve an additional 2,000  
12 young people.

13 To help address the needs of youth in the  
14 community who are at risk of justice involvement, we  
15 will expand the diversion program known as Girls  
16 JustUs, currently operating in Brooklyn to Queens and  
17 the Bronx.

18 Finally we will expand assertive community  
19 engagement and success, ACES, which I mentioned  
20 earlier, citywide. ACES provides evidence-based  
21 services to high risk youth who have been involved in  
22 the justice system by providing social pathways away  
23 from gang and gun violence for youth ages 16 to 24.

24 ACS's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 is  
25 \$2.83 billion, including \$932 million in City funds.

1  
2 In addition to Youth and Safety Success Initiative,  
3 the Preliminary Budget includes \$139 million to  
4 address our Fiscal Year 2025 need for funding the  
5 increased state mandated reimbursement for foster  
6 parents, adoptive parents, and kinship guardians.

7 In addition to the state failing to fund ACS for  
8 the increased foster care rates, the state's proposed  
9 budget does not include the funding ACS needs to  
10 maintain our child care voucher expansion. Based on  
11 the availability of funding, and with the agreement  
12 and encouragement from the New York State Office of  
13 Children and Family Services, New York City  
14 dramatically expanded the number of children in  
15 receipt of child care assistance supported by the  
16 state child care block grant known as CCBG over the  
17 last several years— as have other counties across New  
18 York State.

19 Absent additional investment from the state, New  
20 York City will be forced to dramatically reduce its  
21 provision of child care support to families who need  
22 it, deteriorating the gains achieved.

23 Given the state mandated increase of the  
24 reimbursement rate for childcare providers serving  
25 children with subsidies, which was not funded in the

1  
2 State's Executive Budget Proposal, and the  
3 anticipated increase in mandatory child care for  
4 families on cash assistance, we will need the State  
5 Budget to provide approximately \$2 billion for New  
6 York City, about \$1 billion above the City's current  
7 allocation, to maintain child care assistance for low  
8 income families at our current caseload level.

9 We are in continuous conversation with the  
10 Governor's Office and the Legislature, and we are  
11 very grateful for all of your support on the Council.

12 In conclusion, I want to thank the City Council  
13 for your ongoing collaboration and partnership as we  
14 work together to continue to make New York City a  
15 place where children, youth and families thrive.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I am going to  
18 pass it over to Council Member Williams to ask some  
19 questions before I get started on my questions, thank  
20 you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,  
22 Chair.

23 I actually have to go to a social work, uh, kind  
24 of convening thing about certain topics, so thank you  
25 so much.

1  
2 Just one brief question, which is I'm Chair of  
3 the Civil and Human Rights Committee and the City is  
4 over 430 days late on releasing the racial equity  
5 plans that require city agencies to produce some type  
6 of racial equity plan. And I just wanted to know what  
7 was the status of your agency submitting that plan to  
8 the Mayor's Office?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have submitted it.  
10 That work is led by our first deputy commissioner and  
11 we have an Office of Equity Strategies that does  
12 excellent work across our entire agency. So we've  
13 completed the submission.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, yes, we just  
15 want to get that on the record, because we do  
16 understand why they have not released it when,  
17 according to the last couple of agencies we spoke to,  
18 they have all submitted their racial equity plans.

19 Thank you so much, and thank you so much, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like the record to  
21 reflect both of my agencies being compliant. So,  
22 thank you, Council Member Williams. I don't need to  
23 be yelled at.

24 Good afternoon, I'm gonna jump right in, and  
25 we're gonna talk about federal funding.





1  
2 significant part of your budget. So you have you guys  
3 started to think about a contingency plan if funding  
4 was to be ceased? And what programs, simply, if  
5 ceased, would the City be able to be backfill it? And  
6 will eligible requirements... will we change the  
7 requirements for different programs? Please provide  
8 any or all specifics around this.

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ,you know, it's very  
10 important that this contingency planning be done  
11 citywide, because anything that affects the City  
12 Budget could affect the \$900+ million we have in the  
13 city tax levy as an example. So ,you know, we're  
14 trying to look at what is our absolute core  
15 functions. We want to make sure that we're  
16 maintaining what is needed to protect children, to  
17 keep them safe, to make sure that families have the  
18 supports that they need. We have not made any  
19 particular adjustments. We are trying to make sure,  
20 you know, it's consistent with our vision and  
21 direction. We're trying to make sure that we get  
22 families to preventive services, if they don't need  
23 protection, uh, child protective services.

24 So we're looking across the board where we can  
25 find potential resources. But I have to say, most of

1  
2 the ACS Budget is quite essential and really directly  
3 supports children and families. So Plan A is to try  
4 to maintain as much of this funding because it  
5 matters for children and families. But we are  
6 planning with OMB, on a regular basis, to make sure  
7 we're up to date and we're clear on any cuts that may  
8 come down.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: A state childhood cliff and  
10 advocacy plan, I think is definitely... we need to  
11 kind of talk about— State funds make up 27.7% of the  
12 ACS Budget in Fiscal 2025 and 24.5% in Fiscal 2026.  
13 Non-city funding consists of approximately 67% of ACS  
14 funding for Fiscal 2025 and 2026. Over \$4.1 billion  
15 of the two fiscal years. This funding is critical for  
16 various ACS programs including child care, foster  
17 care, and preventative programming for youth.

18 In your opening statement, you indicated that the  
19 need from the state budget this year for child care  
20 vouchers is \$2 billion with a gap in funding of  
21 approximately \$1 billion.

22 ACS notified the Council of this child care  
23 voucher funding gap last week. When did you first  
24 become aware of this issue, and what actions did you  
25 first take?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we have been in  
3 conversations with the state every single month, both  
4 at the deputy commissioner level and at the  
5 commissioner level. So I'm going to sort of take us  
6 back just a couple years, Chair, just to sort of  
7 describe what's going on.

8           So we had a real opportunity because of some  
9 pandemic rollover funds. There was less childcare  
10 being used. There was also some pandemic related  
11 investment in childcare. And so a couple years, three  
12 years ago now, were at about 7,000 children enrolled  
13 in low income vouchers and today we're at 62,000.

14           We have worked extremely hard, led by Deputy  
15 Commissioner Welkomir and her team, to make sure  
16 families can get access to those supports. We have,  
17 with encouragement from the state, all along, we've  
18 been providing them our projections. We have been  
19 making sure that they understand what we're claiming.  
20 They've been encouraging us to increase our claims so  
21 that we didn't leave any rollover money on the table.  
22 This was absolutely a co-planning thing with the  
23 state.

24           We began to let them know, months ago, that we  
25 were looking like we were going to run out of funds,

1 that we were going to go over that cliff. They wanted  
2 us to continue to see the claims that were coming in.  
3 They made a 20% increase in the fall in the rates to  
4 providers, which is excellent, but have not yet put  
5 any resources in to cover that. So that accelerated  
6 us getting to this point. Currently for Federal  
7 Fiscal Year '25, which we're currently in, we need  
8 about \$125 million additional dollars. And for next  
9 Federal Fiscal Year we need about \$860 million.

11 Much of this relates to the fact that the work  
12 requirements will increase the number of families who  
13 qualify for a mandated child care voucher from HRA.  
14 We expect by the end of the calendar year, early  
15 2027, HRA will have issued around 60,000 vouchers.

16 So with that growth and the growth that we've  
17 already created is why we need that money. So we have  
18 been talking to the state all along. We have had  
19 conversations with the Governor's Office. We've  
20 had... there's been conversations with the Division  
21 of Budget. And we have engaged the State Legislature  
22 and then, more recently, engaged the Council.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, this is one of the  
24 ones that ,like, I know we've just been brought into  
25 the conversation, which hopefully, moving forward,

1  
2 please know that we're your allies and that we can  
3 also help advocate. Because now if ,you know, we've  
4 been doing the best that we can, and I know that's  
5 why... I guess he left, oh, there you go.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm here.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, he's over there, oh.

8 (LAUGHS) Not yet, not yet, Lincoln, calm down.

9 (LAUGHTER)

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who is very excited, and  
11 literally here just for this specific topic. Because  
12 we do want to figure out solution of how to mitigate  
13 this together. But again, you know, you stated... we  
14 just we've learned... we were just brought into this  
15 conversation.

16 When did ACS reach out to the State? And how long  
17 ago? I know you said you've been in talks with the  
18 deputy commissioners and the commissioners. Has ACS  
19 been working with State partners to ensure adequate  
20 funding is provided to the City to meet the full  
21 demand of the child care vouchers? What was the  
22 result of those conversations? When did OMB, the  
23 deputy mayors, and the mayor become aware of this?  
24 And are they also advocating to the State for  
25 additional funding for child care?

1                   Because, like I said, we just learned about it.  
2  
3                   And I know we've been, myself, and Lincoln's been  
4                   doing it, I know the Woman Caucus put us together  
5                   letter. So the Council's really been trying to  
6                   scramble to really push this in the forefront, but,  
7                   know, we want to know what has been going on the  
8                   other side, since we were not brought into the  
9                   conversations until late.

10                  COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So all of those things,  
11                  the answer is, yes. There's conversations at every  
12                  level. There's conversations from City Hall to the  
13                  Governor's Office. There's conversations between OMB  
14                  and DOB. There's conversations between us and the  
15                  Governor's Office— in addition to OCFS. So it is  
16                  unequivocally a very high priority for the  
17                  Administration that we are able to maintain the gains  
18                  that that we had. As I earlier... (CROSS-TALK)

19                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just, uh, I would like to  
20                  go on record by saying, when I reached out to the  
21                  Governor's Office, they were not as aware. And then  
22                  when I reached out to the State Legislator, they also  
23                  weren't aware. So I know that there was some...  
24                  there's clearly some disconnect, because I know I  
25                  reached out to State members individually, and I

1 reached out to the Speaker, and they were ,like,  
2 "This was not on our radar."  
3

4 So I'm not really sure how or who specifically  
5 you guys were talking to, but there has been some  
6 disconnect.

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So there's a, you know,  
8 this has been a real priority for both the Governor  
9 and the Mayor with a lot of resources put into it.  
10 It's been a collaborative process with Office of  
11 Children and Family Services at the State level where  
12 they've encouraged this growth.

13 Our hope is that we can have this funding put in  
14 so that we can continue these gains and meet our  
15 requirements to the mandated population.

16 We have great partners at the State level around  
17 this and we have been engaging with them all  
18 throughout. I don't know how to sort of connect the  
19 dots that you're not seeing, but I can assure you  
20 that there's been very, very frequent conversations  
21 with the State.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If the State does not commit  
23 to filling this gap, is the City's plan? Would ACS  
24 need to rescind childcare vouchers that have been  
25 granted to families? How would ACS go about doing

1  
2 this? How many children would lose childcare, and how  
3 would the Agency decide which children get vouchers  
4 and which one will lose those benefits?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So if we're not able to  
6 secure the resources needed to continue the program,  
7 and the mandated population continues to increase as  
8 expected, we will have to no longer take applications  
9 for child care assistance. No one will lose their  
10 voucher until a recertification date. So everyone who  
11 has a voucher, that has been approved for that year,  
12 keeps it until the end of that period. But we would  
13 have to begin to deny recertifications.

14 We get between 4,000 and 7,000 recertifications a  
15 month. So that would be the population, each and  
16 every month, that would be at risk of losing an  
17 ongoing voucher from having it recertified. We really  
18 want to be able to maintain that continuity.

19 If we get into a place where the resources are  
20 not fully there, and we have to determine how to  
21 manage that priority, we're going need some support  
22 from the State. Because the State holds the levers  
23 around setting priority. So we also have had some  
24 discussions with them around there. Our priorities  
25

1  
2 are continuity of care and to making sure that the  
3 lowest income families have this support.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is very concerning. I  
5 am going to stop there on that part. Like I said, I  
6 know Council Member Restler is here, and he is going  
7 to ask a number of questions in a couple of minutes.

8 Let me just ask a couple of questions, and then  
9 I'll turn it over to you, Council Member.

10 Foster care... so I'm gonna move to foster care.

11 The Preliminary Budget includes an additional  
12 \$138.8 million in City funds for foster care in  
13 Fiscal 2025. Only the State mandated reimbursement  
14 rates for foster care, kinship, and adoptive parents.  
15 How was this funding amount determined, and how was  
16 the funding... and how will this funding be utilized?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So this is really  
18 filling the gap that was created when the State  
19 approved new rates for foster parents, uh, adoptive  
20 parents as well, kinship guardianship payments as  
21 well. When they approved new rates, they did not  
22 increase the funding. So each year, depending on the  
23 number of children in care, the specific rates that  
24 play out, we work with OMB to try to fill that gap.  
25 And that's what the number was for FY25.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What metrics are used? And  
3 does ACS find those metrics to be significant for the  
4 reimbursement rates?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ,you know, we look at  
6 a number of things as it relates to our performance  
7 in foster care- reunification with families, the  
8 safety of those reunification, adoption numbers, the  
9 safety of children in care, the stability of children  
10 in care- all of the funding that goes into foster  
11 care, it's a pretty, there's several funding streams  
12 that support it, relate to those key outcomes that  
13 children are safe and that they're achieving  
14 permanency.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why was funding added for  
16 only one year and not baselined?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Because it's sort of a  
18 moving target. We're not... depending on the... it  
19 all depends on the census, so there's different types  
20 of rates. So there's an exceptional rate if a young  
21 person has a significant developmental disability, as  
22 an example, and it's a special medical foster parent.  
23 There is rates for a sort of more standard level of  
24 care. So depending on what those rates shape out to

1  
2 be, and the number of young people in care, we fill  
3 that and work with OMB to assess what that gap is.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much is the full budget  
5 for foster care in FY25?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The full budget for 2025  
7 is \$670 million, I believe— 600... and for 2025?

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe it's \$682 plus  
10 the \$183 that was added. So a little under \$800  
11 million.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the baseline budget  
13 for foster care in Fiscal 2026 and in the out years?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: \$682 million.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does the Agency plan to  
16 adjust the baseline budget to be more aligned with  
17 the current levels of demand and the requirements...  
18 required reimbursement rates?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. We are in  
20 conversations with OMB, again, sort of looking at  
21 that analysis.

22 There's... we'll also look at the IV-E rates, as  
23 we were discussing, earlier from the federal  
24 government. All of those come together to identify  
25 what services... the total cost.

1  
2 The commitment that we have to our providers is  
3 already in the contracts. We have no cuts that we're  
4 announcing to that, so providers can be assured that  
5 our commitments will remain.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan added  
7 funding from a combination of city, state and federal  
8 funding sources across the years of the plan for  
9 youth programs.

10 In Fiscal 2025, \$7.2 million was added; \$22.3  
11 million in Fiscal 2026; and \$43.7 million in Fiscal  
12 2027; \$44.8 million in Fiscal 2028; and \$44.9 million  
13 in Fiscal 2029. What specific programs will this  
14 funding support? Please provide a breakdown by  
15 program.

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. We're very, very  
17 excited about the Youth Safety and Success  
18 Initiative. Thank you for your advocacy for young  
19 people.

20 On a total, it'll allow us to serve about 3,000  
21 more young people, up to 8,000 from 5,000 now.

22 For Fair Futures, it'll take us from about 4,000  
23 to 5,000 and make sure that the full model for Fair  
24 Futures, which includes coaching and tutoring and  
25

1  
2 other things, is available to young people all the  
3 way to the age of 26.

4 The College Choice goes from 400 young people to  
5 500 young people. We actually extended beyond the  
6 existing budget, so part of that is to meet the need  
7 of the 400 that we've had enrolled this fall.

8 Career Choice is a new program that is building  
9 on the success of College Choice for young people who  
10 want to take a career pathway, want to go to an  
11 apprenticeship, to give them that same stability  
12 during that period— which is some of these  
13 apprenticeships take time and are challenging.

14 It'll allow us to provide 232 new stipends to  
15 young people, that's \$60 a day. It also allows us to  
16 purchase, from DYCD, the 80 Advance and Earn spots.

17 The Girls JustUs Program, that we mentioned  
18 earlier, will go from 48 slots to 72. And the ACES  
19 program will go from 160 to 600 and be citywide. So  
20 overall, 3,000 additional young people will be  
21 reached.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the timeline for  
23 implementing this expansion?

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So in the... between now  
25 and Fiscal Year 2027, we'll be fully expanding. So

1 we... there's about a half of the budget for 2026 for  
2 Fair Futures and then it goes to the full \$23  
3 million. We have to do a procurement around the ACES  
4 model so that will start in Fiscal Year 2027. Much of  
5 it, including College Choice expansion, can happen  
6 relatively immediately- starting in 2026, but will be  
7 fully implemented in 2027.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You know, we just had DYCD  
10 here earlier and they were talking about CRED, their  
11 new career program. When I was talking to the  
12 chancellor, she was talking about Futures Ready and  
13 CTE, expanding CTE programming. And now you guys have  
14 Career Choice and Workforce.

15 How are you guys all collaborating so we can be  
16 maximizing the resources that we have?

17 I know workforce development has been a top  
18 priority, not only for myself, but a lot of council  
19 members. So I think, as we're building this out, what  
20 have the conversations been like with all these  
21 entities to make sure we're maximizing these  
22 resources?

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you, absolutely.  
24  
25

1  
2 We very specifically we're working with DYCD  
3 around the Advance and Earn program and have funding  
4 in that to utilize that model.

5 We of course, as you know, have over 1,000 young  
6 people in SYEP and work very, very closely with them  
7 and New York City Public Schools.

8 We are not adding any Career Pathway money to  
9 Career Choice. What's really here— other than the  
10 Advance and Earn. Because we want to take advantage  
11 of what the City offers across New York City Public  
12 Schools, DYCD as you mentioned.

13 What this really does is allow for the stipends  
14 for young people in foster care. We have found that  
15 that has really given them the space to focus on  
16 their education and college choice. And we don't see  
17 any reason we shouldn't be providing that to young  
18 people who are on a career track.

19 So we're trying to create the space for them to  
20 engage in it, not worry too much about whether  
21 they're gonna be able to make ends meet while they're  
22 doing that, and put some money in their pocket.

23 And so to really encourage them down that track,  
24 too, we wan reward young people who are able to  
25 pursue a track and keep them on it.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. I mean, as we're just  
3 building it out, I just hope that we continue to have  
4 these conversations.

5 And again, just it's about maximizing the  
6 resources. Because, you know, again, one of the  
7 things I said in the last hearing, was just young  
8 people are saying what they want, they want jobs.

9 And I see that we're trying to ,you know,  
10 create, uh, we're trying to fill that gap but I just  
11 want to make sure that we're maximizing it.

12 So I'm gonna move on to... the Preliminary Plan  
13 included an additional \$27.5 million in State funds  
14 for Fiscal Year 2025 only for the expansion related  
15 to foster care services. How is this funding amount  
16 determined? How would it be utilized towards foster  
17 care services?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: \$27.5 million for foster  
19 care services? Can you repeat the question, Chair,  
20 sorry?

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan  
22 includes an addition of \$27.5 million in State funds  
23 for Fiscal Year 2025 only related to foster care  
24 services.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the budget for  
3 foster care services for Fiscal Year 2025, and how  
4 has that been spent to date?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we've, uh, for Fiscal  
6 Year 2025 to date, we have sent \$496 million and for  
7 FY26 it's \$682 million.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS anticipate an  
9 increased need in funding for foster care services?  
10 If so, how much, and when will funding be added?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're assessing that,  
12 it's really around two areas of risk for the City,  
13 one is the reimbursement rates, and the other is the  
14 Title IV-E reimbursement. So we're working with OMB  
15 around those.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So I'm gonna move on to  
17 Close to Home.

18 The number of youth entering Close to Home  
19 programs totaled 43 in the first four months of FY25,  
20 an 8.5% decline compared to the 47 entered during the  
21 same time period in FY24.

22 The average number of youth in Close to Home  
23 placement rose from 65 in the first four months of  
24 FY25... I mean 2024, to 92 in FY25, an increase of  
25 41%.

1                   The average number of children in Close to Home  
2  
3                   aftercare increased by 55.2% from 29 in the first  
4                   four months of FY24 to 45 during the period in FY25.

5                   What is the total number of budgets slotted for  
6                   Close to Home? How many of those slots are being  
7                   used? How many are vacant?

8                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Today it's about a  
9                   174... Today it's 174. We'll get you the exact census  
10                  numbers for today. I believe it is around 100 and...  
11                  we're using about 90% of the NSP and around that for  
12                  LSP as well. We'll get you the exact numbers.

13                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In November 2023 plan there  
14                  was a baseline PEG of \$6.8 million due to  
15                  underutilization. How has that PEG impacted programs?  
16                  Now that the participation has increased, does ACS  
17                  need additional slots for Close to Home?

18                  COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we started in 2022  
19                  with about 301 slots for Close to Home. We wanted to  
20                  make sure that those... and there was very few,  
21                  there's 50 or 60 young people in Close to Home at  
22                  that time.

23                  We initially reduced it to 135 for the new RFP.  
24                  During the RFP process, we noted an additional need  
25                  for about 12 beds. So OMB supported us to increase it

1  
2 to 147. They've subsequently supported an additional  
3 27 beds. So we currently have that 174. We are in  
4 conversations with them, we're assessing the ongoing  
5 need for the census. We're in conversations with  
6 providers. So we keep a very, very close eye on this,  
7 and the track record is there that if we need the  
8 capacity, we'll develop it.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is ACS aware of Close to  
10 Home providers without capacity to take on new youth?  
11 Have any had to put youth on waiting lists?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No. Yes, we are aware  
13 that there are some providers who are at full  
14 capacity. We get the numbers three or four times a  
15 day. And there are no waiting lists for Close to  
16 Home.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So if it's at capacity what  
18 do we do with the kids, then?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We need to have the  
20 capacity, and we'll make sure we do.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How so?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So what you're... what  
23 you're describing, Chair, is that a particular  
24 program... (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I know, one  
3 particular...

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Then you'll shift them  
6 around and things. But the point of the Close to  
7 Homes is for them to be close to home. So if we're  
8 shifting them to other places, and that's kind of  
9 defeating some of the purpose.

10 Obviously it's not Upstate, but it does, if you  
11 are at capacity— let's say in Queens, and you put  
12 them in the Bronx, you might as well put them  
13 Upstate, because sometimes it takes two to three  
14 hours to get from Queens to the Bronx. So that's what  
15 I'm really asking. Yes, you might find another  
16 location, but, obviously, there's some gaps here.  
17 And this was one of the things that we were saying a  
18 year ago, when we were saying we were rightsizing it,  
19 and now we're seeing the numbers go up.

20 Can you to us talk about what that plan looks  
21 like?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we are focused on  
23 stability for young people. And when a when a group  
24 home is filled, we are not trying to move kids out of  
25 there to put other kids behind them.

1  
2 But, I will say that the system is tighter than  
3 it has been. We are looking at a variety of options.  
4 We have a site that is coming online soon. We had to  
5 do some renovations to that site. So we'll be able to  
6 add those beds soon. And we're talking to OMB about  
7 other possibilities.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the budget for Close  
9 to Home in Fiscal 2025 and in Fiscal Year 2026 and  
10 out years?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Give me one second. Go  
12 ahead.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: FY25 Budget is  
14 \$63.5 million. We are working with OMB to determine  
15 the budget for FY26. But the current budget...

