

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE  
ON GENERAL WELFARE

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December 14, 2023  
Start: 1:14 P.M.  
Recess: 5:15 P.M.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Altha V. Stevens,  
Chairperson of Committee on Youth  
Services

Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala,  
Chairperson of Committee on  
General Welfare

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés  
Tiffany Cabàn  
Crystal Hudson  
Kristin Richardson Jordan  
Linda Lee  
Chi A. Ossè  
Lincoln Restler  
Kevin C. Riley  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S

Ramond Toomer  
Associate Commissioner for Community Based  
Alternative Programs, CBA

Stephanie Gendell  
Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs

Johan Peguero  
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Darryl Rattray  
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Makeda Byfield  
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Ali Sibawa  
YMEN, Young Men Establishing a Narrative

Joan Rodriguez Flores  
In favor of Preventative Services for At-Risk  
Youth

Suekanya Meaks  
Youth Justice Network

Lauren Galloway  
Advocacy Coordinator at the Coalition for  
Homeless Youth

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

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Star Fernandez  
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Monet Smith  
Criminologist and Founder of SJI

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Youth Advocate with Youth Represent

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Bishop Mitchell Taylor

Darren Mack  
Codirector at Freedom Agenda

Anthony Robinson  
Artist Program Coordinator at JCCA

Judith Harris  
Attorney with the Legal Aid Society

Sharon Harpaz  
Director of Second Chance over at JCAA

Victor Herrera  
Providing testimony for Peggy Herrera

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Sound check for the Committee  
4 on Youth Services joined with the General Welfare.  
5 Today's date is December 14, 2023 being recorded by  
6 Danny Wong in the Committee Room.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet please. Good evening  
8 and welcome to the New York City Hybrid Hearing on  
9 the Committee on Youth Services jointly with the  
10 Committee on General Welfare. Please silence all  
11 electronic devices.

12 At no time, please do not approach the dais. If  
13 you have any questions, please raise your hand. One  
14 of the Sergeant at Arms will kindly assist you.  
15 Thank you so much for your cooperation. Chair, we  
16 are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon. I'm  
18 Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of the New York  
19 City Council's Committee on Youth Services. I'm  
20 joined by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair of  
21 General Welfare Committee for today's joint hearing  
22 on Preventative Services for At-Risk and Justice-  
23 Involved Youth.

24 We're also joined by Council Member Williams and  
25 online, we are joined by Council Member Cabàn and  
26 Council Member Hudson. Resent reports of overcrowded

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3 at ACS secure juvenile detention facilities  
4 underscore the importance of preventative services  
5 that provide positive influences in the lives at risk  
6 youth.

7 Staffers at the facility reported that detainee  
8 youth are sleeping in hallways and classrooms due to  
9 overcrowded and curbing violence. This is  
10 unacceptable and we must do better. You must  
11 guarantee that young people are treated with dignity  
12 and respect. That starts with constructive  
13 interventions to avoid detention and holistic service  
14 to ensure young people remain on a positive path.

15 Studies have shown that a lack of opportunity and  
16 resources could lead to crime and delinquency.  
17 That's why DYCD's investment in community development  
18 programs is so essential for young people who need  
19 support. About a year ago, the Office of  
20 Neighborhood Safety was transferred from the Mayor's  
21 Office of Criminal Justice to Department of Youth and  
22 Community Development. ONS compares a plethora of  
23 programs and services and a community driven approach  
24 to breaking the cycle of violence among young people.

25 My goal is to evaluate the efficiency of those  
programs and explore their success in helping young

3 people to avoid crisis. DYCD also offers services  
4 for youth experiencing homelessness. I'm interested  
5 to learn how RHY providers help at risk and justice  
6 involved youth replace criminal behavior with  
7 positive practices.

8 Like the Office of Neighborhood Safety, ACS  
9 offers a number of programs access divisions  
10 including family assessment programs, alternative to  
11 placement and Respite care that are tailored to at  
12 risk or court involved teams in young adults.

13 My aim is to facilitate and encourage greater  
14 collaboration between the two agencies to ensure that  
15 services are complementary and not duplicative. Both  
16 of those agencies manage programs that can turn a  
17 young person's life around strengthen their  
18 partnerships and key in helping young people avoid  
19 the criminal justice system.

20 I'd like to thank my Committee Staff for their  
21 hard work in preparing for this hearing, Policy  
22 Analyst Elizabeth Arzt, Committee Counsel Christina  
23 Yellamaty, right? Yeah, okay great, Yellamaty and  
24 the entire A team back at the district office and my  
25 Communications Director Jahtah Brown. Now I will now

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3 - I would now like to turn it over to Deputy Speaker  
4 Ayala for her opening statement.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Chair Stevens.  
6 Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's  
7 hearing. My name is Diana Ayala and I am the Deputy  
8 Speaker of the New York City Council and the Chair of  
9 the General Welfare Committee. As my colleague  
10 Council Member Stevens stated, we are holding a joint  
11 hearing with the Committee on Youth Services on  
12 Preventative Services for At-Risk and Justice  
13 Involved Youth. We are also hearing Intro. 757, a  
14 bill sponsored by Council Member Amanda Farias.  
15 Intro. 757 would require the Department of Social  
16 Services establish a system to obtain employment and  
17 income information from a third party for the city's  
18 youth in making determinations for benefits and  
19 service eligibility.

20 The local justice system for youth is operated by  
21 multiple city agencies. Among them is ACS's Division  
22 for Youth and Family Justice, DYFJ. DYFJ is  
23 responsible for coordinating the city's youth  
24 detention services and overseeing youth remanded  
25 under the juvenile justice system in New York City.  
It's functions are to build stronger and safer



3 communities, prevent youth from entering the criminal  
4 justice system, provide therapeutic services to youth  
5 in custodial care and help youth develop the tools  
6 and capacities that they need to leave the justice  
7 system for good.

8 To reach these goals, DYFJ provides a range of  
9 juvenile justice services. While we know that DYFJ  
10 provides a host of juvenile justice services, it is  
11 undeniable that more can be done to ensure quality of  
12 care for youth. For example, as discussed at a  
13 General Welfare hearing several months ago, ACS  
14 detention facilities are reportedly overcrowded  
15 resulting in teens sleeping on the ground in common  
16 areas. This is unacceptable.

17 We need to think through how we can prevent youth  
18 from entering into detention to begin with. Early  
19 intervention programs and services such as the  
20 portfolio of preventive services models, the ACS's  
21 division of preventive services provides, are  
22 intended to prevent behaviors associated with  
23 delinquency and criminal justice involvement and our  
24 design to support the resilience of youth and develop  
25 their assets and capacity.

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3 Research has shown that youth who are in contact  
4 with the child welfare system are more likely to be  
5 criminal justice involved. Youth who have been put  
6 in and out of home placements and who lack placement  
7 stability, have an especially high likelihood of  
8 becoming criminal justice involved. We need to think  
9 out of the box to promote early intervention models  
10 to support families and their children. We must  
11 prevent out of home placements and increase instances  
12 of reunification. Today, we want to evaluate the  
13 efficacy of preventative services offered by the city  
14 for youth in need of supportive intervention and  
15 those in contact with the criminal justice system.  
16 We also want to explore the potential for greater  
17 collaboration between ACS and DYCD to enhance  
18 programming.

19 I look forward to hearing from the Administration  
20 as well as from the advocates on our oversight topic  
21 and gathering feedback on Intro. 757. Also, I would  
22 like to thank the Committee Staff who worked hard to  
23 prepare this hearing, Aminta Kilawan, Senior  
24 Legislative Counsel, David Romero, Legislative  
25 Counsel, Penina Rosenberg, Policy Analyst, Julia

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2 Haramis, Unit Head and finally, my staff Elsie  
3 Encarnacion Chief of Staff.