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much has been spent  
17 year to date?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yeah, it's  
19 baselined at \$63.5 million

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. What educational  
21 opportunities are available to Close to Home  
22 locations? Has ACS considered expanding educational  
23 instructions to Close to Home locations? And can you  
24 give details?

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Because one of the things that when talking with providers, this has been a huge concern, just around... especially, when they're going to the facility... I mean going to the schools to get the education, they're not getting their IEP, they're hearing that some of their IEPs are not being met. Some of their IEP's are not being met or they're just being put on a computer.

So could we talk a little bit about some of the educational opportunities that we're offering at the Close to Home locations?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So young people who are in nonsecure placement in Close to Home go to either Belmont or Bronx Hope, which is run by the Department of Education, New York City Public Schools, and they get a full set of services. Their IEPs are absolutely prioritized, they can get reassessed there.

We have heard from providers as well that they'd like additional academic supports. We have older young people and Close to Home than we did, so every young person has graduated, and we are looking into ways that we can support that.

1  
2 We have added Fair Futures to Close to Home, so  
3 that they can be supportive of academic and career  
4 pursuits as well.

5 For young people who are in limited secure  
6 placement, the school is on-site. And so limited  
7 secure placement includes the Children's Village,  
8 they have a school on-site, as well as Rising Ground.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Would ACS be open to  
10 partnering with providers to expand vocational  
11 training opportunities? Does ACS have the funding to  
12 support this? If not, how much additional funding  
13 would be needed?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are absolutely  
15 interested in increasing vocational opportunities.  
16 Close to Home young people are also connected with  
17 SYEP.

18 To your earlier point, we'll work with both DYCD  
19 and New York City Public Schools to hear what  
20 providers are seeing and what they need and make it  
21 happen.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many female Close to  
23 Home facilities are there? Does ACS see an increase  
24 in need for female facilities? If so, how many are  
25 you needing to meet this demand?

1  
2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have... let me get  
3 through the exact number. It's one site for 12,  
4 right? Yeah. It's a 12, one, twelve-bed site... Close  
5 to Home.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'm going turn it over  
7 to Council Member Restler for his questioning.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much, Chair  
9 Stevens. And thank you for your smart questions and  
10 thoughtful advocacy around the looming crisis that we  
11 are facing for child care vouchers in New York City.

12 I firstly just want to say that, you know, in an  
13 administration that has been hobbled by dysfunction  
14 and corruption, one of the few bright spots has been  
15 the fact that ACS and your team has enrolled, you  
16 know, 55,000 additional families, some 62-63,000  
17 families in child care vouchers to ensure that they  
18 have free, affordable child care, and high quality  
19 providers in their communities. It's been a major  
20 achievement of this Administration, one that's gotten  
21 far too little attention.

22 Yet, it's apparent that we are barreling toward a  
23 reality where many tens of thousands of families are  
24 about to lose their child care.

1                   So I'd just like to ask plainly for a number.  
2  
3       Barring additional State support, how many  
4       families... how many children do you expect to lose  
5       their child care voucher in the coming fiscal year?

6           COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is possible, if  
7       nothing were to change, Council Member, that between  
8       4,000 and 7,000. So... (CROSS-TALK)

9           COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'd just like a number  
10       for the year.

11          COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I can try to get you  
12       that number. As you know, a lot of this relates to  
13       what the mandated population...

14          COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I know the issue well.  
15       I'm looking for a number.

16          COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll work on getting  
17       you a number, but, it's... (CROSS-TALK)

18          COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I don't understand why  
19       it's complicated. You've been supposedly working  
20       really hard on this issue. Your team is focused on  
21       it. What's the estimate for how many families are  
22       going to lose their child care if we don't get an  
23       additional penny of funding?

24          COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's possible that all  
25       low income vouchers could be...

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Sixty-two-thousand  
3 families?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is possible.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And... okay.

6 So we're talking about 62,000 families at risk of  
7 losing their child care vouchers if we don't see  
8 action in Albany in a matter of days.

9 That is larger than the entire UPK population in  
10 New York City losing their child care (SNAPS FINGERS)  
11 overnight.

12 We have been instructed by folks in the  
13 Governor's Office that OMB has directed ACS to no  
14 longer recertify vouchers starting April 1st, that  
15 families will lose their child care in the middle of  
16 this school year. Have you received that directive  
17 from OMB?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No, what we have... in  
19 conversations with OMB, the City has already hit its  
20 funding amount for this (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But you're continuing to  
22 enroll new families today.

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, so... (CROSS-TALK)

24

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So you've already hit  
3 your funding amount, but you're enrolling new  
4 families... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's right. The City  
6 is putting itself in further, putting in further  
7 investment to make sure we can work fully with the  
8 State to try to see if there's a solution here.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So we've been told by  
10 folks in the Governor's Office that OMB has directed  
11 the City to stop recertifying voucher holders, to  
12 lose their child care, this current school year.

13 You have received no such director from OMB? Have  
14 you had a conversation with OMB for when you will  
15 stop recertifying vouchers barring new funding?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: OMB has approved us to  
17 continue to issue vouchers- to keep applications open  
18 to April 1st- so that we can work with the State to  
19 try to develop a solution here. We have to see what  
20 that solution (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's not my question. I  
22 appreciate the comment, but that's not what I asked  
23 at all.

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: But that's exactly  
25 what's happening. That's... (CROSS-TALK)

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But what's the... you  
3 have had zero conversations with OMB about when  
4 you're gonna no longer be able to recertify vouchers?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-  
6 TALK)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're telling me that it  
8 has not been discussed, that you have only discussed  
9 what could happen until the March. And you have no  
10 idea what's going happen April 1st?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No... (CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to make sure  
13 you're being as transparent as possible.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I am being as  
15 transparent as possible. We went to OMB, made sure we  
16 were clear about what we see the funding implications  
17 are here. We made a request to be able to continue to  
18 provide... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes...

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: this is exactly what  
21 happened, so that we get a time for... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm talking about the  
23 recertifications. I am not talking about new families  
24 you're enrolling today. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: for recertification as  
3 well. But, we would like... (CROSS-TALK)

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Starting only through  
5 April 1st. So we... you have no idea what the policy  
6 of the city of New York will be in twelve days about  
7 whether a family is gonna be able to have their child  
8 care voucher renewed on April 1st.

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The policy will be  
10 shaped by what happens in the State Budget.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. So now let's shift  
12 to what we have done to make a difference for the  
13 State Budget.

14 I'll share my analysis plainly, and then I'm  
15 going to ask a bunch of questions. Well, you know  
16 what? Why don't we start with the questions, and then  
17 I'll give a speech at the end about how pissed I am  
18 that 50,000 to 60,000 families are about to lose  
19 their child care vouchers.

20 ACS has been in communication with OCFS, I  
21 appreciate that. That's your job to coordinate with  
22 the state entity that has oversight of you all. And  
23 I'm sure you've been regularly communicating with  
24 them. They provide resources and oversight of  
25 everything you do.

1  
2 When was the first outreach that ACS made to the  
3 City Council on this topic?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe it was very  
5 recently.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Within the last week, two  
7 weeks?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So we have a looming  
10 child care voucher crisis that's going to kick 62,000  
11 of our children off of their child care, and the  
12 first communication with the City Council was in the  
13 last two weeks?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're working hard to  
15 avoid that scenario.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Kinda.

17 Next up, when... how many members of the State  
18 Legislature has the Administration met with on this  
19 topic?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't know the exact  
21 number. We have met with... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Chair Brisport and Chair  
23 Hevesi, for sure, there's two. (TIMER CHIMES) Have  
24 there been any additional members?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There have. I can get  
3 you the exact... the exact... (CROSS-TALK)

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Three? Four? Because I've  
5 spoken to now over a dozen assembly members and  
6 senators who have thousands of kids in their district  
7 that are at risk of losing their child care, and they  
8 have not heard a peep from the Administration on this  
9 topic. Radio silence.

10 Do you think this is a major priority of this  
11 administration in the State Budget?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is absolutely a  
13 priority of this administration... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Why then... Okay. So why  
15 then when Director Jiha met with the Assembly and  
16 Senate, with the with the State Legislature, prior to  
17 the release of their One Houses and made... shared  
18 priorities for the City, was this issue never  
19 mentioned whatsoever?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I know that OMB has had  
21 a lot of conversations... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay...

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE) about it...  
24 (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I would like to... for  
3 you to walk through with me what conversations  
4 they've had. Because if they didn't share this as a  
5 priority in the One Houses, that was the single most  
6 important moment that they could have said to the  
7 State Legislature, this mattered. They didn't. They  
8 didn't advocate for one more penny of funding for  
9 these child care vouchers. They are supporting us  
10 falling over this fiscal cliff, and 60-odd-thousand  
11 families losing their child care vouchers over the  
12 last year.

13 The amazing work that your team has done, over  
14 these three years, to enroll all these families is  
15 going to go up in smoke (SNAPS FINGERS) because they  
16 have done nothing to advocate for this. City Hall is  
17 asleep at the wheel. Nobody is home.

18 I cannot be more angry about what is about to  
19 happen- the destabilization we are going to see for  
20 child care providers across the city of New York, the  
21 low income communities across New York City that are  
22 going to suffer unnecessarily, because nobody is  
23 advocating for this issue. I am livid.

24 I don't know if you can hear in my voice just how  
25 angry and disappointed I am. Please cite for me one

1  
2 example of a meeting that OMB has held with state  
3 leaders and walk me through exactly what meetings  
4 have occurred so we understand. If any advocacy has  
5 happened, tell us.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'm not privy to what  
7 those conversations look like, but I... (CROSS-TALK)

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you spoken to the  
9 Mayor about this issue?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I've... The deputy mayor  
11 has reached out directly (INAUDIBLE)...(CROSS-TALK)

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you spoken to Eric  
13 Adams about this issue? No. Have you spoken Jacques  
14 Jiha about this issue?

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: How many times?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Several.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Has he... what is the  
19 position of the Administration?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: They want to make sure  
21 that the money is there to maintain the gains that we  
22 have made (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Then why wouldn't they  
24 advocate for it? Is this... Is this...

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: They... They are  
3 advocating for it. The Deputy Mayor has spoken  
4 directly (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Which deputy mayor?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: the Governor's Office...  
7 (CROSS-TALK)

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Who's the deputy mayor?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It was top priority for  
10 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: For Anne Williams-Isom?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, and that's a top  
13 priority for DM Suzanne as well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What has she done to  
15 advocate for the issue? I... I just... I mean, I...  
16 If you're saying... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Let's make sure that we stay  
18 focused. Because I don't think the commissioner can  
19 speak for what other people are doing. So let's just  
20 ask what advocacy they've done and then we can move  
21 on. Because I don't want him to be having to speak  
22 for his boss technically, so...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that.

24 But if you can cite any examples of meetings that  
25 have taken place, you claim it's a priority for the

1 Administration, but from what I can tell, the only  
2 people that are making a push for this at all are you  
3 and your staff.

4 And I value you, and I think you do a great job.  
5 I'm screaming at you because you're the only person I  
6 have to scream at about this. Your staff does great  
7 work under your leadership. You care about this.  
8 You've been pushing for this, but ACS to OCFS is not  
9 going to solve for a \$900 million gap in the State  
10 Budget.

11 That is not how we solve massive problems like  
12 this. It requires leadership from City Hall, and it's  
13 squarely lacking.

14 So I'm just asking, can you cite any examples,  
15 specific meetings that have been held, that the  
16 Mayor's Office has engaged in to push for funding for  
17 this issue and what their request has been?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'd be happy to get you  
19 that. I know of direct phone calls, I know of direct  
20 meetings between the First Deputy Mayor, the Deputy  
21 Mayor, the Governor's Office. This has been a  
22 priority.

23 The OMB has supported us in creating a budget gap  
24 so that we can continue this service while we work  
25

1  
2 with the State. The State has been very supportive of  
3 us growing child care. We are trying to direct dial,  
4 be very clear about the implications. I share your  
5 passion. I appreciate how much you care for child  
6 care and making sure that families have it... (CROSS-  
7 TALK)

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We are barreling toward a  
9 reality of 60,000 kids losing their child care  
10 vouchers. That is where we are heading. There has  
11 been no advocacy of substance beyond ACS talking to a  
12 handful of people about this issue.

13 It was not in the Senate One House, because  
14 nobody had talked to the senate about it, and when  
15 they did, it wasn't raised as a priority.

16 The Assembly only put \$200 million into this at  
17 the very last second. And if it weren't for the  
18 leadership of Chair Stevens, the Speaker of the State  
19 Assembly wouldn't have known about this issue.

20 So I just want to be clear. No one is doing  
21 anything of consequence from City Hall and OMB to  
22 advocate for this issue. We are trying our best, but  
23 we found out about it in the last two weeks. You all  
24 reached out to providers in February but didn't reach  
25

1 out to the breadth of elected officials whose  
2 families are going to be impacted.

3 We are facing an absolute catastrophe. We are  
4 days away from it. We are not... if we do not get  
5 \$900 million, 60,000 thousand families are going to  
6 lose their child care vouchers. And it is going to  
7 have a bigger impact on... more negative impact on  
8 child care than anything I can remember in a very  
9 long time.

10 And all of the phenomenal work that has happened  
11 by you and your team is going to disappear. It's  
12 going go up in smoke. And I appreciate that you all's  
13 job is to execute with the resources you're given, to  
14 implement the policy directives that you receive. It  
15 is not your job to find \$900 million in the State  
16 Budget. It is the Mayor's job, and he has failed.

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I respectfully disagree  
18 with your characterization, Council Member, but I  
19 share your passion to try to solve this and we are...  
20 that is where we're focused.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Commissioner, with all  
22 due respect, you could not cite an example of  
23 substance where this... where the Mayor's Office and  
24 OMB has actually advocated for this issue. So if this  
25

1  
2 was a priority for them, then you would be able to  
3 say, this is what ACS and City Hall have done  
4 together to try to fight for this funding. But  
5 there's been...

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: (INAUDIBLE)...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: radio silence up in  
8 Albany. You can't speak to how many legislators your  
9 team has met with. The State Legislative Affairs team  
10 has not made this a priority for the Mayor's Office.

11 This has fallen to the wayside, and you're trying  
12 your best, and your team is trying your best, and I  
13 respect your team. They have done amazing work to  
14 enroll an additional 55,000 families and child care  
15 vouchers. It's phenomenal. This is literally one of  
16 the top five things this administration has done in  
17 three+ years, and it is all about to disappear  
18 because nobody at City Hall is pushing.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you Lincoln- I mean,  
20 Council Member Restler. We appreciate your passion.  
21 And listen, I am a little bit frustrated, but we have  
22 to figure out how to work together, which is why as  
23 soon as I was notified, I went to work.

24 I mean, the providers were the first people who  
25 rang the alarm for me- so, again, I said this at the

1 top, that we have to make sure that we are a team and  
2 we're using all our collective tools. Because this is  
3 something that means a lot to people and understand  
4 how this is gonna affect the city.  
5

6 I have a couple more questions on the child care  
7 vouchers also. One, I want to start with, uh, is why  
8 the child care voucher enrollment has risen  
9 significantly over the past few fiscal years. I know  
10 some of it is because... I know the cliff we're  
11 looking at because of the increase in providers. But  
12 there are also some requirements— I know when HRA was  
13 here they kind of spoke about it, but I just want to  
14 make sure we have it on record of ,like, what's the  
15 totality of this huge cliff?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So the Child Care Block  
17 Grant funding supports, uh, first the mandated  
18 vouchers, ACS low income vouchers, as well as some of  
19 the DOE contracts, New York City Public Schools.

20 We are looking at about \$125 million gap in this  
21 Federal Fiscal Year and about an \$860 million gap in  
22 next Federal Fiscal Year should there not be an  
23 additional allocation in Albany.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know Council Member  
25 Restler already asked this, but if you guys can get

1  
2 back to the committee staff, could you provide a  
3 breakdown total number of vouchers that child care,  
4 uh, the vouchers that are child welfare and the  
5 number that are low income? If you have it you can  
6 share it, but if not you can send it in.

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And could you provide a  
9 breakdown by borough and both child welfare and low  
10 income vouchers?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So as of 02/28/25, there  
12 were nearly 8,000 children enrolled with child  
13 welfare voucher, which is supported by State  
14 reimbursement and 62,500 supported with low income  
15 voucher.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. What resources and  
17 assistance is made available to families who child  
18 welfare cases have closed and are no longer eligible  
19 for child welfare vouchers?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, we've been working  
21 with their providers and providing the families  
22 information to be able to apply for vouchers through  
23 the Child Care Block Grant.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Like I said before, this  
25 obviously is a serious issue for all of us. And as

1  
2 you can see, I have colleagues who are very  
3 passionate about this subject.

4 And let's just continue to work together to  
5 advocate— and at the State let as many people know.  
6 Like I said, I already started to reach out to folks.  
7 And I know Speaker Heastie has ,you know, briefed his  
8 entire body on this. We're gonna continue to  
9 advocate, because we know how important this is and  
10 just really work together to get this solved. I truly  
11 believe we're gonna get it solved.

12 So we're gonna keep fighting, and I know Lincoln  
13 comes off crazy sometimes, (LAUGHTER) but his heart  
14 is really in the right place. And he's really  
15 fighting for people who typically don't have a voice  
16 and a seat at the table. So I just want to make sure  
17 we highlight that because his passion is the same as  
18 mine. Everybody knows I fight hard for our kids, and  
19 so I actually appreciate in this moment to have  
20 someone else fighting just as hard as I am. Because  
21 that's what it's really about, making sure that  
22 everybody's voice is being heard.

23 So I appreciate your passion and your commitment  
24 to this. And, honestly, it's important so that when  
25 we go to the State, don't worry, he's gonna give them

1  
2 the same smoke. So everybody gets in, and I tell  
3 everybody that everyone gets in.

4 So this is really important to us, and we're  
5 gonna keep fighting. And I know we've been working on  
6 some plans as well together, so thank you.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We look forward to  
8 it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: As ACS continues to assess  
11 its budget and determine where gaps are, it is  
12 critical that there is a consistent communication  
13 with the Administration and OMB to ensure funding is  
14 added where is needed. It's also crucial to ensure  
15 that new needs requests to OMB are calculated  
16 accurately with the use of appropriate metrics.

17 Can ACS provide the Committee with any funding  
18 requests made to OMB and the Mayor this fiscal year?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The major one was around  
20 the Youth Safety And Success Initiative that the  
21 Mayor announced in the State of the City. Obviously  
22 we've been in ongoing conversations about some of the  
23 risks to the budget including childcare, including  
24 the rates, but the big investment was around the  
25 youth work.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. The Preliminary Plan  
3 included an additional \$6.5 million in City and State  
4 funds for Fiscal Year 2025 only to support the  
5 programming for juvenile justice involved youth.

6 How is this funding amount determined and why is  
7 it not baselined?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sorry, Chair, give us  
9 one second.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm. No, worries, we've  
11 got time.

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So \$6.5 million for  
13 juvenile justice specifically you're saying?

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, an additional \$6.5  
15 million in City and State funds for Fiscal 2025 only  
16 supports programming for juvenile involved youth.

17 How is this funding amount determined and why is  
18 it not baselined?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll get you that  
20 answer. I don't have it off of...

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look, Stephanie's up here.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Oh, okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Y'all don't ever want  
24 Stephanie to just sit at the table. Poor Stephanie,  
25 running back and forth.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: One time funding  
3 for STSJP (Supervision and Treatment Services for  
4 Juveniles Program). We put that in the budget on an  
5 annual basis.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You put it in an annual  
7 basis?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLETNIKOFF: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS see current demands  
10 for preventative and supportive services for juvenile  
11 justice involved youth that exceeds the baseline  
12 budget? If so, how much additional funds are needed?

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's really what we  
14 asked for in the Youth Safety and Success Initiative.  
15 So that includes the expansion of ACES, the expansion  
16 of the Girls JustUs Program. We're really excited  
17 about both of those. There's also Fair Futures  
18 dollars that go into the juvenile justice work as  
19 well.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Preliminary Plan  
21 includes an additional \$3 million in City and State  
22 funding for Fiscal 2025 only to support the Nurse-  
23 Family Partnership Program, which supports low income  
24 family, first time parents with pregnancy, and child  
25 care, child health and development services. How was

1  
2 this funding amount determined? Why is this not  
3 baselined in the out years?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This is a pass through  
5 to the Department of Health to support their maternal  
6 work. We've actually been doing a lot of work with  
7 them to explore additional ways to partner together  
8 around maternal health and attachment for young  
9 children and their parents.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean we were just  
11 talking about this in the last hearing around  
12 parenting. And I know DYCD is doing some stuff around  
13 the Fatherhood Initiative.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Mm-hmm

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And they just said that  
16 they're looking to possibly expand to motherhood.

17 I think this is something that can be a continuum  
18 for people who ,you know, the maternal health and  
19 then going into getting parent support and they were  
20 talking about co-parenting.

21 So, honestly, this is something that I would love  
22 for us to continue to look at- expand and make sure  
23 we're collaborating with other agencies. Because it  
24 is a much needed support, especially when we're  
25 thinking about a lot of times when parents have

1  
2 (INAUDIBLE) warrants, and it's just... they don't  
3 have support. So any supports that we can give  
4 parents I think is going to be essential.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We agree.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. So I'm really excited  
7 about some of the stuff they were talking about and  
8 how we can marry it with the work that is happening  
9 on your side.

10 How does ACS coordinate with DOHMH to administer  
11 this program and what role does ACS play?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So it's strictly a pass  
13 through, we don't oversee that. We are in  
14 conversations with our partners at the Health  
15 Department around some of the other work that they  
16 do— Nurse-Family Partnership (INAUDIBLE) which has a  
17 broader criteria so we can get more families the  
18 support that they need. And we'll be continuing that  
19 planning in the months ahead.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Primary Plan includes  
21 savings of \$14.9 million in City funds for Fiscal  
22 2025 only in relation to asylum seeker respond  
23 efforts. What are those savings for and how were  
24 those amounts determined?

1  
2           COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So ACS has taken on  
3 responsibility for some of the language access work-  
4 Stephanie and her team lead. And so with the decline  
5 in that need, that's coming down. And we're also  
6 working with a program to do some resettlement for  
7 families who have been new to the city.

8           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What other current amounts  
9 of asylum seeker related funding has ACS budgeted for  
10 Fiscal 2025?

11          COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Just those, there's no  
12 other additional resource.

13          CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Proposed State Fiscal  
14 Year 2026 Executive Budget was released in January.  
15 State funding plays a critical role in ACS  
16 programming as it supports \$24.5 million of the  
17 Agency's budget for Fiscal 2026. Were there any  
18 proposals in the government's budget that ACS expects  
19 will impact the Agency either positively or  
20 negatively?

21          COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The big one is child  
22 care. And we obviously would love to see the Foster  
23 Care Block Grant grow to be able to cover the rates  
24 and the increased costs around the foster parent  
25

1 rates. We'd love to see some support as it relates to  
2 Raise the Age, but the big one is child care.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. ACS contracts with  
5 various providers for services administered across  
6 the City. Many of the providers' facilities may often  
7 require improvements or repairs that can be done  
8 through the City Capital Program. How many capital  
9 requests has ACS received so far in Fiscal 2025?  
10 What kind of works are those requests, and how many  
11 were received in Fiscal 2024?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I don't believe we  
13 received any such requests in 24-25. For us, in 2025  
14 we've been working on the ACS headquarter relocation,  
15 which has been a big one— the move into 2100 Bartow  
16 Avenue— and some technology related efforts.