4 We will now be calling on Council Member Farias  
5 who will not be able to join us this afternoon. I  
6 will now turn it back to Chair Stevens.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'll turn it over to  
8 Committee Counsel to swear in.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, good afternoon. Please  
10 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the  
11 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
12 before this Committee and to respond honestly to  
13 Council Member questions?

14 PANEL: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

16 RAYMOND TOOMER: Good afternoon. My name is  
17 Ramond Toomer and I am the Associate Commissioner for  
18 Community Based Alternative Programs or CBA in the  
19 Division of Youth and Family Justice or DYFJ at the  
20 Administration for Children Services or ACS.

21 I am joined today by Stephanie Gendell, Deputy  
22 Commissioner for External Affairs and Johan Peguero,  
23 Associate Commissioner for Close to Home, as well as  
24 my colleagues from the Department of Youth and  
25 Community Development or DYCD.

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3 We would like to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and  
4 Chair Stevens, along with the members of the General  
5 Welfare and Youth Services Committees for holding  
6 today's hearing on preventive services for at-risk  
7 and justice involved youth.

8 At ACS, both in our child welfare and our youth  
9 justice work, we are intently focused on providing  
10 youth and their families with services and supports  
11 as far upstream as possible. So, as to prevent as  
12 many youth as possible from coming into contact with  
13 the foster care, juvenile justice or justice systems.  
14 ACS contracts with 44 prevention providers across the  
15 city to provide a full continuum of child welfare  
16 prevention services focused on addressing the needs  
17 of the whole family.

18 Through these programs, we are reaching nearly  
19 8,000 youth ages 13-18 years old in evidence-based  
20 models and family support services. ACS is also in  
21 the midst of a three-year citywide expansion of  
22 Family Enrichment Centers or FECs, going from three  
23 demonstration sites to 30 FECs. FECs are welcoming  
24 homelike, community spaces where neighbors connect,  
25 contribute to their community, find resources, and  
support one another.

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3 Currently, nonprofit providers operate 12 centers  
4 throughout the boroughs with eight more slated to  
5 open in 2024. Our testimony today will focus on the  
6 continuum of preventive aftercare and community-based  
7 services ACS provides for youth through the DYFJ  
8 continuum. Specifically, this includes the Family  
9 Assessment Program or FAP, the Juvenile Justice  
10 Initiative or JJI, Alternative to Detention, ATD  
11 programs and Close to Home Aftercare including our  
12 expansion of fair futures coaches and work with the  
13 Mayor's gun violence prevention taskforce.

14 In all of these programs, we are working to  
15 engage and support youth and their families whenever  
16 youth are struggling or at risk. So, it's to help  
17 youth reach their fullest potential and avoid the  
18 negative consequences associated with the justice  
19 system.

20 Since 2002, FAP has provided services to families  
21 seeking PINS, Persons in Need of Supervision petition  
22 for youth up to age 18 who commit offenses that may  
23 not rise to the level of a crime but are unique to  
24 their status as juveniles. Including truancy and  
25 running away from home. PINS placements have  
declined significantly since the inception of that

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3 from 822 PINS placements in 2002 to 16 in 2022 and 6  
4 in the first nine months of 2023.

5 As the number of caretakers seeking PINS has  
6 declined. FAP has made our offices available and  
7 services available to any family struggling with  
8 difficult teenage behaviors. In 2022, FAP served  
9 2,615 families citywide. FAP bridges the gap between  
10 teenagers and families in crisis by partnering with  
11 them to resolve and manage conflict through  
12 assessments, individualized interventions, and  
13 referral to a range of community-based services and  
14 support programs including our own continuum of  
15 services. FAP is a voluntary program that seeks to  
16 keep youth on the right track and at home with their  
17 families. It is available to any family in New York  
18 City who is struggling with their youths behavior.

19 Families typically seek help from FAP if a child  
20 is skipping school or having difficulties with  
21 teachers or classes, running away from home, using  
22 drugs or alcohol, struggling with mental illness,  
23 experiencing family conflicts or exhibiting defiant  
24 or dangerous behavior. While families can reach out  
25 to FAP directly, in 2022, 35 percent of families were

1 referred from New York City public schools and 12  
2 percent were referred by the NYPD.  
3

4 In 2023, FAP also became the differential  
5 response program for families impacted by the Raising  
6 the Lower Age or RTLA legislation that raised the age  
7 of criminal responsibility up from 7 to 12 years old.

8 Now, youth 7-11 who commit an act that they may  
9 have been arrested for in the past, can be referred  
10 to FAP for intake and assessment. FAP will meet with  
11 the family, assess what is happening with the youth,  
12 and if the families want, FAP will make targeted  
13 referrals for ongoing services.

14 Through our offices located in or near the family  
15 courthouses in every borough, families in need can  
16 receive an assessment from a trained and licensed  
17 social worker who will make tailored referrals  
18 ranging from community-based supports to ACS funded  
19 intensive therapeutic evidence-based programs that  
20 provide in home crisis mediation and family therapy.  
21 Our continuum includes family stabilization and  
22 intensive three-month crisis intervention aimed at  
23 de-escalating conflicts and creating collaborative  
24 service plans.  
25

3 Functional Family Therapy or FFT, a family  
4 therapy intervention for the treatment of violent,  
5 criminal, behavioral, school and conduct problems  
6 with youth and their families were both intrafamilial  
7 and extrafamilial factors are addressed. Brief  
8 Strategic Family Therapy or BSFT, a family  
9 intervention for children and youth with serious  
10 behavior problems and or drug use which identifies  
11 patterns of family interaction and improves them to  
12 restore effective parental leadership and involvement  
13 with the youth.

14 Multisystemic therapy, substance abuse adaptation  
15 and intensive evidence based therapeutic intervention  
16 that provides family therapy to the entire family in  
17 the home over a period of four months. Therapists  
18 visit the home multiple times per week and are  
19 available by phone 24 hours a day.

20 Respite, where youth are enrolled in FAP  
21 alternative to detention programs, alternative to  
22 placement programs and close to home aftercare are  
23 able to be in Respite for 21 days, relieving parents  
24 of the care of their child when families need  
25 immediate relief in order to maintain or restore  
family functioning.



3 Mentoring and Advocacy or MAP, which provides  
4 individualized strength and advocacy-based wrap  
5 around support services for up to six months. MAP  
6 youth who require longer term support can choose to  
7 be connected to a Fair Futures Coach so they can  
8 continue to work on their educational and career  
9 goals well beyond the MAP mentoring period of six  
10 months.

11 JJI is an alternative to placement program, aimed  
12 at diverting young people who had been found by the  
13 family court as juvenile delinquents from placement  
14 in a close to home residents. Instead of placement  
15 in a group home, youth and JJI are able to stay at  
16 home and receive intensive evidence-based  
17 interventions either MST or FFT and services in the  
18 community, while being supervised by the New York  
19 City Department of Probation.

20 The therapy engages the entire family and targets  
21 a range of issues, including mental health, substance  
22 abuse, peer difficulties, school related challenges,  
23 and family troubles. Specifically, families agree to  
24 engage in mandatory JJI services as a condition of  
25 probation and we begin working with the families  
within 48 hours of the courts dispositional hearing.

3 Often the therapists from our provider agency  
4 attends the disposition so that the intake paperwork  
5 for services is completed at court immediately after  
6 the hearing. Youth are assigned probation officers  
7 who are familiar with JJI. The youth MST or FFT  
8 therapists and the probation officer conference  
9 weekly, participate in case reviews and court  
10 hearings and work collaboratively to address any  
11 issues that arise. JJI serves approximately 200  
12 youth annually. Therapy duration is typically six  
13 months but can be extended to one year if clinically  
14 warranted.

15 Despite serving a population with increasingly  
16 high needs, JJI program completion rates have held  
17 steady at 65 percent. After issuing a new RFP last  
18 year, ACS assumed responsibility for the family court  
19 ATD programs in July 2023. Managing the JJI ATP  
20 post-disposition program, New York City's detention  
21 facilities and the close to home placement program  
22 provides us with a unique perspective into the needs  
23 of the youth in the juvenile justice system, making  
24 it a natural transition for ACS to manage the ATD  
25 Pretrial Family Court program.

3 The ATD providers, cases, Good Shepherd Services  
4 and the Center for Justice Innovation promote  
5 positive behaviors, healthy relationships and  
6 problem-solving skills that will allow youth to  
7 remain safely in the community, in lieu of detention.  
8 The model includes curfew checks and individualized  
9 supervision and services during the pendency of the  
10 juvenile delinquency case in an effort to reduce  
11 failure to appear warrants and rearrests. In  
12 addition, youth are connected to age appropriate and  
13 accessible vocational, educational, and social  
14 programming that is tailored to their specific needs.

15 With the new contracts that move to ACS, there  
16 are now ATD court liaison staff at Family Court to  
17 advocate for ATD programs when appropriate, a renewed  
18 focus on youth wellbeing as ATD service navigator  
19 staff connect youth to services based on individual  
20 needs during their time in the ATD program and  
21 beyond.

22 And as a way to incentivize participation, youth  
23 have the opportunity to earn a stipend of up to  
24 \$1,000 for successful participation. The target  
25 population is youth between the ages of 12 and 18 who  
scores mid-risk on the detention risk assessment

3 instrument. We anticipate serving approximately 300  
4 youth annually.

5 Despite all of the prevention efforts underway at  
6 ACS and other city agencies, there are unfortunately  
7 still youth for whom the courts detain or place them.  
8 Judges determine whether youth will be in detention  
9 while their cases are pending in court. Only youth  
10 with cases pending in family court can be detained in  
11 non-secure detention and any youth detained by a  
12 judge in Supreme Court would be in secure detention.

13 At this time, 96 percent of youth in secure  
14 detention have cases in Supreme Court. For the  
15 limited number of youth leaving secure detention and  
16 returning directly to the community, New York City  
17 public schools connects youth back to their schools,  
18 Bellevue which provides the mental health services  
19 and detention, connects youth to mental health  
20 services in their community, and our case managers  
21 connect youth and their families to other services in  
22 the community.

23 For youth returning to the community for  
24 nonsecure detention, are nonprofit partners providing  
25 nonsecure detention are responsible for connecting  
youth to any supports or services they need in the

3 community. If a family court judge decides to place  
4 a youth in disposition, the youth would be placed in  
5 a close to home facility. Close to home placements  
6 are small, group home like settings located in New  
7 York City and Westchester where youth receive  
8 services and supports to help them address underlying  
9 needs and issues and then successfully return to the  
10 community.

11 All youth in close to home placements can receive  
12 up to six months of aftercare and most youth are  
13 ordered to participate in aftercare for several  
14 months. These services aim to create a smooth  
15 transition from residential care to the community and  
16 can include education and vocational support, mental  
17 health and substance abuse services, case management,  
18 and support services, referrals to community-based  
19 programs and a fair futures coach.

20 This past summer, Mayor Adams along with the New  
21 York City gun violence prevention taskforce released  
22 a blueprint focused on upstream solutions to address  
23 gun violence throughout the city. The  
24 recommendations focused on prevention and  
25 intervention strategies through a public health and  
community development lens to address the root causes

3 of gun violence. ACS appreciates all of the work of  
4 the task force and all of the agencies and entities  
5 working to implement the recommendations. We know  
6 that these types of early interventions are the best  
7 way to keep communities safe while promoting the  
8 wellbeing of youth and ultimately keeping youth and  
9 young people out of our detention facilities.

10 ACS's expansion of fair futures coaching for  
11 youth in our juvenile justice continuum is an  
12 important initiative in the blueprint. In April  
13 2023, ACS rolled out the Fair Futures model after  
14 working with the Center for Fair Futures to adopt the  
15 model to youth in close to home placements, close to  
16 home aftercare, and FAP. Youth in these programs now  
17 have access to coaches who can work with them until  
18 age 23, providing them with support and guidance, so  
19 that when they are home in the community, their lives  
20 stay on the right track.

21 Before concluding my testimony, I would like to  
22 thank a moment to thank my colleagues at DYCD for  
23 their ongoing collaboration and partnership.

24 Hundreds of youth in our foster care and juvenile  
25 justice programs participate in DYCD's continuum of

3 after school and youth employment programs, which are  
4 invaluable for the young people we serve.

5 I want to thank all of the nonprofit providers  
6 working with our DYFJ continuum and the DYFJ team for  
7 all that they do every day working with young people  
8 and their families and continuously focusing on how  
9 we can best help youth achieve their fullest  
10 potential.

11 Finally, I want to thank the Council for your  
12 interest in the services and supports that can help  
13 prevent youth from coming into contact with juvenile  
14 justice system, and for your commitment to the youth  
15 and families working with ACS and our providers.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. That's a lot of  
18 information. I have a couple questions about the  
19 testimony but I know that basically I have a couple  
20 of questions in there as well but I'm going to start  
21 with DYCD but I also want to just say and give a  
22 shout out to all the young people that's in the room  
23 today. Let me tell you something, could we give it  
24 up for them? [APPLAUSE] Like, it just warms my  
25 heart and just the importance of making sure that  
like we're not just talking at them, like they're

3 part of the conversation and that is something that I  
4 say a lot and so, just to see so many folks who are  
5 here and know that a few of them are signed up to  
6 testify. We have some more on the way; just is  
7 really the direction we need to continue to be going  
8 and need to see more of that and not in just these  
9 types of hearing but all hearings. Like, they need  
10 to be very much a part of your conversations and  
11 especially because for me, it's always like, how are  
12 we all working together? Like ACS just talks about  
13 all these programs and things that they're doing and  
14 making sure they're also overlapping with the same  
15 things that you know, DYCD got going on and they're  
16 working with. And so, you know I hope this is like  
17 the start of us continuing to make sure that as  
18 programs are being rolled out and as we are facing a  
19 very tough budget of thinking about how are we  
20 working smart, right and working together?

21 But I'm going to start with DYCD. I have a  
22 number of questions for you guys, especially around  
23 the Office of Neighborhood Safety. And so, when the  
24 Mayor announced the transition of Office of  
25 Neighborhood Safety from MOCJ to DYCD, he said the  
shift will enable DYCD to integrate community



3 violence intervention programs into the agencies  
4 existing programs, providing a more coordinated suit  
5 of services to New Yorkers who are at risk of gun  
6 violence. Has DYCD incorporated ONS services into  
7 their existing programs?

8 DARRYL RATTRAY: Good afternoon Chair Stevens.  
9 So, Chair Stevens, yes we've been embarking on what  
10 we are calling and you're familiar with this and  
11 thank you for attending one of these phases but the  
12 first approach -

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I've attended a couple.

14 DARRYL RATTRAY: Oh, that's alright a couple.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, hmm.

16 DARRYL RATTRAY: The first approach was our  
17 entire ONS portfolio, especially the folks who are on  
18 the ground doing the cure violence work, canvassing  
19 communities, needed to know exactly what they were  
20 getting from the DYCD ecosystem. So, we did a series  
21 of meetings directly with them. DYCD meeting with  
22 the entire team from those organizations throughout  
23 the city.