17 For 2026 and forward, between 2026 and 2035, we  
18 have over \$500 million allocated to capital— the  
19 biggest of that is the Horizon Annex.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: ACS commitment to Fiscal  
21 2025 through 2029, as presented in the Preliminary  
22 Capital Commitment Plan totals \$476.3 million, 2.3%  
23 less than the total for the same period presented in  
24 an Adopted Capital Commitment Plan released in  
25 October. ACS largest project includes \$78.1 million

1  
2 in Fiscal 2026 for new construction and expansion of  
3 Horizon— which totaled \$240.8 million for Fiscal 2025  
4 to Fiscal 2029. What is the current status of the new  
5 construction of Horizon? What is the estimated time  
6 and completion of this project?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The estimated time for  
8 completion is early 2029. We have begun work to have  
9 some trailers put in to be able to move, create swing  
10 for space staff. Then the first part of the work is  
11 to build an outdoor exercise platform with several  
12 layers so there's a lot more outdoor space for young  
13 people. We're working with some public artists who  
14 are gonna beautify it, and we're really looking  
15 forward to getting that piece of it up. The entire  
16 project is scheduled for completion in early 2029.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would just say, my hope in  
18 2029, we won't need the space...

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah...

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: because we should have had a  
21 plan to make sure that the census is going down.  
22 That's just my hope and that's what we should be  
23 aiming towards.

24

25

1  
2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We share it, Chair. And  
3 the hope would be for the young people who are there,  
4 that they get to use the new space and so...

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't want them to be  
6 there, though.

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I'm saying, well  
8 we have 48... There's only 48 in the... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's 2025, I don't want them  
10 to be there... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: If we have 48 kids there  
12 in 2029, I think we'll be happy.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Ugh, it stresses me out.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You and me... (CROSS-  
15 TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And the expansion, it's  
17 gonna be about 40 new beds, correct?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, 48.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Forty-eight.

20 Child protective specialists are often one of the  
21 first intersections with family with ACS, and it's  
22 critical to ensure those specialists are attentive  
23 and aware of each individual case. Part of making  
24 this happen is tied to their caseload and ensuring  
25 Child Protective Specialists are not overwhelmed.



1  
2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So when a Child  
3 Protective Specialist is up for the next case  
4 assignment, if they have a very, very complicated  
5 case, or they've had to do a removal, then they might  
6 be skipped on that pending. So it's actively managed  
7 at the borough level.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Well, I want to  
9 say, thank you to you and your team for hosting  
10 myself, Council Member Joseph, and Council Member  
11 Nurse at Crossroads.

12 But ,you know, one of the things I just want to  
13 say, I know one of the young people spoke to us about  
14 access to college. And I know they talked about the  
15 BMCC partnership, but he told us about the  
16 challenges- so I just want to make sure that on  
17 record, and somebody please relay a message to him, I  
18 have already spoken to the Chair of Higher Education,  
19 and he was unaware. And he was, like, "Whatever you  
20 need, Althea."

21 So we'll be meeting, and we'll be pulling you  
22 guys in to meet with CUNY, and thinking about how we  
23 can not only just serve that young man- who said he  
24 is working on his dissertation by the way. But it was  
25 a priority. So as soon as I left the facility, I

1  
2 called him immediately, and we are going to schedule  
3 some time. Because we want to make sure that we're  
4 listening to the young people. And that was what he  
5 said, so that's what I did. And I'm working on  
6 getting them their puzzles.

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I am sure Nancy is  
8 letting them know as we speak.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS)

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Responsive government in  
13 action, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's what we're here for,  
15 right?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yep, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And, y'all know if the kids  
18 ask, I'm gonna try to make it happen.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Amen.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So...

21 ACS saw a 31.8% increase in admissions to  
22 juvenile detentions in the first four months of  
23 Fiscal 2025 when compared to the same period in 2024.  
24 So it was 833 youth and in 2024 it was 632 youth.

1                   The average daily population in juvenile  
2                   detentions increased by 22.4%, totaling 318.4 for the  
3                   first four months of Fiscal 2025 compared to the  
4                   260.1 for the same period in Fiscal 2024.  
5

6                   In conjunction with the increase in admissions,  
7                   the average length of stay in secured and non-secured  
8                   detention declined by 10.3%, going from 43 days in  
9                   the first four months of Fiscal 2024 to 39 days  
10                  during the same period in Fiscal 2025.

11                  What factors contributed to the increase in  
12                  admission to juvenile detention facilities?

13                  COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you for that,  
14                  Chair.

15                  So ,you know, as you can tell from those numbers,  
16                  lot of young people spend a day or two, and then are  
17                  released by the judge or either make bail or some  
18                  other arrangement is made. So the averages can  
19                  confuse us a little bit.

20                  For the young people who are with us today, as we  
21                  discussed earlier this week, about half are there for  
22                  a year or more. This is as a result of very complex  
23                  cases. We're grateful to CJI for, earlier this week,  
24                  convening us with the Office of Court Administration,  
25                  the judges in the youth parts, the lawyers in the

1  
2 youth parts, the service providers— to look at ways  
3 at which we can lower length of stay and make sure  
4 that young people understand their case, are actively  
5 engaged in their case, and have the opportunity to  
6 consider their options fully.

7 We have also seen an increase in admissions. You  
8 know, most of the young people who are with us are  
9 there on serious felony offenses, often related to  
10 gun violence. So we want to make sure that they get  
11 the best representation and also that we move those  
12 cases along so that they... we don't want our kids to  
13 be uncertain about what's next. It is one of the most  
14 difficult things for an adolescent, as you know well,  
15 to not be sure about what's coming next. So we try to  
16 fill those gaps for them.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know in your testimony you  
18 talked about the workforce partnerships with BPI and  
19 the Children's Village, BPI being at Crossroads and  
20 Children's Village being at Horizon.

21 Can you talk to me a little bit about those  
22 partnerships and what are some of the active  
23 activities or workforce activities that they are  
24 doing with the young people in the facilities?  
25

1  
2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely. So one of  
3 their biggest activities is tutoring. So we have  
4 thousands of hours of tutoring. As you see they come  
5 onto the halls, they go into the classrooms.

6 In addition we have young people who are doing  
7 OSHA training, we have the barista program, we have  
8 the spackling work that we talked about, they're  
9 actually painting their living spaces.

10 We're always sort of thinking with them as Elise  
11 (phonetic) mentioned to you yesterday, we want to  
12 keep it fresh and so we're trying to bring in new  
13 programming with them. Those contracts are about a  
14 year old so we are looking at sort of what comes next  
15 year and engaging young people around what that would  
16 look like.

17 Space can be a challenge to create some of the  
18 vocational programming, but we really... the kids  
19 love it, they engage with it, and we're grateful for  
20 both of those partners.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would love to, I mean, and  
22 this is one the things was in my head yesterday, but  
23 I know we were at a time constraint, but definitely  
24 thinking about what are some of the STEM components,  
25 right? Like, especially for the young people there

1  
2 who are longer stints, like how do we make sure that  
3 they are up to date with the technology that's going  
4 on and understanding that? Also we know that AI is  
5 moving us along. And we do not want to have these  
6 young people behind the curve. So we definitely need  
7 to be thinking about how we include some STEM  
8 activities, you know, AI, robotics and all those  
9 things. And that actually doesn't take up a lot of  
10 space.

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, just some of the  
13 suggestions that I have. And also just thinking about  
14 workforce development, I know you guys talked about  
15 the painting and the spackling which is absolutely  
16 necessary, but, you know, I think that there's a  
17 whole host of careers we can try to be getting young  
18 people certified for when they get out as well.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And I just will add  
20 that, you know, the arts is a great pathway to STEM  
21 as well. There's a lot of interest in arts of all-  
22 kinds, music, drawing, and so we've created a lot of  
23 programs for that as well, and those can be pathways  
24 into the... some of the things you're talking about.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. I mean, you  
3 know, we were talking to one of these young people  
4 who's clearly a botanist, and a yoga instructor, and  
5 all the things, but you know especially...and I know  
6 it gets hard with the provider, because they don't  
7 necessarily have the manpower to be able to create  
8 such a wide variety. But we do need to think about  
9 maybe we have smaller contracts, so we can have more  
10 people, more providers there, so we can have... offer  
11 more. Because, let's say if you're there for a year,  
12 you don't want to keep taking the same thing over and  
13 over again. So I do think that we do need to be a  
14 little bit creative about this. So if these two  
15 organizations can't offer a wide variety, which they  
16 probably shouldn't, I just want to say, because we  
17 don't want them to overextend themselves, maybe we  
18 should be thinking about contracts— either on like  
19 rotated based or things like that. Because we do want  
20 to be able to offer the kids as many options as  
21 possible, so that when they are released, they do not  
22 come back. Because that needs to always be the goal.

23 Like, when they leave, they should have a set of  
24 skills that they can rely on to translate back into  
25 society. So definitely would love to continue to have

1  
2 conversations around that and continue develop that  
3 out. Because, as always, I'm always overly impressed  
4 by our young people and under impressed by us as  
5 adults.

6 So speaking to those young people yesterday, just  
7 seeing the brilliance that's locked behind a wall is  
8 heartbreaking because those are literally brilliant  
9 young men. We didn't get to meet the girls, but don't  
10 worry we're coming back. But they were a bunch of  
11 brilliant young men who had some of the most creative  
12 minds and were just excited about showing us the work  
13 that they were doing, the puzzles that they were  
14 creating. And that to me is what the young people  
15 are, and we need to make sure we're creating those  
16 opportunities and setting them up for success.

17 So, thank you for having us yesterday, but that's  
18 something that I would love to be talking about.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We agree. We agree.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What causes the average  
21 length of stay in the detentions to drop? What do you  
22 think that's...

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know, I think  
24 there's been a lot of work that Nancy has been doing  
25 directly with some of the courts, with the DA's

1 office, we partner with MOCJ and others to try to  
2 make sure that that's on folks' radar. It's a modest  
3 drop, so we feel like we got a ways to go. There's  
4 also a slight uptick in some of those short stays,  
5 which will drive down the average length of stay.

6 So we have lot of work to do with our partners,  
7 and we're really grateful that the courts and the  
8 attorney organizations came together with us this  
9 week to kick that off.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. You know, it's one of  
11 those things where it's, like, you guys don't  
12 necessarily have control over the length of stay or  
13 any of those things. Your job is to just house and  
14 keep them safe when they get there. But, obviously,  
15 I'm happy to hear that you guys are part of the  
16 larger conversation, because I think it's important  
17 and essential.

18 The PMMR metrics show an increase in the number  
19 of youth admitted into juvenile detentions. What are  
20 the current populations at both Horizon and  
21 Crossroads?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Combined it's 275 today.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the breakdown between  
24 the two?  
25

1                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Uh, 137 and 135.

2                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The 137 is at which one?

3                   Horizon?

4                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'll get it for you.

5                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh...

6                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I should have just given  
7                   the numbers I had from a couple of days ago...

8                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (LAUGHS)

9                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Crossroads is the 137?  
10                   Crossroads has 137.

11                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: One-thirty-seven and then  
12                   135.

13                   What is the percentage of young people at  
14                   Crossroads and Horizon that are going to school each  
15                   day?  
16                   day?

17                   COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So there's... of the  
18                   group that's compulsory, I think we were around,  
19                   somewhere around 80% that are going to school every  
20                   day.

21                   You heard from the school liaisons, the work that  
22                   they're doing, some of the young people, engaging  
23                   them when they're newly there to be able to come in.  
24                   That includes, you know, we've got court dates that  
25                   young people have to miss school for, they have

1  
2 medical appointments they have to miss school for,  
3 but we're really working in coordination with, not  
4 only with New York City Public Schools, but we've  
5 dedicated staff, who you met yesterday, too, right...

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: uh, who are responsible  
8 for going out in the halls, getting young people  
9 engaged, and getting them to school and it's working.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. We definitely saw  
11 that. But I know some of the issues that the  
12 providers talked about, even with the education  
13 piece, was, you know, they travel by... I think what  
14 is it called bunks or groups?

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Halls.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, their halls, that  
17 they're not getting the needed attention, whether  
18 it's around like the IEPs, and you know, being able  
19 to have distinguished education.

20 So, definitely, would love to talk further about  
21 some ways that we can help improve that- which was  
22 one of the reasons why we had Chair Joseph on the  
23 visit yesterday- to kind of see how we can get some  
24 suggestions.

1  
2 I know the superintendent came in at the end, but  
3 we're gonna meet with her as well to kind of talk  
4 about some of the suggestions as well.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Great.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What percentages are  
7 participating in non school activities or other  
8 scheduled programs each day? What's the percentage of  
9 youth who don't participate in school or programs?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'll get those  
11 percentages for you. We are constantly trying to...  
12 if they're not in a formal program, if they're not  
13 willing to go that day, we are working to bring stuff  
14 onto the halls to work with them to provide tutoring.

15 I would say it's a very low percentage, but we'll  
16 work on getting that to you. And the calendar that's  
17 available for each and every day, a lot of the  
18 tutoring is important here. I mean, you saw yesterday  
19 the brilliant puzzles that they had done.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Uh, 3,500 pieces.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I can't do it so...

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we are trying to  
24 engage them any way we can, but we'll get you more  
25 information on that about percentages.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many hours of programs  
3 does each young person detained in Crossroads and  
4 Horizon receive?

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We'll get that to you as  
6 well. We're working on at least a few hours a day.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I know I started at the  
8 top of this around some of the higher education stuff  
9 and working with the chair, but after the GED what  
10 are some of the opportunities that we have for young  
11 people? I mean even further than just higher  
12 education, what other options do we have for them?

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, this has been a  
14 real focus. The DC Ginsburg has brought in CUNY to be  
15 able to provide those college opportunities. In the  
16 summer we do SYEP, and they have different jobs via  
17 the SYEP work. We are looking at ways in which we can  
18 help them sort of understand career pathways.

19 The college, we really want them to be engaged  
20 there, and the young people really enjoy it. So we're  
21 grateful that we've been able to add that dimension.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The number of children who  
23 moved out of foster care placement to another  
24 increase for the first four months of Fiscal 2025 to  
25 1.4 per 1,000 care days, compared to the 1.3 per

1  
2 1,000 care days in Fiscal 2024; the number of youth  
3 entering foster care totaled 1,081 in the first four  
4 months of Fiscal 2025, 4.1% more than the 1,038 who  
5 entered foster care during the same period in Fiscal  
6 2024.

7 In the first four months of Fiscal 2025, the  
8 percentage of children entering foster care who were  
9 placed with relatives was 42.2%, a decline of 4.7%  
10 compared to the same period last year when it was  
11 48.9. This is below the target of 54%, and ACS has  
12 not exceeded that target since Fiscal 2022 when 4.8%  
13 of foster care placements were relatives.

14 Why did the number of foster care moves increase?

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So around the kin work,  
16 this is really important to us, look at it by  
17 borough. We have seen a major increase. We've set  
18 very aggressive goals around the 54%. We were in the  
19 low 30s and now have sustained to be the active  
20 population in care is around forty four percent.

21 Some of the decline we've seen on the front end,  
22 we hypothesize is a little about having more teens  
23 that are coming into our care. It's just a slight  
24 increase, and we did see some families, more families  
25

1  
2 than before, that were coming who were new New  
3 Yorkers and did not have local kin connections.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The providers continue  
6 to work on that. So another 10% or so are converted  
7 to kin during the time that children are in care. And  
8 so we never stop trying to engage kin.

9 We've also increased the reimbursement that we  
10 provide to kin providers right away, even before  
11 they're connected to a provider agency. So that night  
12 we're able to provide them resources and supports.

13 We also asked our Child And Family Specialists,  
14 who are social workers, to engage in the kin process  
15 to try to move this in the right direction. So we're  
16 very, focused on that.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why does ACS think... Well,  
18 I mean, you kind of already talked about why you  
19 think the percentage has dropped.

20 How's ACS working to better placements for foster  
21 care youth initiated to the needs to move youth from  
22 home to home?

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, and this is very,  
24 very important. Young people need to be stable.

1  
2 We are historically at a lower level this move,  
3 from 1.3 per thousand care days to 1.4, means that a  
4 few of kids were not stable. I believe the number is  
5 about 80% in a given year do not move. We do not want  
6 kids being bounced from home to home.

7 And the work of TRIPP, the TRIPP training model  
8 that we have now rolled out to all foster parents,  
9 it's trauma informed, making sure that they can meet  
10 the needs of young people.

11 We've allowed for... we used to have a small  
12 therapeutic program and then a larger regular  
13 program. We've combined those two so that agencies  
14 can move resources around. So if they need to add a  
15 therapist, a sociotherapist, quickly to support the  
16 young person and the foster parent, they can do that.

17 You know, these numbers are better than  
18 historically, but we don't want any time for a young  
19 person to be moving unnecessarily.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What factors are considered  
21 when evaluating if a young person should be placed in  
22 the home of a family member?

23 What supportive services and guidance is provided  
24 to family members who are new to foster care but have  
25

1  
2 the potential to provide more stability and familiar  
3 home settings to youth?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So the initial  
5 assessment is really a safety assessment. We do a  
6 local clearance, we talk to the child, understand if  
7 they feel safe in that home, we talk to and assess  
8 the home. And then there's the ongoing- once they're  
9 there, there's ongoing training and support.

10 As I was mentioning earlier, we have enhanced the  
11 support that we're providing in those early days.  
12 Additional resources so that they can make ends meet.  
13 We have made fixes to apartments where necessary.  
14 Providers have some budget dollars related to that as  
15 does the ACS folks. So we really try to reduce the  
16 trauma to young people coming into care.

17 We have seen a fairly important downtick in the  
18 census at the Children's Center. We have a ways to  
19 go, but we're really trying to make sure young people  
20 are not stuck in situations where they don't have  
21 placement. We see sort of horror stories nationally  
22 in that regard. But we have given the child and  
23 family specialist, that social worker, more  
24 responsibility and tools to support families upfront.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And the Preliminary Plan  
3 includes 7,028 budgeted positions for Fiscal 2025,  
4 decreasing to 7,027 position in Fiscal 2026 in the  
5 out and in the out years.

6 As of January 2025, 6,417 positions were filled  
7 at ACS leaving 611 vacancies. What type of positions  
8 are vacant? Which program areas are those positions  
9 in?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So we have about a 9%  
11 vacancy rate. I want to just give you some overall  
12 numbers. In 2023 our attrition rate was 17%, in 2024  
13 it was 14. The attrition rate for CPS has declined,  
14 its 20% this past year, and the YDS attrition is  
15 around 34%.

16 We have increased, I mentioned earlier, CPS about  
17 200 additional active. We also have over 105  
18 additional YDS active compared to two years ago. So  
19 we've been shrinking the vacancies and shrinking  
20 where folks are on leave.

21 So for Family Court Legal Services we have about  
22 38 vacancies— we have that class that starts over the  
23 summer. In CPS there are just around 33 vacancies out  
24 of the total; DYFJ forty five. And at the Children's  
25 Center, there are three, but we've worked with OMB to

1  
2 increase some support there. So they're allowing us  
3 to hire an additional 30 Child Congregate Care  
4 Specialists at the Children's Center.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How's ACS actively working  
6 to build those positions?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: In every way possible—  
8 we've done new ads for YDS and for CPS that have been  
9 in a variety of places. We have also been doing  
10 hiring halls and hiring pools. Our HR team has...  
11 every month we have a YDS class. We have four CPS  
12 classes. We've been able to make... we expanded the  
13 CPS classes and have been able to fill them.

14 So our HR team, along with our program folks,  
15 have been working really hard on that and very  
16 successfully.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please send over any  
18 vacancies that you're trying to fill. I get calls all  
19 the time in my office for people looking for work...

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So we're always willing to  
22 share. I will also employ, send this to all my  
23 colleagues too.

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Great.  
25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, I be (sic) volunteering  
3 them to do stuff all the time.

4 Are there any areas where ACS is having  
5 difficulty filling these vacancies? If so, what is  
6 being done to address this?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know, in every area,  
8 we've been able to identify strong staff, so we...  
9 it's hard work, but we aren't having any particular  
10 difficulties.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well that is the conclusion  
12 for ACS. Thank you guys for being here today. We  
13 appreciate all your hard work. And this part of the  
14 scheduled programming will now be over. We are going  
15 to take a quick recess.

16 Providers are... the public testimony is up next.  
17 Please know that we will be enforcing the time limit,  
18 because we have a number of folks who are here to  
19 testify. I am asking that people please listen to  
20 each other, let's all stay on queue, and let's get  
21 through this together.

22 And so we'll be taking a quick recess, and I will  
23 be back in 10 minutes.

24 (PAUSE)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I now open the hearing for  
3 public testimony. I remind members of the public that  
4 this is a formal government proceeding and that  
5 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,  
6 members of the public shall remain silent at all  
7 times.

8 The witness table is reserved for people who wish  
9 to testify. No video recording or photography is  
10 allowed from the witness table.

11 Further, members of the public may not present  
12 audio or video recordings as testimony, but may  
13 submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant  
14 at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

15 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please  
16 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms  
17 and wait to be recognized.

18 When recognized, you will have TWO minutes. I'm  
19 going to repeat, when you are recognized, you have  
20 two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic: *The*  
21 *Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.*

22 I am going to repeat it again: You have TWO  
23 minutes. If you have a written statement or  
24 additional testimony you wish to submit for the  
25

1  
2 record, please provide a copy of that testimony to  
3 the Sergeant at Arms.

4 I will now call the first panel. All right, we  
5 have Ira, we have Kate— Kate Connolly, Ira Yankwitt,  
6 Dr. Charles, Jeremy Kohomban, CEO of The Children's  
7 Village. Oh, Hi, Jeremy, I messed up your last name,  
8 sorry about that. Caitlyn Passaretti from Citizens'  
9 Committee for Children of New York, and Michelle  
10 Avila from Children's Aid.

11 (PAUSE)

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No particular order.

13 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Hello, thank Chair Stevens  
14 and all the members of the Committee for hosting this  
15 hearing. My name is Caitlyn Passaretti; I use she/her  
16 pronounces, and I am the Senior Policy and Advocacy  
17 Associate with Citizens' Committee for Children of  
18 New York.

19 My testimony will address the needs for  
20 Afterschool, Runaway and Homeless Youth, alternatives  
21 to incarceration, and needed State advocacy.

22 Afterschool programs provide vital supports and  
23 care for our city's young people. To ensure programs  
24 are robustly funded and providers are paid what they  
25 are owed, we must adjust the rates for COMPASS and

1  
2 SONYC. In partnership with the Campaign for Children,  
3 we urge the City to increase base rates for COMPASS  
4 elementary to \$4,900 and for SONYC middle school  
5 programs to \$4,150— this year— with the end goal of  
6 fully funding elementary and middle school programs  
7 in a new procurement in FY27.