24 Well, we started with the six precincts, focused  
25 precincts but and they learned about all of our  
programs. They were able to ask us questions about

3 them. Uhm, we talked about pathways and referral  
4 systems as well. The second phase of that and we've  
5 been carrying this out first in the sixth precincts  
6 and there's some other precincts for Rockaway, Staten  
7 Island, and part of the Bronx. But the second phase  
8 is now locally, how do we have a meet and greet with  
9 those cure violence folks who are on the ground doing  
10 the work, that entire team? And all of our programs  
11 within a precinct? So, all of our services, after  
12 school, community centers, our Fatherhood programs,  
13 which ever programs we have, or workforce programs,  
14 in that precinct, they got an opportunity to meet  
15 with those groups and meet each other.

16 The third phase of this and we haven't started  
17 the third phase yet, but it's going to be a community  
18 open house. How do we advertise those services to  
19 the entire community and get folks out there? And  
20 again, Chair Stevens, thank you attending several of  
21 them and supporting.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Of course. I would like to  
23 also acknowledge Council Member Lee and Council  
24 Member Restler who are also here in attendance. Yes,  
25 I did attend several of the Open Houses, mostly in  
the Bronx. Uhm, those are the ones I attended but

3 you know it was a really good opportunity to see how  
4 people were actually excited about the collaboration  
5 and they talked about that a lot. Like, I didn't  
6 even know that was here or I didn't know that  
7 provider was doing that. And so, you know I think  
8 more of things need to happen, not just within one  
9 agency but thinking about how do we do that cross  
10 agency, right? Because I think that those are just  
11 important as well to kind of you know know how do we  
12 make referrals so like, if a parent comes in and  
13 needs to do a PINS and things like that and so, you  
14 know I think you know you got it on Phase three. I  
15 would love to think about what phase four and five  
16 and six will look like.

17 I know I'm always giving you more work. Uhm, in  
18 2021, the Mayor's Action Plan established a Citywide  
19 Youth Leadership Council YLC for young people living  
20 in NYCHAs developments. The nine-month program  
21 trains youth leaders as advocates for safety and  
22 wellbeing in their communities. Please provide the  
23 breakdown of active youth leadership councils across  
24 the city, including the participating NYCHA  
25 developments and the number of young people enrolled.

3 DARRYL RATTRAY: Thank you Chair Stevens. So, we  
4 are proud of the work done by the Youth Leadership  
5 Council. We currently have – the Youth Leadership  
6 Council is comprised of young people from the 30 MAP  
7 sites. So, every MAP site has at least two  
8 representatives from those developments who are on  
9 the Youth Leadership Council.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the MAP sites?  
11 Which one are those and could you explain a little  
12 bit about what those are?

13 DARRYL RATTRAY: We – you want me to read off 30  
14 or you?

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Give us – don't read all  
16 30. Don't do that.

17 DARRYL RATTRAY: We can send you a list of the 30  
18 MAP sites.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, hmm.

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: But the original back in 2014,  
21 it started with 15 MAP sites and then another 15 got  
22 added on.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But could you talk about  
24 what that is? Because some folks might now know what  
25 the MAP program is.

3 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, the MAP program are  
4 developments where – I forgot the stat. I don't want  
5 to use it in testimony and I get the stat wrong but  
6 it was a number of developments originally that made  
7 up a certain percent of crime and violence in NYCHA  
8 developments. And the focus was that we would focus  
9 resources at these sites, give residents and the  
10 neighborhood the tools and resources so they can  
11 actually activate and empower and make change  
12 directly. So, we implemented something called  
13 Neighborhood Stat where the residents come together,  
14 they vote on safety initiatives and measures and  
15 solutions. And then we actually help support them in  
16 implementation.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I know a number of  
18 those were taking place this summer and went to a  
19 couple of those as well. So, in January 2022, the  
20 Office of Neighborhood Safety released an RFP to  
21 select new community-based implementation partners to  
22 expand neighborhood staff to 18 new NYCHA  
23 developments. What NYCHA developments will  
24 neighborhood staff be expanded to?

25 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yup and those were the add on  
uhm, MAP sites, which include Jefferson, Johnson,

3 Beach 41<sup>st</sup>, West Bright and Whitman, Marcy, Sumner,  
4 Mitchell, Mott Haven, Morris, Langston Hughes,  
5 Lindon, Tilden, Gowanus, and Wykoff.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And were those chosen the  
7 same way the ones previous were by looking at the  
8 crime stats of those development sites and that's ow  
9 those were chosen or was it different because it was  
10 an RFP that went out?

11 DARRYL RATTRAY: Those were chosen within the  
12 same formula.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. The Mayor's Office  
14 of preventative gun violence sponsors supportive  
15 services including job training and placement  
16 programming through the Anti-Gun violence employment  
17 program and Justice Plus program. Please provide a  
18 breakdown of how many young people are enrolled in  
19 the Anti-Violence Employment program and what sectors  
20 enroll our young people typically placed in those  
21 programs.

22 DARRYL RATTRAY: I will start with - I have  
23 created Karina Christiansen here with me. I  
24 butchered your last name, sorry.

25 So, our current enrollment for FY24 is 1,700  
young people. We had 912 work this past summer. The

3 current enrollment for the school year sort of  
4 timeline. We have 572 currently enrolled in working.  
5 The target for the school year is 713. Sites have  
6 until January to complete their enrollment  
7 registration and get young people working. But  
8 Karina, do you want to cover sort of the jobs that  
9 they—

10 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Sure, so each cure violence  
11 site has a certain allotment of ATVP slots. And so,  
12 they recruit young people to work at their own  
13 locations and then also at other CBO's in the  
14 neighborhood. They'll also do for example, shadowing  
15 the outreach workers and the VI's. And so, they're  
16 bringing their participants in and really showing  
17 them what the services look like and doing job  
18 training with them as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, a lot of —

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: I was going to add, I'm sorry.  
21 Imagine ATVP slots are similar to SYEP. Less  
22 rigorous when it comes to the paperwork and more  
23 understanding in the worksite development that these  
24 are young people who may need additional supports.  
25 So, the worksites are created in a way where those  
cure violence groups, CMS groups are also supporting

3 our young people at those worksites. The idea is  
4 that they transition out of an Aging DEP slot into  
5 maybe a Work, Learn, Grow site or SYEP slot.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Alright, so that's not my  
7 question. And so, is this a stipend? Is it stipend?  
8 Is it stipend based? Are they paid hourly and if  
9 it's a stipend, how much and yeah, let's start there.

10 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Yeah, so it is stipend  
11 based and it depends on if you're younger youth or  
12 older youth and then also -

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What's the breakdown?  
14 What's the difference?

15 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: So, older youth for the  
16 summer get \$2,000 for the six-week period. Younger  
17 youth get \$700 for the summer.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, so we're still giving  
19 the young youth \$700. I keep telling you all,  
20 there's a lot of kids that don't want to be in it  
21 but.

22 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: And then when we have the  
23 25-week program that's throughout the year, there's a  
24 fall winter cohort of AJVP as well. And the older  
25 youth get \$2,900, younger youth \$1,400.



3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many hours are they  
4 asked to work?

5 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Yeah, so over the summer of  
6 course it's more. So, over the summer, the older  
7 youth have up to 25 hours and younger youth up to 15.  
8 During the school year, it's a little bit less to  
9 account for school time, so 12 ½ hours for older  
10 youth and 8 hours for the younger youth.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, yeah, you know  
12 especially for the summer and I say this with even  
13 less SYEP. Giving a 15-year-old \$700 or \$750, I can  
14 make more money doing something else and getting in  
15 trouble. So, you know it's things like that that I  
16 think that we always have to make sure that we're  
17 taking into consideration uhm and really getting  
18 young people engaged. And you know another thing  
19 that I hearing from young people, they're kind of  
20 sick of the stipend. They're like, "no, I want to  
21 work." And the reality, they don't want to get  
22 stipends anymore because like they want to work and  
23 they don't have other options right because as a  
24 city, we haven't created a cultivated options for our  
25 young people to work because they can't go to the  
supermarket or the Footlocker like we did a couple

3 years ago. And so, these are the only options and  
4 so, we're like really handcuffing them to have these  
5 poverty jobs right. And especially when so many of  
6 them need it to actually provide and help and support  
7 their families.