8       Regarding runaway and homeless youth, we are  
9 grateful for the 100 beds funded in last year's  
10 budget. However, we also need the City to increase  
11 the rates for providers, have not been updated since  
12 2017, to \$70,000 per bed. This investment will  
13 provide safe, temporary housing for youth who  
14 otherwise would be without a stable option. We also  
15 urge you to restore and baseline the \$1.62 million  
16 for Peer Navigators and \$1.5 million for the Housing  
17 Specialists. Having a trusted support person to offer  
18 advice, resources, and answers for young people  
19 experiencing homelessness is an invaluable resource.

20       Additionally, we urge you to support investments  
21 meant to prevent justice system involvement for young  
22 people. Extensive research demonstrates the positive  
23 impacts of ATI and reentry programs, including  
24 lowering recidivism and crime. However, the  
25 Administration has cut \$6 million to these programs

1 since 2023. We are therefore asking for a restoration  
2 in baseline of \$3.3 million for the Impact Program,  
3 \$2.6 million for Next Steps, \$3.8 million for the  
4 Office of Criminal Justice for Alternatives to  
5 Incarceration Programs, and \$8 million for reentry  
6 programs.  
7

8 Finally, we urge you to work with the State to  
9 secure additional funding for the City's Child Care  
10 Block Grant. According to ACS, New York City is on  
11 the verge of exhausting available CCBG funds. This  
12 would result (TIMER CHIMES) in 4,000 to 7,000  
13 children losing childcare assistance each month.

14 It is urgent that city leaders work with the  
15 State to ensure City...

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds...

17 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: receives to prevent a  
18 dramatic drop in access to affordable childcare.

19 And then very quickly, the Commissioner of ACS  
20 mentioned the increase in young people in secured  
21 detention centers, and we just urge that ACS needs to  
22 continue their advocacy for a waiver of hardship to  
23 the State. Because there is \$1.5 billion for Raise  
24 the Age funding New York City is ineligible for  
25

1  
2 unless we submit a waiver of hardship, which has not  
3 ever been done.

4 And so we're urging the Council and ACS to work  
5 to get that hardship submitted. Thank you for the  
6 extra time.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

8 IRA YANKWITT: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and  
9 staff of the Committee. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and  
10 I am the Executive Director of the Literacy  
11 Assistance Center, as well as a proud member of the  
12 New York City Coalition For Adult Literacy.

13 As you know, there are currently over 2.2 million  
14 adults in New York City with limited English language  
15 proficiency or who do not have a high diploma. Yet  
16 combined City and State funding for adult literacy  
17 education is so limited that fewer than 3% of these  
18 New Yorkers are able to access adult basic education,  
19 GED or ESOL classes in any given year.

20 The overwhelming majority of the New Yorkers in  
21 need of adult literacy classes are poor and working  
22 class immigrants, women and people of color.

23 And while the need for adult education classes  
24 has only grown over the past two years, in FY25 the  
25 Adams' Administration inexplicably cut funding for

1 community based adult literacy programs funded  
2 through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17  
3 million to \$12 million. This reduction in funding has  
4 been maintained in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for  
5 FY26.  
6

7 Last week, the Trump administration dismantled  
8 the federal Department of Education's Division of  
9 Adult Education and Literacy, foreshadowing an  
10 anticipated cut, elimination or significant  
11 restructuring of the federal funding stream that  
12 currently provides approximately \$24.6 million a year  
13 in ABE, GED and ESOL funding to New York City. The  
14 loss of all this funding would eliminate seats for  
15 well over 20,000 students. According to the PMMR,  
16 there were over 18,000 students served in DYCD funded  
17 adult literacy programs in FY 24. Yet the \$12 million  
18 in funding for FY 25 and \$12 million proposed in  
19 funding for FY26 is slated to serve only 9,118  
20 students, just half the number of those served in  
21 FY24. Fortunately, this year the Council restored the  
22 Administration's cuts to services through its  
23 discretionary funding. But discretionary funding is  
24 never guaranteed, and it shouldn't be incumbent on  
25 the Council to subsidize the Administration and cover

1  
2 it for its failures to invest in core community  
3 needs.

4 We're calling on the Administration to double its  
5 baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded  
6 through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million, and  
7 we're deeply (TIMER CHIMES) grateful to the Council,  
8 and ask that you maintain your funding for  
9 discretionary contracts at the \$16.5 million level  
10 from FY26.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And you guys are  
12 doing a great job with the speed reading.

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 DR. CHARLES: Great, good afternoon, Chair  
15 Stevens. I'm Dr. Sophie Charles from the Council of  
16 Family and Child Caring Agencies, also known as  
17 COFCCA. We have the most of the foster care, child  
18 welfare, prevention services, juvenile justice  
19 agencies serving New York City families and children.

20 Five high items are on our advocacy priorities:  
21 Workforce, procurement, underfunded prevention  
22 contracts, liability insurance, and community based  
23 services for our youth.

24 On the workforce area, our turnover is 40%,  
25 sometimes higher. And we're looking to get the City

1 Council to invest in our workforce. We need pay  
2 parity, and we also need career development support.  
3 All of this is already on your agenda.  
4

5 And on the procurement side, our agencies are  
6 struggling to keep the doors open, to keep... to make  
7 payroll. At this point, the City delays and  
8 delinquent payments, you know, more than \$800 million  
9 for some of our providers.

10 And on the prevention contract side, underfunded.  
11 Right now, we're five years into a 10-year contract,  
12 and the agencies absolutely cannot keep up with  
13 inflation, the cost of rent, the cost of personnel.

14 And on the liability insurance side, our child  
15 welfare agencies are... many of them are under threat  
16 of losing insurance. They are either faced with, uh,  
17 sometimes as high as a 70% increase in premiums or  
18 just not having their premiums renewed at all. And so  
19 that creates major crisis that we're in right now.  
20 And our city will have to pick up on agencies that  
21 are not... the cost for agencies that are not able to  
22 get insurance, especially on the foster care side.

23 (TIMER CHIMES) And last, our youth in our  
24 juvenile justice programming, they need community  
25 based aftercare services to help with their

1  
2 developmental supports, GED, counseling, vocational  
3 training, and overall development services.

4 So we need your support on all of those. Thank  
5 you.

6 KATE CONNOLLY: Hello, and thank you for the  
7 opportunity to testify. My name is Kate Connolly; I'm  
8 a Senior Policy Analyst for United Neighborhood  
9 Houses, an umbrella organization that represents  
10 settlement houses across New York State.

11 I'd like to highlight three issues today:

12 First, Afterschool. This morning we delivered  
13 over 2,300 signatures, largely from parents, but also  
14 including afterschool participants and DOE teachers  
15 to the Mayor's Office, calling for a commitment to  
16 additional investments in this year's budget. As DYCD  
17 said earlier today, the last five years have been  
18 eventful, and afterschool providers have provided  
19 child care, academic support, mentorship, career  
20 development, mental health support, and more without  
21 fail during these eventful years. However, not only  
22 has afterschool been cut in recent years, as with the  
23 COMPASS Explore program, but they're also operating  
24 on budgets negotiated in 2011 and 2015. During this  
25 time, there have been no increases to the after

1 school base rates. This has created a crisis in our  
2 system. Staff recruitment and retention have  
3 struggled from stagnated wages, rising OTPS costs  
4 have put programs in an impossible position, and it's  
5 threatening the stability of afterschool programs  
6 across the city. And for the record, the COLA is not  
7 meant to be a substitute for increased rates.  
8

9 In November 2023, UNH released the True Cost of  
10 Afterschool Report with model budgets that reflected  
11 the real amount of funding needed to run afterschool  
12 programs. We're asking the City to commit to funding  
13 elementary school programs at a rate of \$6,600 per  
14 participant and SONYC programs at a rate of \$5,500  
15 per participant, with a down payment of half this  
16 year.

17 Number two, Summer Rising. I appreciate the  
18 question from Chair Stevens and Joseph during today,  
19 and last week's Education Hearing. Last week, during  
20 the hearing DOE released a review of the academic  
21 impact of the Summer Rising program. It showed that  
22 even for middle school participants who attended  
23 Summer Rising programming for 20+ days, there was no  
24 statistically significant impact on math scores, and  
25 they actually fared worse in reading scores than

1  
2 students who did not attend Summer Rising. DOE's data  
3 supports our recent report based on middle school  
4 focus groups in a survey of families and providers  
5 that Summer Rising is not an appropriate model for  
6 all middle school youth. We urge the City to offer  
7 choice by providing alternative summer programming  
8 options for middle school young people.

9       And third, payment delays. (TIMER CHIMES) Real  
10 quick— Earlier we heard from Council Member Avilés  
11 about the millions of dollars owed to Center for  
12 Family Life. I wish I could say that this was a  
13 unique experience. We've heard from many of our  
14 members that they're owed millions of dollars for  
15 FY24 and 25. And no provider that I've talked to has  
16 been paid out for Summer Rising programming in 2024.  
17 This should not be treated as a side problem, but a  
18 critical issue threatening the nonprofits in our  
19 city.

20       And I look forward to your hearing in April.  
21 Thank you.

22       MICHELLE AVILA: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and  
23 members of the Children and Youth Committee. Thank  
24 you for the opportunity to testify.

1  
2 My name is Michelle Avila and I'm the Director of  
3 Public Policy at Children's Aid. At Children's Aid,  
4 we're committed to ensuring that young people in New  
5 York City have no boundaries to their aspirations and  
6 no limits to their potential. We know a thriving city  
7 requires a strong ecosystem of programs that support  
8 children, youth, and families. We hold nearly 50  
9 contracts with the Department of Youth and Community  
10 Development for programs ranging from COMPASS, Summer  
11 Youth Employment, Adult Literacy and more. These  
12 programs are critical to the success of New York  
13 City's youth and families and continued investment in  
14 these services is essential.

15 For the FY26 Budget, we are calling for the  
16 reversal of a \$6.9 million cut to the COMPASS  
17 Afterschool system, and for the City to baseline \$19.  
18 64 million to the DYCD portion of Summer Rising  
19 programs for middle school youth.

20 To stabilize the afterschool system, we joined  
21 providers in urging the City to begin a phase-in  
22 process for higher per participant rates in the FY26  
23 COMPASS and SONYC contract extensions by including  
24 the total of \$154,324,800 in the budget.

1  
2 We also urge the City to release a concept paper  
3 for COMPASS and to commit to fully funding both  
4 elementary and middle school programs in the new  
5 procurement process.

6 As both a summer program and Summer Rising  
7 provider, we urge the City to meaningfully partner  
8 with providers to address and resolve operational  
9 concerns with Summer Rising.

10 We also urge the City to address disparities in  
11 funding across summer programs, especially for  
12 center-based programs, include Beacons and  
13 Cornerstones. These community hubs often face lower  
14 reimbursement rates and limited slots despite high  
15 demand. It is crucial to increase funding for all  
16 summer programs and expand program slots.

17 With respect to child welfare, we want to  
18 highlight the importance of prevention services in  
19 the child welfare system. We know these programs  
20 prevent families from entering the (TIMER CHIMES)  
21 foster care system, and that 99% of families engaged  
22 avoid... at Children's Aid avoid foster care system  
23 involvement.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.  
25

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MICHELLE AVILA: However, these services are growing fiscal deficits, and we urge the Council to ensure providers are paid the true cost of these services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, let's start off by saying you guys did an excellent job of trying to stick to your two minutes.

Also, I wanted to just give a special shoutout to all of the providers that have been here since nine o'clock this morning, who were out at rallies, who were delivering petitions to the other side. You guys have been with me all day. So I really appreciate you and your stamina. So I hope you guys went out, got food, and all the things. So I appreciate you guys all being here. It's really necessary.

I just have one question for this panel and it was for the young lady at the end. You talked about the hardship waiver for... that ACS needs to apply for? Could you just tell me a little bit more about that, because when the DAs were here as well, they were talking about Raise the Age and how we have not received adequate funding from the State. Just tell me a little more.

1  
2 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Definitely. So, Raise the Age  
3 was passed in 2017...

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm!

5 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Cuomo and di Blasio. There  
6 was...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I know the issue...

8 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Yeah, okay...

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The hardships, yeah...

10 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: The tax cap makes us not  
11 eligible.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm.

13 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: So New York City has 50% of  
14 the young people incarcerated, and yet we received no  
15 funding at all from the State.

16 So there's an opportunity that you can submit a  
17 waiver of hardship, which is a letter to the  
18 Governor, OCFS, OMB, and DCJS to express that even  
19 though we have this tax cap, we still would benefit  
20 from the resources coming down from the State to  
21 support all of the continuum of programs that Raise  
22 the Age offers— whether that's prevention, whether  
23 that's Close to Home or detention and also reentry  
24 and aftercare.

1  
2 We have not submitted a waiver. Will they approve  
3 it? I do not know, but we cannot get the money at all  
4 if we do submit this waiver... (CROSS-TALK)

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Submit this waiver...

6 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. We will  
8 definitely follow up with that. Because even when,  
9 like I said, when the DAs were here last week, they  
10 also spoke about after Raise the Age was passed,  
11 there was funding that we were supposed to get that  
12 we still haven't gotten. So I want to make sure that  
13 we are doing our part to ensure that we are getting  
14 all of the resources that we need to continue to do  
15 the work that we see as necessary.

16 But, with that, I do not have any more questions  
17 for this panel. Because I think addressed a lot of it  
18 today during the hearing. Didn't I? All right, well,  
19 great. Look at that, look at that.

20 All right, so we are going to get ready for our  
21 next panel. Let's call on down Shakeema North-Albert,  
22 Covenant House; I'm messing up these names and I  
23 apologize, Kha'ja Mendheim, sorry, guys, CDAF, DYCD;  
24 Tricia Mullen, Lehman College; Galloway, well, I know  
25

1 she just put Galloway, but I know her first name is  
2 Lauren; Paula Magnus, Northside; Carlina...

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think we need another chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I think we need another  
5 chair. Carolina Laise-Chong, Northside.

6 (PAUSE)

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Anyone can start.

8 (PAUSE)

9 DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Good Afternoon, Chair  
10 Stevens, members of the Children and Youth Committee,  
11 thank you all for the opportunity to testify today. I  
12 am Dr. Shakeema North-Albert, Chief Executive Officer  
13 at Covenant House New York.

14 I am here today to address a critical issue  
15 impacting the sustainability of our programs and  
16 services: the underfunding of current contracts that  
17 we have been told are now being extended for another  
18 two years and the failure to fund the citywide cost-  
19 of-living adjustments, as promised, at a compounded  
20 rate of 3% year over year from FY25 to FY27.

21 For years, Covenant House New York, and our  
22 sibling Runaway and Homeless Youth agencies, have  
23 partnered with the City to deliver essential programs  
24 that benefit our communities. However, the persistent  
25

1  
2 underfunding of these contracts has significantly  
3 strained our ability to maintain the high-quality  
4 services that youth and young adults in need depend  
5 on. And this challenge is further compounded by the  
6 heightened fear and uncertainty surrounding the  
7 future of the federal grants we rely on to fund key  
8 programs within our continuum of care. With potential  
9 cuts or delays in federal funding, we are facing an  
10 even greater risk of service disruptions at a time  
11 when our communities and our young people,  
12 especially, need stability and support the most.

13       Extending our current contracts without  
14 addressing the funding gaps only exacerbates the  
15 challenges we face to keep our doors open and provide  
16 the quality of services our young people in our care  
17 deserve to have. As costs continue to rise— whether  
18 due to inflation, increased operational expenses, or  
19 the need for competitive wages— the funding we  
20 receive remains stagnant, forcing us to do more with  
21 less.

22       Currently, the City funds our contracts at  
23 \$49,000-\$52,000 per bed, while our actual cost of  
24 operations for Covenant House New York is \$74,000 per  
25 bed. The gap, which amounts to about \$5.5 million,

1 forces us to find alternative funding sources to  
2 maintain services, which, in today's climate, is not  
3 a sustainable, long-term solution.  
4

5 Despite these challenges and the flat contract  
6 rates we have remained deeply committed to serving  
7 young people who come through our doors with quality  
8 programs and dedicated support.

9 Because of our staff's tireless efforts, (TIMER  
10 CHIMES) over 600 Covenant House youth engaged in  
11 mental health services last year.

12 Like many RHY providers...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

14 DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Covenant House has  
15 been asked to take on additional beds. While opening  
16 100 new beds would undoubtedly provide more resources  
17 for runaway and homeless youth and young adults in  
18 need, it is simply not sustainable to expand the  
19 capacity when we lack the necessary resources to  
20 support the beds we already provide.

21 I urge the Council to ensure... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I see you turning pages. You  
23 are running over time.

24 DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: Yeah, I, lastly...

25 (CROSS-TALK)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Wrap it up.

3 DR. SHAKEEMA NORTH-ALBERT: I just want to urge  
4 the Council to ensure that the current contract  
5 extensions come with appropriate funding adjustments  
6 to reflect what it costs to run quality programming  
7 that our youth deserve and that the COLA issued last  
8 year is funded in the way our staff deserves.

9 Specifically, I'm asking for an increase in the  
10 bed rate on the current DYCD contracts of \$70,000 per  
11 bed— this includes the 100 new beds— and fund the  
12 compounding COLA increases at 3% year over year as  
13 promised. Thank you for your time and your  
14 consideration.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

16 KHA'JA MENDHEIM: Hello, I'm Kha'ja, I'm with the  
17 Youth Advocacy Board at Ali Forney Center. I offer  
18 you my perspective based off of my lived experience  
19 and also informed by my peers based off the advocacy  
20 work that we do.

21 We believe that DYCD must approach youth  
22 homelessness, youth chronic homelessness, with a  
23 holistic lens. The truth is that 40% of homeless...  
24 people homeless youth are LGBT and many of them need  
25 mental health resources.

1  
2 And also through navigating these ,like,  
3 Kafkaesque, bureaucratic systems, one, it increases  
4 and exasperates those mental health challenges, but  
5 also it makes it harder to navigate those systems in  
6 the future.

7 We know, like, from our pioneers that justice  
8 deferred is justice denied, and a dream deferred  
9 dries up like a raisin in the sun. And our youth are  
10 our dreams, and in this time, especially in this  
11 climate, we can't allow our social services to be  
12 under attack or fall under atrophy.

13 A lot of like 16 like... the 16 Housing  
14 Specialist providers are currently funded by a  
15 federal grant and that grant is soon going to be  
16 running out. And in this current climate, where our  
17 federal infrastructure is being dismantled in  
18 general, I think it's important that the City step in  
19 and not only fill the gaps that we are perceiving  
20 that the federal government might lack in, but also  
21 to take the chance to reinforce our social services  
22 network in general. So that's it. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you, and you did  
24 great.

1  
2 GALLOWAY: Good afternoon, Chair Stephens, and  
3 council members of the Children and Youth Committee.  
4 My name is Galloway, I'm the Advocacy Manager at the  
5 Ali Forney Center, and I stand before you today not  
6 only as an advocate but for a voice for the thousands  
7 of young people in this city that have been abandoned  
8 for far too long.

9 Right now across New York City, Black and brown  
10 trans and queer youth are being forced into  
11 homelessness, pushed out by families who reject them,  
12 by policies designed to erase them, and by systems  
13 that refuse to invest in their survival.

14 LGBTQ youth are a 120 times more likely to be put  
15 into these systems of survival as opposed to their  
16 non LGBTQ peers. This is not a coincidence. This is a  
17 result of systemic harm, disinvestment, and neglect,  
18 and this is a crisis we have the power to change.

19 New York City calls itself a sanctuary, but a  
20 sanctuary is not a word. It is a responsibility. That  
21 means taking real action to protect LGBTQ youth,  
22 especially those arriving here after fleeing anti-  
23 LGBTQ Executive Orders and violence. It means funding  
24 survival.

1  
2 We need \$16.4 million added to the Runaway and  
3 Homeless Youth Budget, because our youth cannot wait.  
4 This funding will expand programs to meet urgent  
5 needs of newly arriving queer and trans youth, and we  
6 need those 100 additional beds— Shoutout to Chair  
7 Stevens for getting us those beds— we gotta make sure  
8 they're contracted, y'all, at that \$70K bed rate,  
9 because inflation is real, and the bed rates that are  
10 out right now are not working.

11 We need more of just things on the floor. We need  
12 solutions. But shelter alone is not enough. Housing  
13 is more than a bed. It is stability, safety, and the  
14 ability to build a future. This is why we must invest  
15 in Peer and Housing Navigators to help our youth  
16 through the system that was not built for them,  
17 financial coaches to help them achieve economic  
18 security, and wrap around services that support not  
19 just their survival but their healing and liberation.

20 The question before you today is simple. Will you  
21 fund survival or will you fund harm? LGBTQ youth are  
22 coming to us— we do not need more delays, we do not  
23 need more excuses, we need this investment and we  
24 need it now.

1  
2 So thank you so much for your time, and I  
3 appreciate (TIMER CHIMES) all the others that  
4 amplified the runaway homeless youth needs.

5 PAULA MAGNUS: Good afternoon, I'm Paula Magnus,  
6 Deputy Director at Northside Center for Child  
7 Development, where we are a mental health and  
8 educational center serving at risk children in Harlem  
9 and throughout New York City. We know the stark  
10 reality, thousands of New York City children  
11 struggling in poverty, unsafe conditions, and all  
12 that you've heard thus far.

13 A health study revealed alarming rates of  
14 clinical depression, anxiety, and loneliness among  
15 young people with significant impacts on their daily  
16 lives. We witnessed this struggle firsthand in our  
17 ACS Prevention and DYCD Afterschool and Summer  
18 Programs, yet we face critical financial deficits in  
19 both programs. We urge the City to recognize that  
20 investing in the safety, the future, and the mental  
21 health support for the well-being of at risk children  
22 is not just a priority, it is a fundamental  
23 responsibility.

24 We respect and request that the City move towards  
25 a model of full-cost funding of programs providing



1  
2 College Adult Learning Center. Each year, we serve  
3 1,000 of your constituents, employ 12 full-time, and  
4 25 part time New York City residents who are also  
5 your constituents. As a member of NYCAL (phonetic), I  
6 implore the Administration to double its baseline  
7 funding for adult literacy from \$12 million to \$24  
8 million, restoring last year's cuts, and maintain  
9 the \$16.5 million for the Adult Literacy Pilot and  
10 the Adult Literacy Initiative.

11 My center is not a beneficiary of those  
12 contracts, but I'm here as the canary in the coal  
13 mine, because of the \$24 million of federal adult  
14 literacy funding that comes to New York City, my  
15 center receives \$1 million. It is very likely that we  
16 will not get that million, or if we get that million,  
17 I won't be able to run my programs this year, because  
18 the money will be so late in the chaos.

19 So I'm here to just say that I was there in the  
20 Bronx four years ago when Lehman Adult Literacy  
21 programs were created. They were created by social  
22 workers to address the social, economic, and  
23 political inequity. If our center, excuse me, if our  
24 center is not funded, the extreme impact of the  
25 likely loss of federal adult literacy funds that will

1 fall on underfunded DYCD providers who serve our  
2 undereducated and unemployed New York City residents,  
3 will once again be in crisis.

4  
5 These are underfunded City services— as we talked  
6 about today, they're very often... there are delays  
7 in their reimbursements. I lose my million, I'm very  
8 likely to lose my million, there certainly will be  
9 delays. (TIMER CHIMES) That's gonna cause  
10 constituents to suffer.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I do not have any  
12 questions for this panel. So, thank you, at this  
13 time.