8 So, really want us to continue to like think  
9 about that and I'm going to continue to push that  
10 issue because it is a huge issue, especially when we  
11 have a 21 percent unemployment rate for young people  
12 throughout the state, which is really high numbers  
13 and if we don't start thinking about it, we are  
14 literally pushing young people in the route of like  
15 going into illegal channels because it's more  
16 lucrative. And that's just the reality.

17 The Crisis Management System provides several  
18 interventions and support services for at-risk youth  
19 including school conflict mediation to assist in  
20 changing the cultures around the violence. Do you  
21 have a borough-wide breakdown of schools where ONS  
22 has conducted these schoolwide activities?

23 DARRYL RATTRAY: We do, give me one sec. Okay,  
24 so total of the youth enrichment service programs  
25 formerly known as mediation sites, we have 140 in

3 total. The breakdown by borough in the Bronx 36,  
4 Brooklyn 58 –

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, could you – how  
6 much was in the Bronx?

7 DARRYL RATTRAY: Bronx 36, Brooklyn 58, Manhattan  
8 9, Queens 31, and Staten Island 6.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. According to  
10 the Office of Preventative Gun Violence from 2010 to  
11 2019, data shows that Crisis Management had  
12 contributed to an average of 40 percent of reductions  
13 in shootings across the city. How did the Office of  
14 Gun Violence Prevention reach that figure?

15 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, we don't have the backup  
16 that was used by the Office of Gun Violence  
17 Prevention to get to those figures. We'll inquire  
18 again but we do have an example of a study that was  
19 done by John Jay in 2017 that found reductions in gun  
20 violence in both East New York and the South Bronx.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But we don't know on how we  
22 got –

23 DARRYL RATTRAY: That study today did to get that  
24 40 percent reduction figure, I don't – we don't have  
25 the backup to that. We're requiring again and we're  
checking. If we get it, we'll definitely send it

3 over but I could cite another study that was done in  
4 2017 addition in reductions, well reductions in East  
5 New York and the South Bronx.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What studies? Do you know  
7 the name of the study?

8 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yup, John Jay completed the  
9 study in 2017 and Karina could go over the status.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, yeah, I remember that  
11 study in 2017 but it's 2023 right, no? That's a lot  
12 of years ago, so you know I think citing numbers  
13 around it is we need up to date numbers right and you  
14 know for me, I'm — you all know what I say all the  
15 time. How are we evaluating this? How do we know  
16 it's working? And to have a study from 2017 and now  
17 being 2023, how do — obviously things have changed  
18 right? We had a whole pandemic. Like, there's a  
19 whole lot of things that have changed. And so,  
20 thinking about how we are continuously evaluating and  
21 making sure that things are working and if they're  
22 not, adjusting it and fixing and doing these things,  
23 so that actually needs to be part of the work that  
24 we're doing. And I know you guys just had it for a  
25 year, so make sure that's something in part of the  
plan.

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DARRYL RATTRAY: Ten months.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Alright, here you go, ten months. You all had it for a year. As the city emerges from the pandemic, what trends across CMS sites have the agency observed?

DARRYL RATTRAY: So, there's so many potential answers in that. With trends across, like we haven't done a complete study but I can tell you anecdotally what we've been working with programs with. One is connectivity. Like we realized that after the pandemic, folks are working in these silos and that's - you know I mentioned about the phases and bringing the folks into our ecosystem and connecting to our afterschool programs. What we found prior to that, that it was in the connections only around the local neighborhoods that should have been to better support young people, young adults but also finding - I will stick with that for now. And we could, we'll survey across if need be and we could get back to you with some additional responses but I think the most piece that we've been dealing with is that how do we better connect folks who are on the ground doing important work to better support young adults and families.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's interesting. I  
4 would think that that would be one of the things that  
5 you guys would jump into before even – you said you  
6 guys took it over ten months ago, right? I would  
7 think that would be the first thing you would want to  
8 do to kind of like get an assessment of like, well,  
9 what are the trends? What are the things doing even  
10 before jumping in but you know, maybe that's  
11 something you guys should think about.

12 The Atlas program provides a suite of services  
13 including mentorship, family therapy, cognitive  
14 behavior therapy, opportunities for employment and  
15 education to young people and adults awaiting trial  
16 who chose to participate in a program. Can you share  
17 a breakdown of boroughwide numbers of young people  
18 enrolled in that Atlas program? And can you share a  
19 boroughwide breakdown of the Atlas program providers  
20 and what criteria and metrics are used to measure the  
21 success of this Atlas Program?

22 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Thank you. Sure, so we  
23 have six providers that provide Functional Family  
24 Therapy, FFT, and we provide both for our youth and  
25 for young adults. So, we have an adaptation of FFT  
that pulls them up into 25. Most FFT stops at 18 and

1  
2 so, we have one provider that does that adult  
3 adaptation and five providers that do the youth  
4 services.

5 So, when we look at the providers that serve  
6 youth, we have 42 percent of youth are served in the  
7 Bronx, 10 percent in Brooklyn, 11 percent Manhattan –

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry, could you say it  
9 a little bit slower? The Bronx is 42 percent?

10 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: 42 percent.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hmm, hmm.

12 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Brooklyn is 10, Manhattan  
13 11, Queens 23, and Staten Island 1 and the reason is  
14 because of our six providers, one is citywide.  
15 Rising Ground has 3 teams and they no matter where a  
16 person lives, they'll serve that young person and  
17 then five of our providers are really borough based  
18 and neighborhood based So we have Bronx Connect that  
19 serves young people, juveniles in the Bronx. We have  
20 Living Redemption that serves young adults in  
21 Manhattan. In Queens, we have the community, Queens  
22 Community Justice Center serving young people and in  
23 Brooklyn, we have Rise Boro that's doing the adult  
24 adaptation.

3 In Staten Island, we have Central Family Life and  
4 they're serving young adults as well and they're  
5 really just getting started. So, we have some that  
6 are established for a couple years and some pretty  
7 new providers.

8 When we look at the older youth, 19 to 25, there  
9 are 25 percent in the Bronx, 26 percent in Brooklyn,  
10 16 in Manhattan, 17 percent in Queens, and 13 percent  
11 in Staten Island.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, just thinking about  
13 these numbers, ten percent in Brooklyn, just that to  
14 me jumps out and I'm not even a Brooklyn person. You  
15 see that right? I want my credit for saying  
16 something about Brooklyn.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: They have a lot of issues.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, that's why I'm  
19 saying something. Alright, calm down enough. Uhm,  
20 simmer down. Yeah, that just seems really no, ten  
21 percent for you know these type of services for a  
22 borough that claims to be the biggest borough but I  
23 guess they really are.

24 DARRYL RATTRAY: You want to speak to the  
25 recruitment and referral?



3 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Sure, so uhm, you know  
4 Atlas began during the pandemic in August 2020 really  
5 for young adults who were in the criminal court  
6 system and we've been expanding to serve young people  
7 who are in the family court system or who are just  
8 being referred because they are being referred by  
9 YCO's or being referred by family members. They're  
10 being referred by the CPO's who are working with  
11 them.