14 Right now I have— and I'm not sure if they're  
15 here, because this is the panel of young people,  
16 Ashanti Bennons from Groundswell, Brooke from  
17 Groundswell as well, Nate Duvall from Groundswell,  
18 are they here? No? All right, I don't think they're  
19 here, so I will put this panel on hold.

20 Oh, is that you? Oh, you are here! Okay, well,  
21 let me go back. All right, well, let's start over:  
22 Nate Duval, Brooke Fyffe, Ashanti Bennon from  
23 Groundswell, Rebekah Kwong from Lower East Side Girls  
24 Club, and Rebekah Dzah from Armory College  
25 Preparatory. All right, well, I have some more

1 students, Lady Beina from Armory College Preparatory,  
2 Journey Johnson from Armory College Preparatory, Yi  
3 Lin Zhou from Girls from Gender Equity, Jonee Billy  
4 from Power Play NYC, Mia Lema Lindao, and Vick from  
5 Row NY.  
6

7 Whenever you guys are ready you can start.

8 NATE DUVALL: Hello, My name is Natalie Duvall  
9 Estrella (phonetic), preferably Nate, and I'm in  
10 Helping Artist in Groundswell. Thank you for the  
11 opportunity to speak today about the critical role  
12 about... nonprofits play in supporting mental health  
13 and why additional funding is essential for our  
14 communities.

15 As a working artist personally, I've been having,  
16 like, I've been seeing how society's been, like,  
17 getting a hard time... having a hard time with things  
18 such as jobs. And since it's hard to get a job  
19 nowadays as a young person, it's good to have these  
20 things such as Groundwell on my résumé. And working  
21 with other artists in the same position as I am is  
22 quite nice. This year I've been working on a project  
23 along with other young artists with the Visual AIDS  
24 Women's Empowerment Group to raise awareness about  
25 the ongoing epidemic of AIDS— fun fact, based off of

1 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,  
2 African American females were 10 times more likely  
3 than non Hispanic, white females to have a diagnosis  
4 of HIV infection in 2022— that's not a very unknown  
5 fact... I mean, not very known fact, which is why  
6 we're making a mural for those women. Not only that,  
7 but I've been working with well, I just said it...  
8 I've been working with young artists, and they...  
9 they're actually very sweet people. I was... they're  
10 like... they've been... I'm sorry. I've never done  
11 this before. Okay. (LAUGHS) Yeah, but...

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right, stop saying  
13 you're sorry...

14 NATE DUVALL: (LAUGHS)

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're doing great. Calm  
16 down, relax, you're doing great.

17 NATE DUVALL: Okay, working with young artists is  
18 very fun and very nice, especially for the fact that  
19 they are just as nervous as I am talking to people  
20 (LAUGHS). And speaking with them was really nice,  
21 because of the fact that we have all been able to get  
22 more extraverted. And I have been able to get more  
23 comfortable in myself while working with these  
24 artists, because I have noticed that a lot of us have  
25

1  
2 amazing personalities, and we just don't show it off  
3 because we're so uncomfortable with ourselves. And  
4 with nonprofits you show yourself more with people  
5 that you feel comfortable with. So, yeah, that's why  
6 we should have...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good job.

8 (APPLAUSE)

9 NATE DUVALL: Yeah.

10 (PAUSE)

11 REBEKAH KWONG: Greetings, my name is Rebekah,  
12 and I am a 15-year-old girl who is attending the  
13 Clinton School. I first want to thank committee  
14 members for the opportunity to speak today about the  
15 critical role nonprofits play in supporting youth  
16 development, youth mental health, and why additional  
17 funding is essential for our communities.

18 I have personally experienced the impact of  
19 nonprofits always being there for everyone, even if  
20 they're in need of support. I have been a member of  
21 the Lower East Side Girls Club for a fifth of my  
22 entire life, and I would 100% say I haven't regretted  
23 a second of my time here. I used to be isolated and  
24 lacked motivations or drive to do anything. I was  
25 failing classes and had only two other people other

1  
2 than my family. The Girls Club allowed me to open up  
3 my eyes and grasp what I wanted to be. I got to meet  
4 many young women, career women, and most of all, kind  
5 and supportive people. They helped me set goals for  
6 myself, be kind to myself, and to others. They  
7 brought me to STARS Citywide Girls Initiative events  
8 where I was met with the opportunity to be a Fellow  
9 and meet other people like me and speak about issues  
10 we were passionate about.

11 We met and had vision sessions to share our ideas  
12 for the future and laid out plans on how to achieve  
13 this. We held town halls and presented our ideas to  
14 the public. Here, we showed that our young minds are  
15 capable and what would support us at this time.

16 STARS CGI and Girls Club introduced me to public  
17 speaking. It helped to grow me into standing up for  
18 myself and thinking about a better future for  
19 communities. I will never forget the adults who made  
20 my current life happen. I changed for the better,  
21 seeing for the harsh reality around us, but also the  
22 beauty of the world and planning for everyone, not  
23 just some. I learned to be thoughtful of the  
24 diversity we have in New York City so everyone is  
25

1  
2 heard; I learned to be confident, how to maintain a  
3 good mental state.

4 Without these nonprofits, I wouldn't be standing  
5 where I am. Many women wouldn't be where they are  
6 today. (TIMER CHIMES) People have careers because of  
7 Girls Club and STARS. I can't repay them back other  
8 than being here today representing them. Even though  
9 I feel nervous and anxious, I want to be here,  
10 because these organizations matter to me— which is  
11 why I urge you to consider increasing funding for  
12 youth-serving nonprofits like STARS CGI and Lower  
13 East Side Girls Club. They are organizations  
14 committed to growing young leaders. They have helped  
15 people invest in their future, brought people  
16 together, and so, so, so much more. It is so  
17 important at this time.

18 In closing, youth well-being is not a luxury. It  
19 is a necessity. Initiatives like STARS CGI and  
20 organizations like the Girls Club play a vital role  
21 in ensuring young people like me have access to care  
22 and support we all need to make mistakes, learn,  
23 grow. With continued and additional funding, they can  
24 continue to provide safe spaces, mentorship, and  
25 critical resources that truly change lives.

1  
2 I appreciate the opportunity to share my  
3 experience and advocate for increased support. Let me  
4 remind you, each one of us is a person, and we have  
5 different things that matter to us. These nonprofit  
6 organizations are a sole reason I stay standing up  
7 and many other people would feel the same. We young  
8 people are the future, and we need the help you can  
9 provide. Thank you.

10 JONEÉ BILLY: Good evening, Chair Stevens..  
11 Gotcha, no problem (LAUGHS). I am Joneé Billy, I am  
12 here on behalf, I'm in a dual capacity, on behalf of  
13 PowerPlay and STARS CGI, and thank you for having us  
14 here, uh, as well as some of our young people from  
15 our organizations.

16 PowerPlay is now in its 27th year. It's dedicated  
17 to empowering thousands of girls across all five  
18 boroughs of New York City. We use sports to propel  
19 girls beyond circumstances, providing access to  
20 experiences, strong female role models, and a  
21 blueprint for opportunities. Moreover, PowerPlay  
22 serves as the lead agency for STARS CGI, a coalition  
23 of 10 nonprofits. Together, we serve the healthy...  
24 we support the healthy development of over 6,000  
25 girls and gender expansive youth, helping them

1  
2 overcome barriers and become leaders in their  
3 communities.

4 STARS CGI is deeply committed to addressing the  
5 social emotional needs of our city's youth. We have  
6 witnessed a significant increase in mental health  
7 needs, especially among young people of color.  
8 Recognizing this critical gap, STARS CGI has  
9 prioritized equipping youth with strategies for  
10 social and emotional well-being while empowering them  
11 to speak out on societal issues.

12 Funding restoration will be critical in our  
13 effort to continue to provide high quality youth  
14 development programming to the communities we  
15 currently serve. Today, federal directives against  
16 diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations have  
17 left us in a tenuous position. Not only do we derive  
18 nearly 50% of our funding from federal grants, but we  
19 fear for the effect that this will have on all  
20 avenues of funding. A growing list of foundations and  
21 corporate donors have eliminated their in house DEI  
22 initiatives and all related giving.

23 PowerPlay's funding has already been impacted by  
24 the shift of foundations serving Black girls—  
25 rescinded \$25,000 of pledged funds in FY24— citing

1  
2 the fact that funders have very abruptly shifted  
3 their commitments to us with little to no warning.

4 We cannot anticipate the duration or severity of  
5 this new public sentiment, and more so... now more so  
6 than ever, require New York City Council's support to  
7 continue operations. We appreciate your consideration  
8 of this request.

9 Currently funded at \$1.4 million, of which  
10 PowerPlay receives \$550,000, we seek full funding  
11 restoration and an enhancement to \$2 million to  
12 expand and deepen our impact. (TIMER CHIMES)

13 PowerPlay's portion would increase to \$600,000  
14 ensuring we reach more young people in District 16  
15 and beyond.

16 Thank you for allowing me this time to testify  
17 today.

18 MIA LEMA LINDAO: Hi...

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You were here last year,  
20 right?

21 UNKNOWN: Yes, I was.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I'm talking to the young  
23 person.

24 MIA LEMA LINDAO: Oh, yes, I was here last time.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I remember your face.

(LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: See, I remember faces, I don't know names.

MIA LEMA LINDAO: So, my name is Mia Lema Lindao, I've worked... well, not worked, but I've been in Sadie Nash for two years. I joined my junior year, I'm currently 17 years old, and right now a senior at the Heritage School.

So joining Sadie Nash my junior year, I'll be honest with you, I had no idea what I was walking into. For starters, I didn't... I was top of my school, literally at top of my school, but yet I had no foundation, like, built for me. I had no... I felt like I wasn't being understood. I had no support, personally. And when I joined Sadie Nash, personally, I felt like I was being supported by not just the, like, the staff members there, but also my own peers. I was surrounded with people who thought like me and that were like me. Maybe they weren't Hispanic or my name, but they were definitely girls out there who shared the same interests, and definitely wanted to step out the whole... what's that word again? The whole stereotypical minority and not stepping out.

1  
2       So definitely, Sadie Nash has taught me to step  
3 out of my comfort zone and present myself more  
4 confidently. They also showed me what I should stand  
5 up for. I didn't know what I should stand up for, but  
6 definitely, Sadie Nash has taught me and showed me  
7 how communities like ours don't really get a lot of  
8 support, and because of that, they led me to believe  
9 in a good social justice. They led me to believe in a  
10 good, equal school system, which I'm a be honest, I  
11 wasn't very informed back in junior year, but now I  
12 can say I have much more information, and I have more  
13 of a passion to just stand with my foot on the  
14 ground.

15       And transitioning that, because I enjoyed just  
16 the junior year, was like, hey, kinda wanna do it  
17 again, which is now I'm currently in Nash-U in Sadie  
18 Nash. And like I said, all our peers will support  
19 each other, and I feel like it's a great fundings  
20 because we went to events with STARS CGI. We did  
21 events like the City Hall one, where I met you, and  
22 we did events like even outside of that. And I can  
23 say that it definitely prepared me to feel more  
24 comfortable and be confident. And not only that,  
25 (TIMER CHIMES) they really set you up for the real

1 world experience, which I think a lot of people  
2 should experience, because I think a lot more people  
3 should join in and the funding, we need it. Okay? We  
4 need it.  
5

6 All the all the good stuff. Okay? When I tell  
7 you, all the trips that we go to, it's not just a  
8 (INAUDIBLE) boneless of a with no foundation. Like,  
9 every trip has a meaning, and I feel like we should  
10 be able to join more trips. Not even that, for junior  
11 year, most of our courses online... were most of our  
12 courses in, like, the leisure scholar was online. So  
13 it got to the point where even all of us were like,  
14 hey, wanna meet up in person more. We wanna get to  
15 know each other. Matter of fact, I like seeing  
16 everyone's face because that's how comfortable we  
17 are. So this year, now that everything is more in  
18 person, I feel like we deserve that. And definitely  
19 deserve more people around because, yes, it's a small  
20 group, and we get to know each other, but why not  
21 make it bigger? Why not open everyone's eyes? Why  
22 limit ourselves? And that's what I can offer, so  
23 thank you.

24 ISABELLA PEREZ: Good afternoon, my name is  
25 Isabella, and I'm currently a student who's part of

1  
2 the Armory College Prep Program, which aims to  
3 support students who plan on going to college as  
4 their post secondary path. And firstly, thank you so  
5 much for the opportunity today to speak to you about  
6 the fundamental role that nonprofits play in ensuring  
7 the success and development of the youth and  
8 especially students in our communities.

9       As a person of color who grew up in the projects  
10 and is from a low income household, going to college  
11 was never really in the picture for me, I thought it  
12 was too difficult, and I thought it was way too  
13 expensive. But through the networking opportunities  
14 that have been granted to me through this program, I  
15 was able to meet a Columbia Admissions Officer, and I  
16 was able to ask her all these burning questions I had  
17 about the admissions process. And I truly felt that I  
18 could have a chance to go to Columbia, one of the top  
19 universities in in the country. And I felt like I...  
20 I felt much more confident in my abilities, which is  
21 something I wouldn't have the opportunity to do if I  
22 weren't part of ACP or if I weren't part of a  
23 nonprofit in in general.

24       And I feel like the people that I meet in... that  
25 I meet, and the people that I'm around in those

1  
2 programs, also have the similar... a similar goal as  
3 me— which really just motivates me all the time to do  
4 better, to perform better, and to ultimately get to a  
5 good school— all those names on the on the wall of  
6 these people who went to Yale, to Babson, to  
7 Brandeis, and that really motivates me.

8 And through nonprofits that are geared towards  
9 our youth, students are truly able to recognize their  
10 potential and give their best performance, which is  
11 always ideal in everything.

12 And I believe that with more funding, that  
13 provides students with more opportunity to experience  
14 what I... what I have, and also for them to  
15 experience an environment that provides them with the  
16 unconditional support that is truly necessary in able  
17 to succeed (TIMER CHIMES) and that's it. Thank you so  
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You did great. I wasn't  
20 gonna cut you off, but thank you.

21 ISABELLA PEREZ: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will never cut young  
23 people off who have the courage to come and tell us  
24 what we need. So I appreciate all of you powerful  
25 young people to be here today. I know we have some

1  
2 more young people in the audience. We are definitely  
3 gonna give it up to them. They had... I'm sure some  
4 of you guys are coming from school. So thank you for  
5 being here, and we really appreciate it. And I have  
6 no questions for this panel.

7 UNKNOWN: (UN-MIC'D) (INAUDIBLE)

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You did?

9 UNKNOWN: (UN-MIC'D) (INAUDIBLE)

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I love that. She just made  
11 my heart sing. So, I've been trying to get young  
12 people to join Community Boards, because that is a  
13 definite necessity. And she heard me. Look at that. I  
14 didn't even have to harass her. So she remembered. I  
15 appreciate that. That just made my heart sing.

16 We do have some young people on Zoom. And they  
17 are here, so we are going to transition over really  
18 quickly for remote testimony, and then we will come  
19 back to in person.

20 Please listen for your names to be called. Once  
21 your name is called, a member of our staff will  
22 unmute you, you may then start your testimony once  
23 the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock and tells you  
24 that you may begin.

2 So we have Aaisha (sic) Hernandez online, Alyssa  
3 Hernandez?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 (PAUSE)

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You may begin.

7 ALYSSA HERNANDEZ: My name is Alyssa Hernandez,  
8 and I've been in New York Edge for the last three  
9 years. I really had fun learning and getting the  
10 chance to spend time with my friends and the staff  
11 here. Some of my favorite activities/clubs have been  
12 creating a book when I was in sixth grade. Our book  
13 has been published, it is called "A Dragon's Tale".  
14 And I was also able to create my own video game in  
15 our coding club.

16 My favorite memory was last year's carnival. I  
17 was able to play with inflatable with fun games and  
18 chill with my friend... and have fun with my friends.

19 My entire time in New York Edge has been very  
20 fun, and I... and I enjoyed being able to spend time  
21 with my... with my friends and do cool activities.

22 I'm really... I'm always happy here, because I  
23 get to spend time with my friends and try new  
24 experiences.

25

1                   While I'm in New York Edge, I feel happy because  
2  
3 I get to spend time with my friends and try new  
4 experiences.

5                   (PAUSE)

6                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's it?

7                   ALYSSA HERNANDEZ: Yes.

8                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, great, thank you. We  
9 have... I am going to really mess this name up, so I  
10 apologize in advance, Cheikhou Diouf online.

11                  SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin when you're  
12 ready.

13                  CHEIKHOU DIOUF: That wasn't a bad pronunciation,  
14 but let's begin.

15                  Good afternoon, Councilmen and Councilwomen, my  
16 name is Cheikhou Diouf, and for the last two years I  
17 have been part of New York Edge. I'm a senior at the  
18 Community School of Social Justice, and thank you for  
19 your time.

20                  New York Edge has been... has made significant  
21 impacts in my life overall by all the opportunities  
22 they've given me— such as going to trips to places  
23 like Baltimore, which I would have never gone to had  
24 it not been for them. We went to Morgan State and  
25 (INAUDIBLE) State, and being in these colleges has

1  
2 like... physically, it gives you an experience as to  
3 what it's like to actually be there. You don't have  
4 to picture it in your head. And I could have never  
5 afforded the opportunities to go there had they not  
6 given me the opportunities.

7       Being a part of New York Edge has been amazing.  
8 It exposes you to different things that you would  
9 have never been exposed to in the first place, such  
10 as going to UConn. I have never gone to UConn, but  
11 because of them, I was able to go there. Being to...  
12 going to UConn, meeting the teachers, talking to  
13 staff members gave me the confidence to apply to  
14 UConn. And I was accepted to UConn, and it made me  
15 cry because of all the years of hard work and  
16 sacrifice, but the confidence to be able to do that  
17 came from New York Edge.

18       While in, CSJ at my school, they created a school  
19 store to help students have more options when it came  
20 to, like, food. They created perfect attendance  
21 incentives such as NBA games, Six Flags, and going to  
22 Medieval Times. They also created new clubs such as  
23 painting a mural, which we actually did, DJ and  
24 podcasting.

1  
2 They've also given me the opportunity to apply  
3 for scholarships to help fund my college dreams,  
4 which I would have never known had it not been for  
5 them.

6 They've also created internship programs for me  
7 and seniors to work with elementary schoolers, middle  
8 schoolers, and even in hospitals, which has been...  
9 which has broadened my, just understanding of life,  
10 basically being exposed to new things.

11 And they've also done Google Certificate,  
12 programs to help me just broaden my range... my  
13 build up my résumé even more.

14 And throughout my journey, New York Edge has been  
15 a great support (TIMER CHIMES) from all the staff  
16 members to everyone who's here.

17 And, like, moving forward, I would feel very  
18 comfortable for kids from my school to have New York  
19 Edge support them. I think they deserve all the  
20 funding in the world, because they make so much  
21 happen with so little— rather than saying, "I'll do  
22 this," they actually do it— which is a life changer  
23 for some of us who don't actually see impact most of  
24 the times. So thank you for your time.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Next we will have  
3 Hannah Comarao (phonetic).

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 NEOMI NEPTUNE: Hi, my name is Neomi Neptune, and  
6 I go to MS 127.

7 So, firstly, I introduced to New York Edge...  
8 Yeah, I was firstly I introduced to New York Edge  
9 when I was a young girl, because my mom works in a  
10 public school, I used to go to Catholic school.

11 But firstly, I wanted to talk about how the New  
12 York Edge Afterschool Program provides many benefits  
13 that help students thrive both academically and  
14 socially.

15 The program offers a variety of experience that I  
16 look forward to every day, such as basketball. They  
17 help us do extracurricular work, like, workouts and  
18 stuff. They offer trips that make me exposed to  
19 different environments, such as, colleges or high  
20 schools and stuff like that.

21 So I attended Catholic school from Kindergarten  
22 to seventh grade until I transferred to MS 127. My  
23 mom is a teacher in the school, and I particularly  
24 grew up here wishing that I could take part of all  
25 these activities that go on during afterschool. My

1  
2 old school never took us on trips or did fun  
3 activities, so all of this was something fun and  
4 exciting for me.

5 As a student, I have strongly believed that  
6 cutting the afterschool program would be a huge  
7 mistake. This program is not just an opportunity for  
8 fun, it plays a crucial role in our academic and  
9 personal development. Firstly, it provides us with  
10 the chance to engage in subjects we may not fully  
11 explore during regular school hours, such as  
12 leadership, art, or SEL through hands on activities  
13 and projects. These experiences reinforce what we  
14 learn in class and help us develop critical thinking  
15 and problem solving skills.

16 Additionally, the afterschool program offers a  
17 safe space for us to unwind and socialize with  
18 friends, fostering teamwork, and collaboration.

19 Beyond academics, we're we participate in sports,  
20 clubs, and creative activities that allow us to  
21 discover new passions and build confidence.

22 By nurturing our interest outside of this  
23 traditional classroom setting, the afterschool  
24 program helps us create well rounded individuals and  
25 encourages us to stay engaged in our education.

1  
2 If this program were cut, we would lose valuable  
3 opportunities for growth, exploration, and connection  
4 with our peers, making school a less enjoyable place  
5 to be.

6 Lastly, (TIMER CHIMES) spending time with friends  
7 can reduce stress and anxiety, which are common among  
8 different students. In a safe environment, we can  
9 relax, have fun, and unwind from academic pressures  
10 leading to a healthier balance in our lives. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Next, we have  
13 Isabella Navarro.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 ISABELLA NAVARRO: (NO RESPONSE)

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Neomi Neptune? Danny Lam?

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

18 DANNY LAM: Good afternoon, I am actually not a  
19 student, but I am with New York Edge.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Great, you will have two  
21 minutes...

22 DANNY LAM: Madam Chair, and members of the  
23 committee, I'm here today to ask that you prioritize  
24 New York Edge's FY26 funding request. We are seeking  
25 \$1.2 million under the Council's Afterschool

1  
2 Enrichment Initiative and \$250,000 under the  
3 Council's Social-Emotional Supports for Students  
4 Initiative.

5 Our council citywide funding has remained at \$1  
6 million for the past 15, even though we have tripled  
7 in size, and have significantly increased the number  
8 of students served.

9 New York Edge is the largest provider of school-  
10 based afterschool and summer programming in New York  
11 City, serving 33,000 students in over 100 schools in  
12 37 of the 51 Council Districts. Our mission is to  
13 help bridge the opportunity gap among students and  
14 underinvested communities.

15 Core components of our programming includes STEM  
16 education, social-emotional learning and leadership,  
17 visual and performing arts, sports, health and  
18 wellness, academics, and career, and college  
19 readiness and summer programs.

20 We are identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest  
21 afterschool provider in the nation offering SEL  
22 learning... SEL supports. We are also one of the  
23 city's largest providers of college access programs.

24 Council citywide funding has enabled us to enrich  
25 and expand our programs and has allowed us to develop

1  
2 and implement new, unique engagement programs such as  
3 our award winning student-led podcast formative, our  
4 book publishing program, our Heart for the Arts  
5 program, our partnership with the Van Gogh Museum in  
6 Amsterdam, and our Read Across New York Edge program.

7 New York Edge, its students, and families are  
8 extremely grateful for the Council's 33 years of  
9 support. Together, we are guiding students so they  
10 grow up healthy, happy, and empowered. Together, are  
11 creating the next generation of active and productive  
12 community members and problem solvers. Together, we  
13 are creating New York City's next generation of  
14 doctors, mechanics, chefs, writers, and so much more.

15 The time has come where increased funding is  
16 vitally needed. Unlike contracts with DYCD and other  
17 agencies, council discretionary contracts are not  
18 eligible for COLA increases. This is making it  
19 increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract  
20 maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the  
21 wide array of programs we are known for. We're now  
22 looking to you to meet the needs of the next  
23 generation of young people by supporting our funding  
24 request. Thank you. (TIMER CHIMES)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And he was under two  
3 minutes, and we didn't have to cut him off. Great.

4 We will be moving back to in person panels. Thank  
5 you for those who waited. But it is always important  
6 to make sure that we are creating spaces for young  
7 people to be part of this civic engagement. So I did  
8 promise that as soon as they jumped on, that I would  
9 let them go. So, sorry for the delay. But I think  
10 we... We're all providers, so we know what that is,  
11 right? Thank you.

12 So, in person panel: Anthony Rowe from Center for  
13 Justice Innovation, Jazmine Reed from Figure Skating  
14 in Harlem, Rachel Walman from the Green-Wood  
15 Cemetery, Sebastien Vante from Safe Horizons, Illiana  
16 Santiago, Jason Alleyne from Exalt. And I apologize  
17 again for butchering people's names because I'm not  
18 really good at, so, sorry.

19 No particular order, anyone can start.

20 JAZZ REED: All right, good afternoon, you guys.  
21 My name is Jazz Reed, good afternoon, council  
22 members, and Chair Stevens.

23 I am honored to speak today as a Development And  
24 Communications Manager for Figure Skating in Harlem.  
25 Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for

1  
2 increased funding for Youth Programming in New York  
3 City.

4 For over 28 years, Figure Skating in Harlem has  
5 empowered young girls of color through a unique blend  
6 of education and figure skating. We provide academic  
7 support, leadership development, and health and  
8 wellness programming ensuring our students gain the  
9 confidence and skills to succeed both on and off the  
10 ice. Our mission is not about skating, it's about  
11 breaking barriers and creating opportunities for  
12 young people who are under resourced.

13 The impact of our work is clear, our students  
14 maintain in an 100% high school graduation rate, all  
15 pursuing higher education. They develop critical STEM  
16 and financial literacy skills, receive mentorship,  
17 and build resilience and critical life skills through  
18 figure skating. Our 1,500+ alumni prove what's  
19 possible when we invest in our youth.

20 Women like Flo Ngala, the first Black woman to  
21 shoot the Met Gala, and Sherry McPherson, our first  
22 alumni board member, showcases the power of our  
23 mission. Our alumni also hosted our career panel this  
24 week at their respective locations such as Carnegie  
25 Hill Veterinary Center, MasterCard, and Paramount.

1  
2 I know firsthand how life changing this program  
3 is. I was one of those girls looking for a space like  
4 this. Programs like these take young girls from  
5 Harlem, raised in a single parent, no income,  
6 disabled household, and helped me become a NYU Stern  
7 graduate, a city council staffer a couple of years  
8 ago, and an award winning mental health advocate now  
9 working for an amazing non profit in Harlem.

10 Despite our successes, financial challenges still  
11 persist, so today I urge the City Council to allocate  
12 additional resources to programs that empower and  
13 uplift young people. Too often we complain about kids  
14 on the streets, but not often enough do we meet with  
15 solutions to help. So here we are, including  
16 investments and enrichment programs like figure  
17 skating in Harlem and STARS CGI, strengthening these  
18 programs mean building healthier communities and  
19 brighter futures for the next generation.

20 So on behalf of Figure Skating in Harlem, STARS  
21 CGI, and the incredible young women we serve, I thank  
22 you for your time and consideration and I look  
23 forward (TIMER CHIMES) to working together to create  
24 a more equitable and supportive environment for all  
25 of New York City's children and youth. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And I did just  
3 see the documentary that they did with the  
4 organization, so shoutout to you guys for that.

5 JAZZ REED: Thank you.

6 ANTHONY ROWE: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and  
7 esteemed members of the Committee of Children and  
8 Youth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
9 today.

10 My name is Anthony Rowe, and I serve as a Project  
11 Director for Neighbors in Action, a program of the  
12 Center for Justice Innovation, and we think the  
13 Council for its ongoing advocacy and investments into  
14 programs like ours.

15 The health and well-being of our youth is at a  
16 crossroads. We are noticing that the ages of young  
17 people impacted by violent crimes are getting younger  
18 and younger. And the needs of our young people are  
19 increasing.

20 Since my arrival at the center, I've had the  
21 privilege of working alongside many invested  
22 colleagues, elected officials, and community  
23 stakeholders all with the purpose of improving the  
24 well-being of our children. The joint effort has led  
25

1  
2 to a decrease in violent crimes in the communities  
3 that we serve.

4 It's become increasingly clear that in order to  
5 create safer communities, we have to continue to be  
6 innovative and adapt in order to meet the ever  
7 changing needs of the youth and communities that we  
8 live in.

9 The continued investments we have received have  
10 allowed programs like Brownsville and Bronx Community  
11 Justice Centers, RISE (phonetic), and Neighbors in  
12 Action to continue to pour into our communities and  
13 provide access and resources to our youth.

14 Creating safer spaces with our communities that  
15 sent to youth creativity, the entrepreneurial spirit,  
16 economic development and workforce development has  
17 become very vital. Just this past summer alone, we  
18 were able to employ... provide placement employment  
19 for opportunities for over 165 youth across Central  
20 Brooklyn. The young people were able to receive  
21 training, counseling, and employment workshops assist  
22 with not only getting jobs but keeping them as well.

23 In closing, we strongly believe that furthering  
24 the investments in the programs like these will help  
25 to increase capacity and add to the variety of

2 programs that will hopefully minimize tragedies like  
3 the one that impacted 13-year-old Troy Gill and Crown  
4 Heights a little over a year ago. Thank you for your  
5 time.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at you with 20 seconds  
7 to spare. All right, (INAUDIBLE) we do it.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 ILLIANA SANTIAGO: Hi, my name is Iliana Santiago  
10 and I'm a staff attorney at the Community Justice  
11 Unit.

12 I'm here today, because I'm asking for the  
13 Council to reinstate our state... our funding.  
14 Forgive me, I'm really nervous; this is the first  
15 time I'm here.

16 As the young lady who testified before me stated,  
17 people, forgive me... initiatives like CJU are not a  
18 luxury. They're a necessity. Cutting funding makes  
19 our cities less safe, our communities less stable,  
20 public safety that much more elusive.

21 This city has done amazing things. It has  
22 committed itself to the Cure Violence Model, to  
23 organizations who treat gun violence like a public  
24 health crisis, stopping violence before it spreads.

1  
2 And we know that it works. Last year alone, there  
3 was a 19% decrease in gun violence. And this is an  
4 actual lifeline that our communities are using in  
5 order to empower our youth and most vulnerable  
6 populations— including our elderly and our disabled.

7 Historically we've learned that when we invest in  
8 justice we invest in safety. A lot of people don't  
9 think about me specifically, lawyers, in terms of how  
10 we fit into that puzzle, but they're wrong. CJU  
11 provides legal defense, housing protection, family  
12 support, crisis intervention in neighborhoods in  
13 need, because a person fighting eviction, a young  
14 person with no job opportunities, or a family torn  
15 apart by the system is more vulnerable to violence.

16 I'm gonna give you specific examples. Our team,  
17 when a mother lost her son to gun violence, our  
18 Housing Specialists fought to get her emergency  
19 housing so she wasn't grieving her child in the  
20 streets. When young people in East New York expressed  
21 fear of police interactions, our CJU organizers gave  
22 them tools to educate their peers on how to navigate  
23 these interactions safely, replacing fear with hope.  
24 When senior citizens face eviction, we've secured  
25 rent relief preventing homelessness for our elders.

1  
2 Specifically, my team, we go at least two or  
3 three times (TIMER CHIMES) to these organizations.  
4 This is time that young people are not out in the  
5 streets. There was an idea, a statement before that  
6 talked about project-based learning. This is exactly  
7 what we're doing in our communities. CJU provided  
8 over 8,000...

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

10 ILLIANA SANTIAGO: Eight-thousand...

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, take a breath and wrap  
12 it up.

13 ILLIANA SANTIAGO: (LAUGHS) Absolutely.

14 Over 8,000 people with legal services, organized  
15 111 community events, and reached 1.6 young people  
16 (sic) in legal education.

17 I'm asking you specifically to allow me not to  
18 say no. I'm much better at saying yes. I am a staff  
19 attorney at CJU, and I'm really lucky to have my job  
20 because I really think that this is the only path  
21 forward to invest in our communities. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I agree, thank you.

23 RACHEL WALMAN: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens.

24 My name is Rachel Walman, and I am the Director  
25 of Education at the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

1  
2 Green-Wood is a 187-year-old active cemetery, so  
3 you might be wondering why am I here right now. Well,  
4 Green-Wood is in fact vital to the educational  
5 landscape of Brooklyn. Some fun facts about us:  
6 Green-Wood is the City's first large public green  
7 space before Central Park. We are a national historic  
8 landmark. We host an SYEP internship every summer.  
9 We're opening a new Education and Welcome Center in  
10 2026, and we taught 299 school field trips to more  
11 than 9,000 students in 2024. Twenty DOE schools are  
12 within a half mile walk of a Green-Wood entrance.

13 And it's good that Green-Wood is so accessible,  
14 because this is the real fun fact, not so fun fact,  
15 we are the only major cultural institution in  
16 Brooklyn, south of Prospect Park. Self guided  
17 admission to Green-Wood is free 365 days a year, but  
18 we need funding to make guided programs more  
19 available to schools everywhere, even those in our  
20 own backyard. Teachers and students love Green-Wood—  
21 some classes come to visit the graves of fascinating  
22 figures from George Washington's dentist to Jean-  
23 Michel Basquiat. Others are exploring 478 acres of  
24 urban nature, or they come to study world class  
25 architecture.

1  
2 More than 50% of visiting teachers have brought  
3 classes more than three years in a row. And we never  
4 forget that we're a cemetery. Green-Wood educators  
5 receive grief sensitivity training to help kids with  
6 big feelings during programs. And this is a key  
7 feature of our work. We have actually recently  
8 received funding from the New York Life Foundation  
9 and National Alliance for Children's Grief to build a  
10 free support program for bereaved children and their  
11 caregivers starting in 2026.

12 For this year's budget, Green-Wood is seeking  
13 \$50,000 from the Brooklyn Delegation, and this  
14 funding will help us serve more Title-I schools and  
15 offer free professional development with CTLE credit  
16 to local teachers, and most crucially, it will help  
17 us normalize conversations about death and grief for  
18 more students.

19 Thank you for listening, and we look forward to  
20 working with the City Council toward our shared  
21 goals.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that, you had three  
23 seconds to spare! (LAUGHTER) Sebastien, can you do  
24 it? He had 20, she had three. Where do you fall in  
25 between?

1  
2 SEBASTIEN VANTE: (LAUGHS) Good afternoon, Chair  
3 Stevens. My name is Sebastien Vante and I'm the  
4 Associate Vice President of Streetwork programs at  
5 Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit victim  
6 assistance organization. We help 250,000 New Yorkers  
7 each year who have experienced violence or abuse.

8 Streetwork Project works with homeless and  
9 street-involved young people to help find safety and  
10 stability. We provide essential resources at our drop  
11 in centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our  
12 street outreach teams.

13 I've submitted my full testimony but want to  
14 emphasize a few points.

15 First, we urge the City Council to restore and  
16 expand City Council initiative and discretionary  
17 funding that organizations like Safe Horizon rely on.  
18 Specifically, we are seeking enhancements to the  
19 Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, which supports  
20 our Child Advocacy Centers, and Support For Persons  
21 Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative, which supports  
22 Streetwork. We are also requesting new Speaker's  
23 Initiative funding to enhance our ability to respond  
24 to the increase in undocumented and new arrival youth  
25

1 seeking our support and address their complex  
2 immigration and social services needs.

3  
4 When young people are connected to legal  
5 assistance, long term representation, and wraparound  
6 services, we help to prevent them from experiencing  
7 further exploitation, trafficking, and violence.

8 Second, we join with other RHY providers to urge  
9 the Council and the Administration to make additional  
10 investments to our RHY continuum.

11 Our recommendations include increase the bed rate  
12 for crisis sheltering services to \$70K per bed,  
13 rightsize RHY residential contracts, restore and  
14 baseline Housing Navigators and Financial  
15 Empowerment, fund youth specific immigration legal  
16 services, fund 16 Housing Specialists and 16 Peer  
17 Navigators.

18 Third, we must, and we have, to ensure that youth  
19 experiencing homelessness can access CityFHEPS (TIMER  
20 CHIMES) Vouchers without barriers. This is especially  
21 critical given the news we received yesterday from  
22 DYCD that we will be losing the ability to refer  
23 clients for NYCHA HCV (Housing Choice Voucher)  
24 Section 8 Vouchers and that our clients who  
25 previously received HCV...

1                   CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

2                   SEBASTIEN VANTE: Section 8 Voucher holders might  
3 lose their vouchers because of federal budget cuts.  
4 This is a crisis moment and our city and state must  
5 step up to ensure that young people have safe and  
6 stable housing.  
7

8                   Lastly, the City must ensure that nonprofits are  
9 paid on time. Thank you.

10                  CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And you did not  
11 do the 20 (INAUDIBLE) seconds. No, I'm just playing.  
12 Guys, I'm sorry, I'm tired, so I get a little silly  
13 at the end.

14                  But I am happy you brought up the voucher thing,  
15 because, as you heard today in the questioning with  
16 DYCD, they made it seem like I was making it up  
17 around the meeting that they had providers around  
18 losing the vouchers and NYCHA access.

19                  So, if you don't mind sharing, if you can tell  
20 us a little bit more of the details about what was  
21 expressed to you? Because I feel like what was  
22 expressed to me was different than what they said  
23 today in the hearing. So I just would love some  
24 clarity, very succinctly too.

1  
2 SEBASTIEN VANTE: I'll try to be quick, but  
3 there's a standing meeting that we always have with  
4 DYCD around housing related to vouchers. And in that  
5 meeting that we had yesterday, it was told to us  
6 that... initially, it was told to us that we had  
7 until 4:30 that day to refer folks through the NYCHA  
8 portal for HCV. You know, we really pushed back, and  
9 they gave us an extension until today, 5:00 p.m.

10 But it was such a last minute thing. And right  
11 now, why a lot of my colleagues are not here today is  
12 because we're...

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Trying to get the young  
14 people...

15 SEBASTIEN VANTE: we're doing the outreach right  
16 now...

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In...

18 SEBASTIEN VANTE: We're trying to get young folks  
19 in, because we don't know how long the portal will be  
20 closed or what are other options. Which is why we are  
21 really urging the City Council to really lean on  
22 getting us access to the CityFHEPS Vouchers. Because  
23 EHV (Emergency Housing Vouchers) seems to be  
24 running... going to be running out in January 2026.

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You know, there's not many rapid rehousing programs that have vacancies.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Mm-hmm

SEBASTIEN VANTE: So, like, what other resources do our young people have to connect to housing? So we are really concerned about that. So we are doing our best, we're...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, we're all concerned about it. And, again, I am happy you brought it up, because, again, what you're saying, what I heard, and what was said here, are all very different— because it was said that that was not happening, and that they were just alerting you guys and not that it was actually happening. So thank you for being able to clarify that for us on the record. I am very concerned about this, because I got a bunch of frantic text messages and calls yesterday after that meeting— because of what you guys were told. So let's continue to have conversations, because this is something that we do need to find a solution for. So, thank you. Thank you to this panel, I appreciate you guys.

(PAUSE)

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, Jane Dacosta from  
3 Metropolitan Equestrian, Joan Kanarkiewicz, sorry,  
4 please say your name when you testify, because  
5 clearly I am messing up everybody's name, such a  
6 butchering. Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele, I don't know  
7 what that last name is, but they're from Queens,  
8 Queens Community House; Moomina Rahman, Groundswell;  
9 Feliz (INAUDIBLE), that's also a student, from Center  
10 for Family in Sunset Park, Emily Versen from Center  
11 for Family Life.

12 So, there are two young people here. And we know  
13 I'm not going to stop them, but everyone is not...  
14 Oh, I know, and I can see... But we can go. No, you  
15 can do it whatever way you want. You guys want to  
16 start with the young people, you want them to end,  
17 whatever. Dealer's choice.

18 JANE DACOSTA: Okay, My name is Jane DeCosta. I'm  
19 the Executive Director and Founder of Metropolitan  
20 Equestrian, established in 2010 to provide access to  
21 equestrian sports and education programs from all  
22 across New York City.

23 I am Brooklyn born and raised. I'm a proud U.S.  
24 Navy disabled veteran, and I've been an equestrian  
25 for 35 years. My journey began at 12, made possible

1  
2 by the mentorship of a female New York City police  
3 officer who guided me while my immigrant Guyanese  
4 mother, single mother, worked multiple jobs. That  
5 mentorship shaped my life— to my even recent  
6 achievements at NYU Stern, as a scholarship  
7 recipient, and a graduate from the MBA of the  
8 Executive MBA program.

9       Those experiences are the foundation of MET.  
10 Since 2010, MET has been a New York City based  
11 nonprofit organization servicing New York City  
12 children and youth citywide. For more than a decade,  
13 MET serviced a maximum 50 New York City youth in  
14 Brooklyn, but due to space constraints developed on  
15 wait list, MET is now has the opportunity to expand  
16 programming in New York City.

17       Outdoor sports and activities are crucial for  
18 city youth providing them with physical, emotional,  
19 and cognitive benefits. Equestrian sports fosters  
20 discipline, responsibility, and confidence while  
21 exposing students to a world of opportunities beyond  
22 the traditional urban recreation. MET is unique in  
23 youth development and is the only nonprofit in  
24 equestrian sports that provides integrated academic  
25

1 support, life skill training, and college preparation  
2 alongside equestrian instruction.  
3

4 MET more than just a horseback riding lesson  
5 program. We offer access to resources to pay for all  
6 programs. MET provides access to grants,  
7 scholarships, and work study programs. Currently, the  
8 majority of the participants taking part in resources  
9 helps them subsidize access to the sport.

10 Throughout the years, MET students have received  
11 over \$2 million in college scholarships, ranging from  
12 beginner to intermediate levels from New York City.  
13 These children were never exposed to horses in the  
14 same way that I was as well.

15 We are asking for a very small amount compared to  
16 the many that have asked today of a \$25,000 citywide  
17 grant. MET can expand programming, (TIMER CHIMES)  
18 provide recreational experiences, and cultivate inner  
19 city talent like myself. I stand here as a proof of  
20 what's possible for young people who are given the  
21 opportunities.

22 We urge New York City Council Committee on Youth  
23 to support MET in ensuring all New York City  
24 children, regardless of socioeconomic background, to  
25

1  
2 have access to transformative, equestrian, and  
3 educational opportunities.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

5 ROBIN VEENSTRA-VANDERWEELE: Good afternoon, Chair  
6 Stevens, and members of the Committee. Greetings from  
7 your friends at Queens Community House. My name is  
8 Robin Veenstra-VanderWeele, I'm the Associate  
9 Executive Director for Youth Services at Queens  
10 Community House.

11 I'm here today to talk about a crisis for  
12 community based organizations like ours regarding the  
13 funding provided for afterschool programs across the  
14 city.

15 The Department of Youth and Community  
16 Development, DYCD, COMPASS and SONYC programs are  
17 funded to provide afterschool and summer programming  
18 to thousands of school aged youth across the city.  
19 These hours of learning and growth and development  
20 are an essential investment in equity for our youth,  
21 and they also provide the critical child care that  
22 working families need in after school and summer  
23 hours.

24 In January of 2025, afterschool providers  
25 received communication from DYCD that their current

1  
2 COMPASS and SONYC contracts would be extended through  
3 the summer of 2028.

4 While this is good news for current providers  
5 across the city to see contract extensions, it is a  
6 devastating blow to see contract extensions without  
7 any increase to the rate per participant.

8 Those rates for participants were agreed to by  
9 CBOs over a decade ago. This contract extension would  
10 include no increase to the rate per participant,  
11 leaving the programs across the city stuck with a  
12 funding formula that has not kept up with inflation  
13 or the actual cost of running an after school program  
14 in 2025, much less an after school program in 2028.

15 Today, over 60% of the City's COMPASS contracts  
16 provide a rate per participant of \$2,800 per  
17 participant. In order to assess the true cost of  
18 providing afterschool services, that both meet the  
19 contractual requirements of DYCD, as well as the  
20 realities of providing afterschool programming in  
21 this post pandemic era, United Neighborhood Houses  
22 engaged in a citywide assessment of how providers are  
23 funding their afterschool programs and what the costs  
24 are that are not covered by contracts with DYCD.

1  
2       Based on this assessment, the City would need to  
3 increase COMPASS elementary school programs from  
4 (TIMER CHIMES) \$2,800 to \$6,600 and middle school  
5 programs from \$3,200 to \$5,500.

6       Across the city, CBOs are coming together to say  
7 that we cannot sustain our programs without an  
8 increase to these rates. We cannot afford to cover  
9 these costs with other funds, and the rate... the  
10 distance between what the City funds and what we need  
11 to run these programs is growing every year.

12       You heard from my colleagues from other  
13 organizations and from our member organization,  
14 United Neighborhood House...

15       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

16       ROBIN VEENSTRA-VANDERWEELE: the new funding, and  
17 we're respectfully requesting an increase in funding  
18 to the COMPASS contract in this budget year to meet  
19 us halfway to the funds that we need. Thank you for  
20 your time.

21       CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

22       JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Hi, good afternoon. My name  
23 is... Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, my name is Joan  
24 Kanarkiewicz, and I'm an Adult Education and Admin  
25 Coordinator at Make the Road New York.

1  
2 So on behalf of our 28,000+ members and staff, I  
3 thank the Committee for the opportunity to share our  
4 concerns with the FY26 Budget and its impact on adult  
5 education programs for immigrant New Yorkers.

6 Make the Road firmly believes in safeguarding  
7 dignity and fairness for all New Yorkers. Over the  
8 years, the Council has done so much to ensure that  
9 New York continues to be a city that welcomes  
10 immigrants. Part of this is ensuring that ESOL  
11 classes are available to the 2.2 million New York  
12 City residents with limited English. Yet combined  
13 City and State funding for adult literacy education  
14 is so limited that fewer than 3% of these New Yorkers  
15 are able to access adult basic education, GED or ESOL  
16 classes in any given year.

17 In the face of horrifying anti-immigrant attacks  
18 and potential cuts to adult literacy funding at the  
19 federal level, our communities need the City's  
20 support for these programs. Unfortunately, in FY25  
21 the Adams' administration inexplicably cut funding  
22 for community based adult literacy programs funded  
23 through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17  
24 million to \$12 million. This reduction in funding has  
25 been maintained in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for

1  
2 FY26. This combined with likely federal cuts will be  
3 devastating.