12 And I think it is also important that our  
13 providers are all also MAP providers and CMS  
14 providers as well, so it's one of the ways that we're  
15 really knitting together our resources. So, how are  
16 we getting clinical services into the providers that  
17 are doing street outreach and doing CB work? And so,  
18 the Bronx is so big with the youth because we have  
19 this incredible provider beneath the lines in Bronx  
20 Connect who are also really doing that outreach and  
21 connection with Release the Grip and also connection  
22 back to other city agencies, so Legal Aid will refer,  
23 the Law Department refers, uhm and so, I think  
24 certainly we can.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But yeah, I mean but then  
that still doesn't, I still don't understand why then

3 Brooklyn would be at ten percent because they also do  
4 work with -

5 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Because our provider there  
6 does -

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just adult.

8 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: With the adult program.  
9 So, Rising -

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, you don't have a youth  
11 provider? Because I know you said the adult provider  
12 is the Brooklyn one, so you don't have a specific  
13 youth provider in Brooklyn?

14 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Exactly. So, we have  
15 Rising Ground that has three teams that serve all  
16 five boroughs. Uhm, and they get their referral  
17 pathways through CJA. So, CJA, any person who meets  
18 the criteria of repeated arrests and it's not their  
19 first arrest and they don't have a perfect score in  
20 their release assessment, the criminal justice agency  
21 does outreach in courts uhm by phone, by mail, by  
22 test to really reach those people who are having  
23 escalating court contact and meet the criteria for  
24 the program for FFT, which serves young people.

25 And so, they are primarily serving people with  
criminal court cases.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I hear you but like again,  
4 this is not answering the question, right? Because  
5 it's evident that obviously you have providers who  
6 are in these boroughs who are doing the outreach and  
7 the work and the citywide one clearly probably isn't  
8 a Brooklyn based organization which is why Brooklyn  
9 is getting the short end.

10 And so, then how do we remedy this? Because the  
11 things you're saying, I hear you. Okay, great but  
12 it's not happening because they're only at ten  
13 percent. And so, how do we then change this?  
14 Because that's why my other question was, what's the  
15 criteria or metrics for success? How are we  
16 determining that this successful? And from nothing  
17 else other than the numbers, at ten percent, that  
18 just for Brooklyn seems very low.

19 DARRYL RATTRAY: And so, one piece mentioned, the  
20 metrics, so and we, one of the pieces that we've been  
21 doing is again, is informing folks about the program,  
22 about Atlas. How do we strengthen that referral  
23 system? The idea is that we get to the highest risk  
24 younger adults who are out there, many of which who  
25 have been released on our recognizance and we're  
trying to get them from stopping to recidivate before

3 their court data if you will. But we'll work on a  
4 plan to see the gap in the Brooklyn recruitment and  
5 why that's showing up that way. But Karina can touch  
6 on some of the metrics and how we show outcomes in  
7 Atlas.

8 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Sure, so within the program  
9 itself, FFTs is a family based relational program.  
10 We're looking to improve communication skills,  
11 strengthen relationships, move young people towards  
12 autonomy, really strengthen those protective factors  
13 like kinship, relationships. A lot of our youth are  
14 very isolated. And so, how do we not just reduce the  
15 risk factors but really connect them to things that  
16 are protective so their community, uhm, you know  
17 their family, we have young people who are just  
18 extremely isolated. This is an entirely voluntary  
19 program and we're doing outreach to them. We reach  
20 them because they're coming through court and so,  
21 we're doing cold calls and we're outreaching to young  
22 people and families to invite them into a family  
23 therapy model. And so, one of the ways that we as a  
24 program measure success is, are we continually  
25 improving our engagement rate? So, in year 2022,  
which was our first really full year of operation,

3 our engagement rate was 40 percent. And then in  
4 2023, our engagement rate went up to 60 percent and  
5 so, that's means your getting a cold call and  
6 someone's telling you, there's a really great program  
7 out here. People who are disconnected, who are  
8 distrustful systems, uhm, and we're getting them into  
9 services now at 60 percent and we'll continue to grow  
10 that.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: A cold call sounds, it  
12 sounds interesting with especially with folks who  
13 typically are suspicious of institutions and systems.  
14 So, why aren't we doing a better job of like having  
15 trusted members who they might know or maybe youth  
16 doing these calls because like a cold call, they'll  
17 be like "hey, we got these programs." They're like  
18 alright. And they're probably like, are you going to  
19 give me a job? Because I know that's the next thing  
20 that comes out of their mouth.

21 KARINA CHARISTIANSSEN: That's absolutely part of  
22 the conversation. And you know so, to be clear,  
23 there's all sort of ways in CJA is our primary  
24 referral partner. They have a really amazing  
25 outreach team of credible messengers who do the phone  
calls and do the text messages and do the emails and

3 go to court dates. So, are physically in those  
4 spaces. They're not our only referral source.  
5 Again, YCO's, Defense Council, the Law Department,  
6 we're reaching young people wherever we can but the  
7 calls, because of the skill and the credibility and  
8 relevance of the people calling, they're able to get  
9 most months between 60 and 70 percent of people  
10 consenting to learn more about the program, so and  
11 yeah, they do quite a good job. But every door is a  
12 good door to come into our program and so, that's  
13 also part of the reason why we're working with  
14 organizations that have credibility in their  
15 community.

16 So, like a living redemption has FFT as well. A  
17 living redemption is going to be doing really  
18 different outreach models than some of our other  
19 providers. They did a Therapy Comes to Harlem event.  
20 They had pop-up therapy in St. Nicks Park. So, you  
21 know we do all of the above and our goal is to make  
22 sure that people aren't falling through the cracks  
23 because someone might not meet them or know them.  
24 So, that's why there's a systematic-ness of making  
25 sure every single person coming through the court  
system that's eligible, gets a call, gets an email,

3 gets a text message. So, that part is really about  
4 the systematicity of it.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But you know, I think and I  
6 know some of the providers and they're great and  
7 they're really credible and that's why even if the  
8 cold call, I think that we probably need to change  
9 the language because a lot of it is cold because they  
10 have connections with some of these young people  
11 already.

12 Uhm, and shout out to my Youth Advisory Board who  
13 just walked in. Look at you all. My heart is full  
14 with these young people showing up and being  
15 thoroughly engaged.

16 Uhm, so, my next question is more around like the  
17 cornerstones and the beacons and how are we using  
18 that as a touch point for young people who are at  
19 risk of being justice involved?

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, two-fold. One, is that sort  
21 of relationship on the ground ecosystem building that  
22 we've been doing with the phases. It's like one,  
23 they need to figure out who do they refer folks to?  
24 How do they activate? How do they get the additional  
25 supports that CMS provides onto the work that they do  
at a community center, an after-school program? I do

3 want to point out and highlight that we do have four  
4 conference programs located in non-secure and secure  
5 locations.

6 All operated by the Center for Community  
7 Alternatives. They're literally going in with a  
8 youth development program in these secure locations,  
9 in the nonsecure locations, and working with young  
10 people making those staff connections, to someone who  
11 is caring and mentoring but also giving those young  
12 adults the opportunity to develop and build their  
13 self-efficacy. The belief in themselves that they  
14 can do more and do things positively but also making  
15 those real time connections.

16 So, when they do return home at any point, that  
17 they have this sort of new foundation as we have  
18 established and connecting back to a beacon or a  
19 corner stone program in their neighborhood.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Uhm, and I'm going to ask a  
21 question I already know the answer to. But I know  
22 you guys have been doing this collaboration, having  
23 folks talk together and just even thinking about the  
24 application process. And I brought this up before  
25 you know, how do we get there? Of thinking about how  
can we on the initial application start asking about



1  
2 the other services that young people need and having  
3 like that be part of the intake to also connect them  
4 to all these other things, right? Like as we're  
5 thinking about the collaboration and having providers  
6 talk but like, even having on the application a  
7 laundry list of other services that are provided in  
8 the area and the community assessments and you know  
9 the goal will be when you guys are doing joint  
10 information sessions together, to have those be on  
11 the application, so then we can have an inventory of  
12 what young people actually need help with right?  
13 Whether it's a job or they need support around  
14 homeless services or career readiness of really doing  
15 an intake so they can tell us upfront what they need.  
16 Is that something that you guys are looking to move  
17 towards?

18 DARRYL RATTRAY: I would say don't quote me on  
19 this but we're in testimony right. Uhm, so two for  
20 one - on our enrollment form, we do have several  
21 questions. I need to - I don't state what they might  
22 be. I want to get back to you on that, on the  
23 enrollment form. The other side of this coin though  
24 is, and we're learning with middle school, high  
25 schools students, they don't want to fill out eight

3 pages. So, we're also figuring out how do we  
4 implement a feedback mechanism whether it's through  
5 survey, whether it's through sending out a survey to  
6 our providers after they are already enrolled, to  
7 give us that information.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I see we definitely  
9 have to move in that direction because I think you  
10 know, I mean and I yelled about this at SYEP, we were  
11 asking them to bring a Con Edison bill and all this  
12 random stuff, but like we're not actually getting and  
13 gathering information. I know some of that stuff has  
14 changed but we're not actually asking for information  
15 that they can use and be a little bit more useful.

16 I have more questions.

17 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah, I had one - oh -

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh okay, sorry.

19 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, we do a community needs  
20 assessment as well, so we can get you the results  
21 back from that from the last one that we did.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, thank you. I have  
23 quite a few more questions but I do want to make  
24 space for my colleagues and Deputy Speaker and so,  
25 I'll come back in a little bit.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you Madam Chair. In  
4 the November Plan, well actually the November Plan  
5 included a baseline PEG of \$4.2 million. This is for  
6 ACS starting in Fiscal Year 2025 for ACSs preventive  
7 services. This resulted in a reduction of 240 slots  
8 across Brooklyn that we utilize for family treatment  
9 and rehabilitation and functional family therapy  
10 programs. Can you tell us one, how are these savings  
11 calculated and two, since there is a reduction in  
12 slots available for this program, what alternative  
13 programs can ACS provide that will assist families  
14 who need these services and are at risk?

15 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Thank you Chair for that  
16 question. I just want to start off just to clarify  
17 that this, the November modification PEG that you're  
18 referring is related to the Child Welfare  
19 Preventative Continuum and that there is no PEG  
20 related to the preventive continuum that Ray  
21 testified. So, I just wanted to make it clear about  
22 which prevention continuum we're talking about. This  
23 is on the child welfare side.

24 The prevention PEG savings is \$4.2 million gross,  
25 which is based on the total fiscal year value of the  
two providers that receive the reduction. The way we

3 identify the two providers was looking at the two  
4 lowest utilization programs and ensuring we weren't  
5 moving services for the same model in the catchment  
6 and only looking at certain program types.

7 And so, just as an example, the FFT Adaptation  
8 program that we took down in Brooklyn, had a capacity  
9 of 144 slots and the utilization at the end of fiscal  
10 year 2023 was 20 percent.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: 20 percent of the 144?

12 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Yeah and for Fiscal Year  
13 2024, for the first quarter, it was 11 percent. And  
14 then using the second one as an example, which was in  
15 Brooklyn has a 96-slot capacity. It's utilization  
16 was 21 percent at the end of Fiscal 2023 and was 22  
17 percent for the three-month average of the beginning  
18 of Fiscal 2024.

19 So, as we look to see how we can be most  
20 effective and efficient with our programs, we looked  
21 at these ones that were really under-utilized. The  
22 programs don't end until June. Most of the families  
23 will probably have completed their program by that  
24 time, any remaining families will transition to  
25 another program in their community. All of the two  
catchment areas that we're talking about, we have

3 programs with the same model in those catchment areas  
4 with vacancies available, so there won't be – no  
5 family will feel a reduction.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay. In cases where  
7 therapeutic options are offered to families, such as  
8 mediation, counseling, substance abuse services,  
9 domestic violence programs, anger management or other  
10 mental health services, where do families end up  
11 being referred to? Is there a geographical location  
12 that's taken into consideration? How does that work?

13 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Do you mean generally how do  
14 we refer families?

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

16 STEPHANIE GENDELL: So, we have uhm a unit, this  
17 is on the child welfare side. We have a unit that's  
18 part of their role is helping connecting families to  
19 the appropriate service. If it's in coordination  
20 with a child protection case, they will work with a  
21 child protective worker but people can come forward  
22 seeking prevention services on their own and don't  
23 need that. And so, it's really about assessing what  
24 kinds of needs. Some of our programs focus on  
25 working with babies, some with teens. Some have  
substance abuse; some domestic violence and it really

3 involves really getting a sense of what is the right  
4 program for that family. All of our program models  
5 are available in every catchment area and we have  
6 openings in our programs.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I think that the question was  
8 really, we included it because there's a concern that  
9 we often time rely on community-based programming  
10 that doesn't necessarily exist in every community.  
11 And so, how are we ensuring that we're not only  
12 advocating where we see a deficiency right? A lack  
13 of a program that we have a higher percentage of  
14 young people you know in need of, and how often are  
15 our kids having to - or families having to leave  
16 their own communities to access these resources?

17 And I say that because it's specifically for the  
18 mental health you know services. I often hear you  
19 know; well we're moving to a community-based model.  
20 People are being referred to their local clinicians  
21 and I'm like what local clinicians? We have probably  
22 three and they have wait lists of up to one year.  
23 So, who are we referring to exactly and who is  
24 picking up on the fact that we only have three? That  
25 we have a high wait list and that we may need more.

3 STEPHANIE GENDELL: So, one of the benefits I  
4 would say our full continuum, prevention continuum on  
5 the child welfare and the juvenile justice side is  
6 most of the services are actually in home.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

8 STEPHANIE GENDELL: And the therapists or the  
9 case workers, social workers, come to the families  
10 home so that helps alleviate the issue that you're  
11 raising. I don't know if you want to add to this?

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I think that's great. I love  
13 that. Now, for young families that are not ACS,  
14 under ACS's umbrella in any way, shape or form, does  
15 DYCD do any of these referral-based programs in any  
16 of your community centers?

17 DARRYL RATTRAY: Deputy Speaker, we'll start with  
18 Atlas.

19 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Just to also say that our  
20 Atlas Therapeutic Services are home based as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Home based as well, okay,  
22 great.

23 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: It's all based on what the  
24 family is comfortable with. That could be their  
25 home. It could be a local spot that they feel -

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: They're fantastic. When I  
4 used to work in senior services, we had a program  
5 that did that and it really does you know wonder  
6 because it takes away the stigma of having to go into  
7 a facility and I think that we're advancing in the  
8 right direction in terms of you know uhm, being able  
9 to do this now virtually and so, that's great but you  
10 know, so go ahead. I interrupted.

11 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: I mean, the virtual piece  
12 is interesting too because we again started August  
13 2020 and so, a family therapy model has that the  
14 virtual allows family members who might be, it might  
15 be you know someone in Pennsylvania who is really  
16 important to that young persons life who can also  
17 come in. So, of course we've moved much more almost  
18 entirely to in person but we still use in Atlas, the  
19 virtual because it allows family members to come into  
20 the family session even if they're not physically in  
21 the five boroughs.

22 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Hmm, hmm, okay. Go ahead.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Atlas is specific for just  
24 the court involved youth that are -

25 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: That's the majority of our  
referrals but we also have because we work with these



3 community-based organizations, we also if they know  
4 the young person who is at really high risk of  
5 violence through their own determination, we allow  
6 them to serve those young people as well because we  
7 know that they have really good insight into who's at  
8 risk in their neighborhoods.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But can like cornerstones  
10 or beacons or some of the other program refer as well  
11 in your Saturday Night Lights program?