4 Make the Road stands with allies in the New York  
5 City Coalition for Adult Literacy and calling on the  
6 administration to double its baseline funding for  
7 adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12  
8 million to \$24 million. We also ask the Council  
9 maintain its discretionary funding at its current  
10 level of \$16.5 million in FY 26 for the Adult  
11 Literacy Pilot and Adult Literacy Initiative.

12 We are extremely grateful to the Council, as this  
13 funding is currently ensuring that many thousands of  
14 working class immigrants are getting the adult  
15 education services they need in order to help their  
16 kids succeed in school, get civilly engaged, and  
17 improve their employment outcomes.

18 Make the Roads New York's adult education program  
19 serves over 800 (TIMER CHIMES) adult literacy  
20 students a year.

21 We are fortunate to have received discretionary  
22 funding this year through the Council. And, for  
23 example, one of our participants who arrived in New  
24 York two years ago and did not speak English, proudly  
25 shared how the program helped her develop English

1 skills. At a recent medical appointment, she was able  
2 to communicate and ask questions without the support  
3 of a translator.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

6 JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Make the Road respectfully  
7 requests the renewal of the \$449,000 from the Adult  
8 Literacy Pilot, as well as \$150,000 from the  
9 Initiative to enable us to sustain our own ESOL  
10 classes to some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

12 JOAN KANARKIEWICZ: Thank you. (TIMER CHIMES)

13 SILAS DUPIGNY: Hello.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hi.

15 SILAS DUPIGNY: Thank you to Chair Stevens and the  
16 City Council for your support for children and youth  
17 across New York City. My name is Silas Dupigny, and I  
18 am currently a senior at Sunset Park High School.

19 For the last three years, I was a participant of  
20 the COMPASS Explorer Program with Center for Family  
21 Life at my school. Now I am a staff at CFL's  
22 afterschool program at PS 971, where I am an  
23 Assistant Group Leader for fifth grade children.

24 I am calling on the City to invest in afterschool  
25 and create a funding opportunity to replace the

1  
2 former COMPASS Explorer contract that DYCD ended in  
3 June 2024 with no replacement.

4 COMPASS Explorer allowed Center for Family Life  
5 to provide opportunities each year for 75 high school  
6 students, like me, to engage in leadership  
7 development and activities that developed our social  
8 and emotional well-being while building real skills  
9 for the future.

10 COMPASS Explorer was open to all students,  
11 regardless of their documentation status or academic  
12 standing, and welcomed students from other schools  
13 serving the wider Sunset Park community.

14 During my time at CFL, I grew more than I knew  
15 possible. When I started high school, right as  
16 schools were reopening after COVID, I learned new  
17 skills and improved as a musician, dancer, and actor.  
18 By my last year, I was incorporating music of my own,  
19 writing an original piece, and accompanying a cast of  
20 over 60 performers as they sang for an audience of  
21 almost 2,000 people.

22 Now I spend my time afterschool using those same  
23 skills at PS 971 helping elementary school children  
24 build relationships in a safe and supportive  
25 environment.

1  
2 This job has helped me grow, and it's shown me  
3 that I really want to use my skills to support the  
4 community and become a teacher, a music teacher.

5 Talking more about these kids— this is going off  
6 script, but...

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're okay. Don't be  
8 nervous, you got it, I hear you.

9 SILAS DUPIGNY: Seeing these kids a lot of the  
10 time reminds me of when I was a kid, and they're  
11 young, they're unprotected, they're the youth. And  
12 they're growing, they don't know themselves, and  
13 sometimes they need more support than what is seen.

14 In schools— there's how many hours in a school  
15 day? Eight maybe, I'm not sure. But you would think  
16 that's enough, but when these kids come to us in  
17 afterschool, there's a lot of times when they're  
18 lacking things that they should really honestly have.  
19 Like my class, for example, during homework time,  
20 sometimes kids will come to me, I have fifth graders  
21 lacking the skills to do basic, maybe, like,  
22 subtraction, maybe multiplication, and they're behind  
23 for a fifth grade level. And CFL, and other  
24 afterschool programs like this, gives these kids, who  
25 don't have enough time in school to learn, more

1  
2 opportunities to further their growth— so that when  
3 they go on to middle school, and to high school, they  
4 won't be seen as a child who's behind and needs more  
5 work. But they'll be seen as someone who can keep up  
6 with their peers and even exceed.

7 This program...

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (UN-MIC'D) You need water?

9 SILAS DUPIGNY: I'm okay, thank you.

10 This program allowed participants to turn their  
11 afterschool involvement into meaningful employment  
12 opportunities. Other than me, there are 22 former  
13 COMPASS Explorer participants that have gone on to  
14 become CFL staff members.

15 By ending this funding with no replacement,  
16 Center for Family Life and providers across the city  
17 have lost a crucial opportunity for high school  
18 students.

19 I urge the City to fully invest in afterschool  
20 programs, so future generations can experience the  
21 same transformative impact that COMPASS Explorer had  
22 on me and other students also in Sunset Park. Thank  
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to say thank  
25 you. Because I think we have been talking a lot about

1 the Explorers Program last year, and your testimony  
2 is just evidence of what we were saying, in real  
3 time, around how this program was super necessary—  
4 and even to hear how it's helping to fill some of the  
5 employment gaps and shortages that they have to be  
6 able to turn over to now work in the program. So,  
7 thank you, and I am very proud that you were able to  
8 come and do that for us today.

9  
10 SILAS DUPIGNY: Thank you.

11 EMILY VERSEN: Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the  
12 City Council for your support for children and youth  
13 across New York City.

14 My name is Emily Versen, and I am a Program  
15 Director at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park. I  
16 am calling on our City to prioritize fully funding  
17 year round, afterschool and summer programs for  
18 elementary and middle school youth and high school,  
19 and to advocate for prompt registration of contracts  
20 and timely reimbursements for services rendered.

21 For over 45 years, the Center for Family Life, a  
22 settlement house, has provided a comprehensive range  
23 of neighborhood-based family and social services.

24 We intentionally base our K through 12  
25 programming in 11 of Sunset Park's public schools,

1  
2 enrolling over 3,600 youth in free, year-round, high  
3 quality afterschool and summer programs— made  
4 possible through DYCD funding— that save our working  
5 class immigrant families over \$15 million per year in  
6 child care costs. However, we simply cannot continue  
7 to deliver these services if DYCD does not recognize  
8 and fund the true cost of programming— which  
9 according to the comprehensive analysis conducted by  
10 UNH that several people have mentioned today— is over  
11 \$6,000 per elementary aged youth for a school year  
12 and over \$4,000 for the summer. The decade old  
13 contract that we are currently operating under, which  
14 the City has extended multiple times, rather than  
15 issuing a new concept paper an RFP for, funds us at  
16 less than half of that.

17 It is unconscionable to under invest in our  
18 city's children in this way, and it is unsustainable  
19 for providers who want to deliver the high quality  
20 programs that the children of New York City deserve.

21 Additionally, across the city, CBOs have faced  
22 untenable delays in contract registration and budget  
23 and invoice approvals. These hardships have been  
24 compounded by the City's migration from HHS  
25 Accelerator to the PASSPort system. At CFL, we are

1  
2 unable to voucher for expenses already incurred this  
3 year, as we are still awaiting FY25 five contract  
4 registration and approval in PASSPort- totaling over  
5 (TIMER CHIMES) \$1.9 million. Additionally we're  
6 awaiting reimbursement for outstanding FY24 invoices  
7 totaling more than \$500,000, and FY25 outstanding  
8 invoices totaling over \$980,000. That is a total of  
9 over \$3.4 million for Center for Family Life alone,  
10 and we are not the only CBO weathering these funding  
11 delays...

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds.

13 EMILY VERSEN: that affect essential cash flow.

14 Streamlining and prioritizing prompt contract  
15 registration and reimbursement should be a top  
16 priority for DYCD, so CBOs can focus on directly  
17 serving their high need communities. And we urgently  
18 need this addressed. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. Thank you, and I  
20 believe Council Member Avilés asked about you guys  
21 today. And she definitely wanted to make sure we  
22 highlighted that.

23 And I want to say, it's not just DYCD's  
24 responsibility. I'm putting this off as everyone's  
25 responsibility. Because we are seeing this not only

1  
2 in DYCD contracts, we're seeing across contracts,  
3 including DOE. So this is a systemic issue that needs  
4 to be addressed ASAP.

5 And we have our last person on this panel, thank  
6 you so much.

7 MOOMINA RAHMAN: Hello, my name is Moomina Rahman,  
8 and I am a participant in Groundswell Community Mural  
9 Project. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today  
10 about the critical role nonprofits play in supporting  
11 mental health and why additional funding is essential  
12 for our communities.

13 I have personally experienced the impact of  
14 nonprofits like Groundswell in helping students like  
15 me find confidence and sense of belonging.

16 Before joining the program, I felt like my voice  
17 did not matter, but working on murals with other  
18 young artists gave me a way of expressing myself and  
19 connect with people who truly understand me. The  
20 mentorship and support I've received helped me  
21 realize that art is more than just painting, it's  
22 healing.

23 Without organizations like Groundswell, many  
24 students wouldn't have access to creative spaces that  
25 support their mental well-being. I urge you to

1  
2 consider increasing funding for youth-serving  
3 nonprofits like Groundswell Community Mural Project.

4 Investing in mental health support through  
5 nonprofits is an investment in the well-being and  
6 future of our communities. Thank you for your time  
7 and commitment to support young people.

8 In closing, mental health support is not a  
9 luxury, it's a necessity. Nonprofits like Groundswell  
10 play a vital role in ensuring young people have  
11 access to the care and support they need. With  
12 additional funding, we can continue to provide safe  
13 spaces, mentorship, and critical resources that truly  
14 change lives.

15 I appreciate the opportunity to share my  
16 experience and advocate for increased support. Thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you to this panel. I  
19 don't have any additional questions.

20 I believe this is Jasmine, Ysmerlyn Murshed, I  
21 don't know, it's M U... I don't, the last name, the  
22 Center for Family Representation; Nila Natarajan,  
23 Brooklyn Defenders; George Kottas; the Bronx  
24 Defenders; Piyali Basak, Neighborhood Defenders; Mr.  
25 Wilson, Youth Represent; Carlos C., Youth Represent.

1  
2 (PAUSE)

3 PIYALI BASAK: Okay, great. Thank you, Chair  
4 Stevens, and the members of the Committee for this  
5 opportunity to testify with my colleagues here from  
6 Bronx offenders, BDS, and CFR, and I know Youth  
7 Represent is here as well.

8 My name is Piyali Basak, I'm the Managing  
9 Director for the Neighborhood Defender Services of  
10 Harlem. Our offices are the primary providers of  
11 mandated legal representation to eligible parents in  
12 Article X proceedings, or what we call Family  
13 Policing Cases filed in Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan,  
14 Staten Island, and Queens.

15 Since 2007, when we first received the first  
16 contracts, we have represented more than 50,000  
17 parents in Family Court, close to... Over 100,000  
18 children, the vast majority of whom are Black and  
19 brown and live in the most marginalized, low income  
20 communities.

21 I say, "family policing", because we have  
22 followed the leadership of directly impacted parents  
23 who replaced the term "child welfare system".

24 I know you support us, because our work goes  
25 beyond litigating in the courtroom. Through our

1  
2 interdisciplinary model, we work closely together to  
3 address the underlying systemic barriers that drive  
4 families into this system— such as lack of access to  
5 healthcare, mental health treatment, and appropriate  
6 educational services for children with disabilities.  
7 And we are also addressing the collateral  
8 consequences from criminal charges, to housing, to  
9 educational issues, and inability to adjust  
10 immigration status.

11 You've read the research, listened to our  
12 testimony, you know that Black and brown children are  
13 separated from their parents by ACS and placed in the  
14 foster care system at rates hugely disproportionate  
15 to their presence in the total population of New York  
16 City.

17 Ultimately, the system harms children, even noted  
18 by the U.S. Commission of Human Rights, a harm that  
19 can last through life. We're especially concerned by  
20 this federal administration's targeting of immigrant  
21 communities, which is additionally placing strain on  
22 our early defense resources in the way that the  
23 immigration... in the way that non-citizen (TIMER  
24 CHIMES) parents are targeted.  
25

1  
2 So we thank the Council for your support, and my  
3 colleagues will elaborate on what our ask is. Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

6 YSMERLYN MURSHED: Thank you, Chair Stevens, and  
7 the members of the Committee for taking the time to  
8 hear our testimony.

9 My name is Ysmerlyn Murshed, and I am the  
10 Director of Early Defense at the Center for Family  
11 Representation.

12 CFR's mission is to defend the rights of parents  
13 and youth through free, holistic interdisciplinary  
14 legal and social work representation. In partnership  
15 with the other defender services, and with the City  
16 Council's support, we are able to think creatively  
17 and connect families to community supports that are  
18 not connected to the "family policing system" and its  
19 various systemic failings, but rather to walk hand in  
20 hand with parents as they navigate traumatic ACS  
21 investigations.

22 Early Defense is providing what all New York City  
23 parents want when their family is experiencing ACS's  
24 course of tactics of interrogation, child strip  
25 searches, and home inspections. Much of our work is

1 centered on providing families with advice about what  
2 an ACS investigation is and what their rights are as  
3 parents.  
4

5 Our goal is to minimize the harm of that ACS  
6 investigation— which can be terrifying for children  
7 and parents alike, because of the threat of family  
8 separation— while giving some sense of agency to  
9 parents.

10 Without the threat of parental prosecution and  
11 punishment that a full fledged Article X case  
12 invokes, our clients, the majority of which are Black  
13 and brown parents, who are already targets of  
14 systemic injustice, can be honest with us and  
15 voluntarily ask for support in different settings.

16 We advocate directly for our clients with ACS at  
17 their children's school, and with preventative and  
18 other service providers, all while centering what our  
19 clients identify as their needs.

20 Additionally, our goal is not to wait for an ACS  
21 investigation to begin before arming parents with  
22 information about their rights through various  
23 community events and through public facing materials.

24 Thank you for your ongoing support, and for  
25 allowing us to defend and uplift the hard work the

1  
2 New York City parents we represent do every day. As  
3 public defenders, we work in community to ensure that  
4 all of our offices can together meet the needs of our  
5 clients.

6 In closing, (TIMER CHIMES) consider this  
7 testimony an invitation to come to our office and get  
8 to know more about our work.

9 GEORGE KOTTAS: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens,  
10 members, and staff of the Committee. My name is  
11 George Kottas, I'm Director of Early Defense of the  
12 Family Defense Practice at the Bronx Defenders.

13 The funding we seek today for the Family Advocacy  
14 Initiative provides much needed and otherwise  
15 unfunded legal representation during OCFS hearings.

16 Legal representation for parents in these  
17 hearings ameliorates one of the most unfair and  
18 harmful consequences of an ACS investigation. At the  
19 conclusion of each investigation, it's ACS- and only  
20 ACS- that determines whether the report against a  
21 parent should be indicated. If ACS indicates, the  
22 name of the parent is placed on the SCR is a person  
23 who has maltreated a child. This is true regardless  
24 of whether the case is ever brought to court and the  
25 evidence is ever even reviewed by a judge. The

1  
2 consequences are enormous and the record remains for  
3 years.

4 Consequences include preventing parents from  
5 entire categories of employment and the ability to  
6 support their families, all based on unproven  
7 accusations. Listing on the State Central Registry  
8 can bar individuals from becoming custodial parent of  
9 their own children. They can bar relatives from  
10 becoming caregivers to children who need them,  
11 causing them to be passed to strangers and often  
12 ending up in the foster care system.

13 The only way off the SCR is to challenge the  
14 listing through an evidentiary hearing.  
15 Representation is critical to the hearing being fair  
16 because ACS is always represented by counsel.

17 The legal standards, the advocacy, the  
18 preparation required for these hearings means any  
19 unrepresented parent faces a serious disadvantage  
20 against a city agency that always has a lawyer.

21 Without this program, parents have no access to  
22 counsel and SCR hearings unless they are wealthy and  
23 hire their own.

24 This is a matter of racial justice. It's Black  
25 and brown New Yorkers who are most disadvantaged by

1  
2 the SCR process. In New York City, Black and Latinx  
3 children represent 83% of all SCR reports and a  
4 shocking 86% of all indicated cases.

5 With the funding through this initiative that  
6 we've already received, thanks to the Committee,  
7 we've been successful in amending and sealing records  
8 93 to 97% of the time. This funding allows hundreds  
9 of parents to regain the ability of access to  
10 employment and restore custody rights for their  
11 children. It is crucial to those parents who, under  
12 the law, should automatically have these cases  
13 unfounded.

14 Current law creates an automatic presumption that  
15 certain cases dismissed in Family Court should be  
16 amended and unfounded. However, parents (TIMER  
17 CHIMES) request these hearings, and representation  
18 makes sure the law is actually followed as written.

19 This advocacy is a crucial part of a parent's way  
20 to clear their name, and it's a lifeline from some of  
21 the most impacted and disadvantaged New York. Thank  
22 you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

24 NILA NATARAJAN: Good afternoon, my name is Nila  
25 Natarajan, and I am the Associate Director of Policy

1 and Family Defense at Brooklyn Defender Services.

2 Thank you, Chair Stevens, and the Committee.

3  
4 As my colleagues have expressed, we are grateful  
5 to the Council for your ongoing commitment to the  
6 Right to Family Advocacy Project. This work is  
7 critical in preventing prosecution in Family Court,  
8 traumatic family separation, and harmful foster  
9 system involvement.

10 As my colleagues have testified, New York City's  
11 Right to Family Advocacy Project enables our offices  
12 to empower parents and caretakers under investigation  
13 by ACS by informing them of, and protecting their  
14 rights, and assisting families with ACS involvement  
15 to clear their records, so they have every  
16 opportunity to obtain secure employment and income.

17 We are also deeply connected with our communities  
18 and work to educate community members about their  
19 rights.

20 While the Council has recognized that this work  
21 is essential to minimize the harm of ACS  
22 investigation and prevent family separation, the  
23 program has been chronically underfunded. This  
24 strains our ability to meet growing program costs.  
25 Insufficient funding forces us to choose between

1 fully compensating our incredible staff and fully  
2 staffing these vital programs.

3  
4 Funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Project  
5 has remained flat since 2019. This program has never  
6 been fully funded. And without any adjustment for  
7 inflation or cost of living, flat funding amounts to  
8 a fiscal loss.

9 We are here to request that the Council fully  
10 fund the Right to Family Advocacy Project. At \$3.3  
11 million, this request is a modest increase over prior  
12 funding, which has, again, remained stagnant for six  
13 years.

14 For years, our offices have been forced to absorb  
15 rising costs for salaries, healthcare, utilities, and  
16 office space without additional funding. We are  
17 asking you to meet our funding request recognizing  
18 that, in addition to the incredible human impact of  
19 our services, we save the City money by avoiding  
20 court filings and foster assistant placement.

21 New York City's Family Defense organizations are  
22 essential to ensuring compassion, dignity, and  
23 justice (TIMER CHIMES) for parents navigating ACS  
24 investigations and Family Court prosecution

1  
2 regardless of their ability to pay. Thank you for  
3 your time and we welcome any questions.

4 PSYCO WILSON: Peace everybody. My name is Psycho,  
5 from Youth Represent. It's an acronym in the essence  
6 of time. I'm not going to get into too much of what  
7 that means.

8 I'm from Brownsville, Brooklyn. I'm currently 30  
9 years old, and from what I understand crime is going  
10 down. I feel like one thing that's not... or I guess  
11 it literally has been said here by the providers,  
12 that it is going down, because of all the efforts in  
13 the community. Right?

14 Kids are starting to step up and come out to  
15 places like hearings. They're starting to go to  
16 things like Know Your Rights trainings, and they're  
17 starting to organize Know Your Rights trainings.

18 Programs— crime prevention programs— are starting  
19 to enter the communities with credible messengers  
20 that are actually ,like, doing... that are actually  
21 not only deterring crime, but also helping meet the  
22 needs of community. Yet, also at the same time, we're  
23 seeing these programs being inexplicably underfunded,  
24 we're seeing them being cut, and we're seeing other  
25

1  
2 budgets, namely the police budgets, get raised over  
3 and over and over again.

4 If New York City is committed to keeping people  
5 safe, if it's committed to the development of the  
6 youth, if it's committed to a holistic approach to  
7 bringing the city to being one of the greatest cities  
8 in the country, then we need to continuously invest  
9 in these program... in these social, economic, and  
10 developmental program— social and emotional  
11 developmental programs, that help young adults and  
12 youth be the people who they want to be in life.

13 We need to stop wasting our time, we need to stop  
14 over criminalizing them, and we need to stop cutting  
15 the services in the places where they're at— schools,  
16 community services, mental health programs, literally  
17 all spaces where youths are at need to be funded and  
18 instead they're being cut.

19 We need to not only ask why, but really just cut  
20 it out, and that's all I gotta say on that. Thanks  
21 for hearing me out.

22 CARLOS CAIZA: Good afternoon, thank you for  
23 having me. My name is Carlos Caiza, I'm currently  
24 enrolled in Arches, an alternative incarceration  
25 program at Youth Justice Network. I'm also a member

1  
2 of the Youth Committee hosted by Youth Represent, and  
3 I'm a senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy High  
4 School. I'm graduating this year.

5 I'm here today to testify about a budget that  
6 invests in youth. New York currently spends \$900,000  
7 per year on incarcerating a single young person. In  
8 New York City, \$10,000 could fund an afterschool  
9 program for one year. That \$900,000 can be  
10 reallocated to those afterschool programs that can  
11 also serve as an alternative to incarceration and a  
12 way to keep kids out the streets.

13 In 2001, the budget for the detention centers and  
14 other services was a \$110 million, and in 2020, it  
15 rose up to \$285 million.

16 The real question is now, what exactly are the  
17 other services this money is going to? Not only is  
18 this budget being wasted and handled wrong, but  
19 there's youth out there that are finding themselves  
20 in trouble because they don't have anything to keep  
21 them from engaging in negativity.

22 Teens that are arrested often have to deal with  
23 repercussions and end up in the detention centers in  
24 a space that's overcrowded and where they are  
25

1  
2 mistreated. This can affect them mentally and  
3 continue the cycle of them being lost.

4       These are all reasons why we need more money into  
5 alternative incarceration programs and programs where  
6 young people can spend their time doing something  
7 positive.

8       Two programs that personally helped me are the  
9 Arches Program, a Youth Justice Network, and a Youth  
10 Committee at Youth Represent. These programs allowed  
11 me to learn more and helped me grow up. They have  
12 given me a second chance, and allowed me to change  
13 into a better version of myself and become a Youth  
14 Advocate and a Youth Mentor.

15       Other programs that will benefit youth include  
16 programs that offer support with substance abuse,  
17 mental health, workforce development programs, and  
18 mentoring programs.

19       I'm asking the City Council today to listen to  
20 youth like myself, and invest in our futures right  
21 now, through this budget, so more youth all over New  
22 York City can have the same opportunity to programs  
23 that help me. Thank you for listening. (TIMER CHIMES)

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that, right under  
3 time. Thank you to this panel, I don't have any  
4 questions.

5 Joshell Lawrence, from the Alliance; Roberto  
6 Rodriguez; Constance Lesold; Gregory Brender; Grace  
7 Wang; Betty Garger, Junior Achievement of New York.

8 (PAUSE)

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Faith Behum? Is there a  
10 Faith Behum, UJA Federation of New York Afterschool  
11 Funding? Okay.

12 (PAUSE)

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You guys have been with me  
14 all day, so make it good.

15 (LAUGHTER)

16 GRACE WANG: We'll try. Thank you, Chair Stevens.  
17 Thank you for the love and support you are showing to  
18 our young people in this room. It is very inspiring  
19 to witness.

20 My name is Grace; I'm a youth worker at Chinese  
21 American Planning Council, known as CPC, the nation's  
22 largest Asian American social service organization.

23 I've been working directly with high schoolers  
24 and college students for the past seven years. And  
25 just over last year, a 1,000 students participated in

1  
2 my afterschool program, and 100% of our seniors  
3 graduated.

4 I have witnessed how funding for community based  
5 organizations, like ours, has been life changing for  
6 our young people, especially when they're coming from  
7 low income and immigrant families.

8 We urge the City to expand funding for programs  
9 like the Summer Youth Employment Program— we heard  
10 from our young people how hard it is for them to get  
11 a job— because SYEP helps undocumented students who  
12 otherwise could not work. SYEP helps struggling NYCHA  
13 families to keep food on their table. And SYEP helps  
14 immigrant youth work at a small business where their  
15 colleagues speak their home language.

16 Two years ago, a student came to my office for  
17 help. He gets into trouble in and out of school, and  
18 he was failing his classes. But there was one thing  
19 he really wanted for himself, a paid job. I started  
20 preparing him for the school-based SYEP program,  
21 where a paid internship is guaranteed when a young  
22 person is successfully enrolled. He started  
23 participating in our afterschool work readiness  
24 workshops. He participated in CPC's advocacy events,  
25 and he traveled outside the city for the very first

1  
2 time on our overnight college trip. Today, he has  
3 successfully worked for two summers, contributed to  
4 his household financially, and he's preparing for  
5 college, something he never imagined. This is just  
6 one success story, and there can be so many of them  
7 with proper funding. (TIMER CHIMES)

8 We urge the City to expand fundings for community  
9 based organizations like CPC and programs like SYEP.  
10 Thank you so much for your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

12 JOSHELL LAWRENCE: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens,  
13 and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity  
14 to testify before you today on the critical need for  
15 continued and enhanced funding for programs that  
16 support children and youth across our city.

17 My name is Joshell Lawrence, and I am a senior at  
18 CUNY Baruch College, and I am also a Youth Assistant  
19 Coordinator at Project DOT (Project Dream, Own, Tell)  
20 a youth focused sexual violence prevention and  
21 leadership program developed by the New York City  
22 Alliance Against Sexual Assault, the Alliance.

23 The Alliance's mission is to prevent sexual  
24 violence and reduce the harm it causes through  
25 education, prevention programming, and the pursuit of

1 legal and policy change. Project DOT is a key pillar  
2 of this mission and is funded by the City Council  
3 through the Young Women's Initiative.  
4

5 We are asking for an enhancement from a \$100,000  
6 \$125,000 to expand our program's reach. Project DOT  
7 has served as a vital resource for young people who  
8 often face systemic barriers to accessing  
9 comprehensive, sexual violence prevention education  
10 and leadership opportunities since 2014.

11 I'm here today advocating not only as a  
12 Coordinator of the program, but also as a young  
13 person who was once a beneficiary of Project DOT. I  
14 joined Project DOT during my senior year of high  
15 school as a youth participant in 2020. Project DOT  
16 didn't just change my world view, it opened me up to  
17 a new understanding of myself and the systems that  
18 shaped my daily life. At the time, I didn't fully  
19 grasp what a healthy versus unhealthy relationship  
20 looked like or understand the importance of consent.  
21 Yet, Project DOT provided me with the knowledge as  
22 well as it gave me, and so many others, a voice  
23 conversations we were often left out of.

24 The need for programs like Project DOT is urgent.  
25 Young people continue to face high rates of sexual

1 violence and harassment. Nationally, one in nine  
2 girls and one in 20 boys experienced sexual violence  
3 before the age of 18; 49% of LGBTQ+ youth ages 13 to  
4 18 report experiencing some form of sexual violence,  
5 with rates even higher among Black and Indigenous  
6 youth. These statistics unfortunately prove that  
7 programs like Project DOT are essential to the  
8 safety, well-being, and support of youth.

9  
10 (TIMER CHIMES) To conclude, we are seeking an  
11 enhancement of our funding to \$125,000 to expand our  
12 program's reach and impact.

13 Thank you for your time and for your commitment  
14 to ensuring the well-being and safety of New York  
15 City's children and youth.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

17 GREGORY BRENDER: Good afternoon, thank you so  
18 much for opportunity to testify, and thank you for  
19 your questions to ACS about the budget deficit facing  
20 the voucher system.

21 I'm Gregory Brender from the...

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And thank you for actually  
23 bringing it to my attention.

24 GREGORY BRENDER: Of course.  
25

1  
2 I'm Gregory Brender from the Day Care Council of  
3 New York. We're the membership organization of early  
4 childhood education provider organizations.

5 And yeah, just wanted to highlight that this is a  
6 situation where 4,000 to 7,000 families a month could  
7 be denied recertification, and that this is going to  
8 affect low income working families, people who need  
9 child care in order to go to work.

10 We have been up to Albany to communicate this  
11 urgency to state legislators, and where we know we  
12 need the State to act, we really need both the State  
13 and the City to work together. Both have a role to  
14 play in averting this crisis.

15 And I'll just also point out, and it goes into  
16 much more detail on the written testimony, but this  
17 is on top of a City Budget that cuts \$222 million  
18 from early childhood education from programs  
19 including 3K, School Day Plus, preschool, special-ed  
20 and others. So it's crucial that we invest in early  
21 childhood education in this budget. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE) minutes to  
23 spare, I think you won so far.

24 GREGORY BENDER: (INAUDIBLE)

25 (LAUGHTER)

1 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

2 (LAUGHTER)

3 FAITH BEHUM: Thank you, Chairperson Stevens, and  
4 members of the Committee of Children and Youth  
5 Services for holding this hearing and for the  
6 opportunity to testify. My name is Faith Behum, I am  
7 a Manager of Government and External Relations at UJA  
8 Federation of New York.  
9

10 Established more 100 years ago, UJA is one of the  
11 nation's largest local philanthropies. We support an  
12 expansive network of nearly a hundred nonprofit  
13 organizations, serving those that are most vulnerable  
14 and in need of programs and services.

15 Many of those nonprofits contract with New York  
16 City to provide services to children and youth  
17 including afterschool programs, summer youth  
18 employment programs, and programming at Beacons and  
19 Cornerstones.

20 On behalf of the nonprofits in UJA's network,  
21 who oversee afterschool programs, I'm urging the  
22 Fiscal Year 2026 Enacted Budget to include additional  
23 investments in the COMPASS and SONYC programs.

24 First, we're asking for \$6.9 million to be  
25 included for the COMPASS Explorer program. This

1  
2 funding was cut last year. Two nonprofits in UJA's  
3 network lost funding for 72 youth to attend their  
4 after school programs. One of these programs had a  
5 lengthy wait list, both provided services to  
6 communities that had limited access to other  
7 affordable after school options.

8       Second, we are asking for an investment over a  
9 \$154 million in the FY26 Budget to begin a phase-in  
10 period of increasing rates for COMPASS and SONYC  
11 programs. These programs have not been re-procured in  
12 over a decade, leaving providers with outdated  
13 reimbursement rates that do not reflect inflation.

14       Providers were expecting DYCD to reissue an RFP  
15 in 2024. They were actually expecting that RFP for  
16 quite a long time. However, Compass and SONYC  
17 contracts are extended through Summer 2028 by DYCD  
18 and rates were not enhanced.

19       The increased investment we and other advocates  
20 are proposing would result in higher per-participant  
21 rates for COMPASS Elementary and SONYC middle school  
22 programs in their FY26 contract extension. The goal  
23 must be to fully fund elementary and middle school  
24 programs and a new procurement in FY27.

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COMPASS and SONYC programs continue (TIMER CHIMES) to provide services to children and youth regardless of how much or when they are reimbursed to do so. Increased financial investment must be made to better support these programs so providers can continue to serve the communities for years to come. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ: Hello, thank you, good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Children and Youth Committee. Thank you for your time and attention today.

My name is Roberto Rodriguez, and I am the Teen Center Program Director of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center in the Bronx. I'm here today to urge the City to increase funding for COMPASS and SONYC afterschool programs in the FY26 Budget.

These programs are a lifeline for tens of thousands of New York City youth, providing them with safe spaces, academic support, and enrichment activities that keep them engaged after school.

However, due to the stagnant based funding rates, these programs are struggling to stay afloat. Despite a contract extension through 2028, no additional

1 funding has been provided, leaving programs unable to  
2 keep up with the rising cost. Low wages have made it  
3 nearly impossible to recruit and retain staff, and  
4 background check delays have left positions vacant.  
5

6 Without enough staff, programs are forced to  
7 limit enrollment or reduce quality, leaving kids  
8 without the afterschool support they need.

9 This funding crisis isn't just about budgets,  
10 it's about the kids. If we could hire more staff, we  
11 could serve more children, fill all available program  
12 slots, and ensure that every child who needs a safe,  
13 engaging place to go after school has one.

14 More staff means smaller group sizes, more  
15 individualized attention, and the ability to offer  
16 higher quality programs from academic enrichment to  
17 arts, sports, and mentorship. It means kids who might  
18 otherwise be left unsupervised after school have a  
19 place to go where they feel supported and empowered  
20 to succeed.

21 This investment isn't just about numbers, it's  
22 about real children and families who depend on these  
23 programs, our programs. The City must act now to  
24 fully fund afterschool programs and ensure that every  
25 child has access to the opportunities they deserve.

2 Thank you again for this opportunity to speak on  
3 this very important issue that we are facing today.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Close, 19, but, Greg is  
5 still winning.

6 (LAUGHTER)

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Last panelist?

8 CONSTANCE LESOLD: My name is Constance Lesold,  
9 and I am a retired social worker who has worked  
10 extensively with summer youth programs over the years  
11 to successfully set up at least one community garden  
12 that's lasted about 50 years— with no expense to the  
13 City, except that we have had to work hard to keep  
14 that garden over the Franklin Avenue shuttle, not to  
15 go for something else.

16 I hope that your committee can get all your funds  
17 restored for families and children. It's so it's so  
18 important. They make up an essential part of the  
19 city. I'm here especially, too, to call your  
20 attention to an event that I witnessed on February  
21 3rd on Rutland Road, near Schenectady Avenue, where  
22 an ordinary looking family, probably African  
23 American, was accosted by a huge group of the 71st  
24 precinct and possibly other agencies. They were...  
25 looked like an ordinary, well-dressed middle class

1  
2 group. The father was carried off in a Fire  
3 Department Ambulance, 1377, and I bring this to your  
4 attention, that he had no medical or psychiatric  
5 problems going on. He was trying to find out why the  
6 police had stopped him. He was yelling, that's why I  
7 saw it from my 4th window on (INAUDIBLE) Street.

8 I bring to your attention the AM Article about  
9 the cuts well, not cuts, but how desperate the  
10 situation is for EMS. (TIMER CHIMES) And not only did  
11 they put take the father off improperly in a Fire  
12 Department ambulance, but they took the mother, put  
13 her in handcuffs, put her in one car, and put two  
14 different children, her two small children, their two  
15 small children, in a separate police car and off they  
16 went.

17 Now, since February 3, I have tried to find out  
18 what was going on because I'm a...

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: (INAUDIBLE)

20 CONSTANCE LESOLD: citizen.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thirty seconds, if you can  
22 make your conclusion.

23 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh? Okay, thank you, I have  
25 no questions for this panel. Thank you.

1                   The last panel will be Christopher Leon Johnson  
2  
3 and Sharon Brown.

4           CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Ready?

5           CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, whenever you're ready.

6           CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello, yeah, hello,  
7 Chair, Chair Stevens, my name is Christopher Leon...

8           UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

9           CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: No problem... Hello, My  
10 name is Christopher Leon Johnson, Thank you for  
11 having this testimony today.

12           I'm here calling on the defunding of all Cure  
13 Violence nonprofits in the city of New York. I'm  
14 calling on the defunding of Life Camp. I'm calling on  
15 the defunding of Man Up Inc.

16           I'm calling on an investigation of that \$1.6  
17 million contract that was given to the Flossy  
18 Organization via Man Up, Inc. that was given in the  
19 FY25 budget. I'm calling on investigation to Mercedes  
20 Narcisse for her allocation of \$1.6 million into Man  
21 Up, Inc. for the Flossy Organization. I'm want to  
22 know what justified of getting \$1.6 million contract  
23 for FY25. I'm calling on the City Council to look to  
24 ask Jibreel Jalloh from the Flossy Organization to  
25 have a special hearing and ask him what justifies him

1  
2 to collect all that money from \$1.6 million for a  
3 contract. And he needs to start answering, like, what  
4 justify him to what... why he can't get money through  
5 his own organization through... only he had to go to  
6 Man Up, Inc. to get that money.

7 One more thing is, I'm calling on the... I'm  
8 calling on the defunding all Cure Violence  
9 organizations in New York City because they do  
10 nothing for the city. This is nothing but a taxpayer  
11 scam. And all they do is recruit these guys who come  
12 first out of jail to keep these guys compliant with  
13 the Probation Department and the New York State  
14 Parole Department. Majority of that money goes to the  
15 executive board members, and while the members get  
16 paid \$20 an hour to do basically nothing, and just  
17 so-called... so-called "stay out trouble", none of  
18 these guys get in trouble with even guns (INAUDIBLE)

19 One more thing is that the City Council needs to  
20 allocate money to the Deliveristas and the Street  
21 Vendor Project for cure for... like... because of the  
22 youth, because they have young members in their  
23 organization for OSHA trainings and OSHA trainings  
24 and job trainings for Workers Justice Project and  
25 Street Vendor Project.

1  
2 And by the... before, like I said before, again,  
3 the City Council, before they allocate money to  
4 man... I know they might do anyway... before they  
5 allocate money to Man Up, Inc, they need to have a  
6 special hearing with, (INAUDIBLE) Mitchell and  
7 Jibreel Jalloh asking, what is going on? What  
8 justified them to get all that money? Because what's  
9 going on here is that (TIMER CHIMES) Man Up, Inc. is  
10 getting the money, and that money is going to Jibreel  
11 Jalloh Organization. And Jibreel Jalloh used to work  
12 for public the Public Advocate.

13 And they need to put a bill in the City Council  
14 to prevent anybody that you work for Public Advocate  
15 Office from working a nonprofit sector for at least  
16 10 years. So thank you so much, and have a great day.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

18 SHARON BROWN: Thank you. Hello, My name is Sharon  
19 Brown. Before I get started, remember the hostages,  
20 release the hostages, let Yahweh's people go.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please stay on topic, thank  
22 you.

23 SHARON BROWN: Defend Israel. Okay. So, ACS was  
24 here. A prior time they were here they had determined  
25 that foster parents and adoption should not be done

1  
2 by homosexuals. I believe that should be reinforced  
3 and reinstated and made sure that that's followed. It  
4 is unbiblical and it is proven harmful to children  
5 biblically and in real time. Fun (sic) parents  
6 keeping their children where it's a problem with  
7 money causing their separation. The monies that are  
8 being put into the ACS can be used for the... reunite  
9 the parents and the children. And the same money that  
10 the foster parents would get, the parents should be  
11 able to get that funding so that they can raise their  
12 children if it's only a money issue.

13 We need to implement Jewish and Christian bible  
14 based counseling and teaching. I myself, was a  
15 teacher in a church, Sunday school teacher, I worked  
16 in the youth department in the church, and we have a  
17 lot of things that we do with children where they're  
18 not in the streets, they're not going to jail. Over  
19 many years, I have overseen, working with children,  
20 taking them out on outings, and we don't have a high  
21 crime rate in the churches that I've been involved  
22 with the youth ministry, the children's church, the  
23 little babies, these things aren't happening in the  
24 church settings. If we bring the church setting into  
25 the school, which we are doing now, Texas has just

1  
2 okay prayer in school. This is something that we have  
3 been working with. We are also getting the Ten  
4 Commandments in school, and we are getting (TIMER  
5 CHIMES)... in different states. And we want that here  
6 in New York City, so that we can make a difference,  
7 and the children in the schools can be like the  
8 children in the church that I taught.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I will be taking  
10 a five-minute recess and will be right back.

11 (PAUSE)

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now be moving to Zoom  
13 testimony. First up, we are going to have Alejandra  
14 Ng.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

16 ALEJANDRA NG: Great. My name is Alejandra Ng, and  
17 I am the Assistant Director of New York Junior Tennis  
18 and Learning's NYJTL's Community Tennis Programs. I  
19 want to thank Chair Stevens and the members of the  
20 youth... Children and Youth Committee for allowing me  
21 to present today.

22 We are seeking an increase under the Council's  
23 Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, which  
24 would be our first increase over 17 years.

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2 In the past 17 years, things have gone up— costs  
3 such as labor, permits, equipment, minimum wage have  
4 all risen, and we are currently struggling to  
5 continue providing the level of tennis programs that  
6 we are known for.

7 We... to keep up with these costs, to continue to  
8 pay our staffs a livable wage, and prevent cuts to  
9 any programming, we are asking for an increase in  
10 funding. It is our belief that talent is universal,  
11 but access and opportunity are not, and that is why  
12 we have strived over the last 50 years to continue to  
13 provide the sport of tennis to all children,  
14 including those with special needs.

15 With the Council as our partner, we have become  
16 the largest tennis and education organization in the  
17 country. Through our community tennis program, we  
18 enroll over 10,000 kids every year. Over 70% of our  
19 participants are under the age of 10; 75% of our  
20 youth identify as Black African American, Latino, and  
21 or Asian; 80% of our families report as low income  
22 based on the New York City AMI.

23 I was a product of this organization. I started  
24 when I was 10 with my with my younger siblings, and  
25 it was a free program that my parents could afford.

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More than 75% of our coaches are alumni of the program. We hire... we have about a 100 coaches working year-round, and 50% of these coaches are also in high school or college, so we also are their first time for employment.

Again, we are asking for a \$1 million on the Council's Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, which is an increase of \$200,000 from last year. If allocated, we would be able to provide additional hours, increase enrollment, increase accessibility to these kids, and continue providing the product that we have. Again, we thank the New York City Council for all their support over the past couple of years.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

Next we will have Daniele Gerard.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

DANIELE GERARD: Thank you, Chair Stevens... Can you all hear me?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yep.

DANIELE GERARD: Thank you, Chair Stevens and committee members.

I'm Daniele Gerard, a Senior Staff Attorney at Children's Rights. We are a national organization

1  
2 that advocates on behalf of youth and state systems  
3 here in the city on behalf of young adults on Rikers.

4 As the Progressive Caucus states, "Living with  
5 mental illness is not a crime." In June 2024, we  
6 submitted a public comment to the Board of Correction  
7 regarding the law banning solitary confinement, which  
8 includes a great deal of research regarding youth  
9 brain development and the criminalization of mental  
10 health. We would like to highlight one of the points  
11 we make and some of the accompanying data.

12 Mental health is integral to overall health and  
13 well-being, especially for adolescents, shaping their  
14 development and influencing their responses to stress  
15 and social interactions, and supporting healthy  
16 decision making.

17 The lack of investment in community mental health  
18 services results in police and agents of other  
19 punitive systems responding to children and youth  
20 experiencing psychiatric distress rather than trained  
21 behavioral health personnel.

22 As a result, youth with mental health conditions  
23 are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated than  
24 those without mental health conditions.

1  
2 Nationwide data show that 70% of incarcerated  
3 young people present with a diagnosed mental health  
4 condition compared to 18 to 22% of all children.

5 Once involved in the child welfare or juvenile  
6 legal systems, youth who are Black or brown, LGBTQ+  
7 and or living with a disability, disproportionately  
8 face the most profound mental health challenges.

9 Young people themselves describe the child  
10 welfare and juvenile legal systems as traumatic, and  
11 youth who experience these systems often have poor  
12 mental health outcomes.

13 The criminalization of mental health is a direct  
14 result of the lack of investment in community mental  
15 health services. We urge the Council to stand firm in  
16 supporting our communities, especially when it comes  
17 to the health and well-being of *all* our children and  
18 youth incarcerated or not.

19 We refer you to our written testimony for ways to  
20 reallocate the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Rikers to  
21 work toward achieving this full... Thank you for the  
22 opportunity to testify. I know it's been a long day,  
23 especially for you, Chair Stevens.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will have  
25 Allison Hollihan.



1  
2 the parental incarceration, and it's vital that this  
3 question be continued in future surveys.

4 We urge NYPD to collect data on how many children  
5 are present during a parent's arrest and for ACS to  
6 collect data on how many children experience parental  
7 incarceration.

8 We urge DOC to expand video visiting to include  
9 weekend and evening hours, so the children don't have  
10 to miss school to visit, and we ask for Rikers to  
11 reinstate Saturday visits for ACS Children of  
12 Incarcerated Parents Program. Currently, these visits  
13 occur only on a school day.

14 Funding must be fully restored for community  
15 based providers to deliver services to Rikers  
16 including family focused reentry.

17 We recommend that ACS and its provider agencies  
18 have designated staff liaisons who are familiar with  
19 the criminal legal system.

20 Children of incarcerated parents should be  
21 considered as a priority population for the Summer  
22 Youth Employment Program.

23 And finally, the Interagency Coordinating Council  
24 On Youth should create a Children Of Incarcerated  
25 Parents Working Group.

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Taking steps to identify and support these children sets up children for success, rather costly involvement in the mental health, homeless, and criminal legal systems. Thank you for your time today. I know you've been there forever.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Next we have Liangliang Han. I'm sorry if I mispronounced your name.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

LIANGLIANG HAN: Good afternoon everyone, my name is Liangliang Han, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm a social worker with the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, working on the ACS founded Family Enrichment Center, FEC Project.

FEC's are more than just the spaces. They are community homes that promote connection, empowerment, and prevention.

Our Sunset Park site is the first FEC in South Brooklyn, playing a vital role in supporting immigrant communities. Culturally inclusive spaces like the FEC builds trust and resilience.

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Community members have shared that prevention is crucial. Addressing needs early prevents small challenges from turning into crisis.

We urge ACS to continue investing in proactive community driven initiatives, increase funding for programs like FECs where expanded services prevent issues at their root, and reach more families before problems escalate.

Strong empowered communities are essential for children and youth's well-being. Let's pay attention to upstream investments that create lasting, meaningful change. Thank you so much, everyone.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

The following witnesses were also signed up to testify remotely, but I don't see them online. So raise your hand if you're online: Ashley Jones; Glendaliz Valdez; Sierra Kraft; Jeremy Kohomban; Alex Stein.

(NO RESPONSE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If there is anyone else in the room that did not have the opportunity to testify, please raise your hand. Seeing no one else, I will turn it back to the chair.

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COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's all folks. (GAVEL  
SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

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 April 26, 2025