12 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Yup.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Uhm, in regards to Respite  
14 programs, the Respite programs, can you tell us who  
15 the providers are and how many young people and  
16 families are currently enrolled in using these care  
17 programs and how many use this program annually?

18 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, Deputy Speaker Ayala, thank  
19 you for that question. Our Respite program is  
20 managed by a community-based organization called  
21 Rising Ground. They serve 14 people in 2022, 14  
22 young people in 2022. It's a very small program. We  
23 have five beds citywide, one in each borough. And  
24 so, right now we don't have any young people in the  
25 program. The Respite program does require both the  
26 care taker and the young person to agree to enter

3 into the program, so then it's a 21-day period where  
4 Rising Ground works with the family to repair the  
5 underlying issues with the family dynamic and then  
6 the caretaker has to agree to accept the young person  
7 back into the home after the 21-day period.

8 And so, we did serve I'm sorry, 16 people, 16  
9 young people in 2022 and we have served 14 young  
10 people so far in 2023.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: What does the ideal candidate  
12 look like? Like a young person that would use these  
13 services, like what is the scenario where they would  
14 you know -

15 RAYMOND TOOMER: Our Respite program is really to  
16 offer a cooling off period to the family. So, when  
17 the family gets engaged in a domestic dispute or that  
18 young person is at risk of you know exhibiting  
19 dangerous behaviors and the caretaker is really just  
20 sort of at wits end and needs an immediate response  
21 and immediate Respite period. Those are the young  
22 people that we typically serve but we can also take  
23 referrals from our Alternative to Detention programs  
24 from our FAP program. So, any young person who is  
25 really exhibiting challenging behaviors at home is  
eligible for our Respite program.

3 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: What is the age?

4 RAYMOND TOOMER: Uh, it's up to age 18, so we can  
5 take young people between 12 and 18 I believe.

6 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Between 12 and 18 and the  
7 referral has to come from whom?

8 RAYMOND TOOMER: The referral can come from  
9 anywhere but they typically come from our Family  
10 Assessment program, Alternative to Detention  
11 programs. Close to Home can make referrals. JJI can  
12 make referrals. So, the young person can come  
13 through any door and we will serve them. I think the  
14 biggest thing is that they have to agree to enter  
15 into the Respite program.

16 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I'll just add, so that's on a  
17 DYFJ, Respite that we are in the process of actually  
18 within the next month or so, we should have a second  
19 Respite program on the child welfare side uhm, that  
20 will have ten beds also through Rising Ground and  
21 actually offer Respite to younger children than the  
22 DYFJ.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, if I'm hearing correctly,  
24 we have no young person currently in care and what is  
25 the need? Why are we adding additional beds and how

3 are we getting – like what’s the difference between  
4 the two?

5 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Right, so sort of two  
6 different programs. On the child welfare program,  
7 it’s going to be for kids, young kids. I don’t know  
8 if someone – it’s sort of a – it’s up to age 14.  
9 That program is really about the parent needs a time  
10 for there to be – have their child somewhere else for  
11 some reason and so they can do also up to 21-day  
12 Respite and we’ll have ten beds for that.

13 So, it’s not foster care but it’s an opportunity  
14 for a parent in need to have a time not with their  
15 child for whatever reason. The program hasn’t  
16 started, so I don’t have an example but you could  
17 think of the examples.

18 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Would these be like what a  
19 building? Like is it clinical? Is it somebodies  
20 home? What does this look like?

21 STEPHANIE GENDELL: It’s a home. It’s a home.  
22 Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: So, it would be like a foster  
24 but not a foster parent?

25 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay.

3 STEPHANIE GENDELL: And it's completely voluntary  
4 and something the parent has asked for. That we  
5 would use that for. Once the program is actually  
6 started, we can share better examples of how it's  
7 been used.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah.

9 STEPHANIE GENDELL: But it's separate than the  
10 program Ray is talking about is more like a conflict  
11 between a parent and a child and needing time to be a  
12 part before bringing back together.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Sure and during the time of  
14 separation, is there any intensive case management?  
15 Is there any I don't know, I mean listen, I have four  
16 children and I was a different parent to the two  
17 younger children than I was to the two older  
18 children. I had them when I was very young, when I  
19 was very broke, when I was very stressed out, when I  
20 was single parent, when I had to go to school and go  
21 to work and drag two kids with me. Uhm, it was a  
22 very, very different situation. It was very  
23 stressful. I, you know, I probably would have gone  
24 to the Respite myself.

25 But in all seriousness, this is how I felt and  
I've always been very honest about that because it's

3 an experience. You know, it is an experience and so  
4 I wonder, okay so we get the kids out. We get a  
5 cooling period time, whatever, everybody is chilling  
6 and you know, what happens during that time to ensure  
7 that we are learning to work with these children  
8 right.

9 In my case, I had a child that had ADD and who  
10 was driving me bananas. I did not have the coping  
11 skills to address a lot of his needs, right? And so,  
12 I had to go to therapy and in therapy, I learned  
13 techniques that allowed me to you know get him to  
14 listen. To not have to use corporal punishment or  
15 even having to threaten you know corporal punishment  
16 but it was a learned behavior. Somebody actually you  
17 know took the time to teach me to work with me, to  
18 hear from me. Is that happening in that time?

19 RAYMOND TOOMER: Yes, absolutely and so, during  
20 the 21-day period, our therapists are working with  
21 the young person and the parent and the caretaker  
22 individually and then brings them together as well to  
23 talk about services, engage in services. 21 days is  
24 not enough to fix the situation, right, so it's a  
25 triage period but the good thing about DYFJ is that  
we have a full continuum of services and so, after

3 the 21-day period for Respite, we look to see what  
4 other services the family might benefit from right.  
5 Perhaps its FFT where we engage the family in family-  
6 based therapy again in the home, in the community,  
7 where it's comfortable for them, where they can get a  
8 longer-term intervention.

9 So, the Respite is really just sort of triage  
10 period for things to cool down. You know to  
11 implement services, begin therapy and determine what  
12 the family really needs, what service is most  
13 appropriate and then we make those referrals as  
14 appropriate.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Do you speak to the young  
16 people after the fact to get feedback on what the  
17 experience was like living in somebody else's house?

18 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, our providers you know work  
19 with - they are sort of like you know therapeutic  
20 foster homes. You know our providers are working  
21 with the foster parents to make sure they're  
22 appropriate. We do require our providers to issue a  
23 survey to the family after the services are over.  
24 One of the things that we're looking to implement are  
25 post services surveys, where we reach out to families  
after our services are concluded to determine you

3 know how they felt about the service but it's not  
4 something that we do on a regular basis. We do  
5 randomly reach out to families but I can't say that  
6 every family that's gone through our Respite program,  
7 we've talked to the young person.

8 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I appreciate that. On July 1  
9 of 2023, nonsecure detention and nonsecure placement  
10 provider, Sheltering Arms announced that due to  
11 severe financial challenges resulting from the  
12 pandemic, they have been forced to see their  
13 operations. Can you tell us how many NFD and NSP  
14 places Sheltering Arms had and how does ACS plan to  
15 handle the reduction in available places?

16 JOHAN PEGUERO: So, the good news is that ACS was  
17 able to transfer – to find a new provider to take  
18 over the Sheltering Arms contract and there were no  
19 reductions. The new provider is Rising Ground.  
20 Specifically Sheltering Arms operate two nonsecure  
21 detention sites, two nonsecure close to home  
22 placement sites and one limited secure Close to Home  
23 facility.

24 ACS was able to transfer the contracts from  
25 Sheltering Arms to Rising Ground without interrupting



3 our programming and not impacting our capacity to  
4 serve youth.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Is there any level of support  
6 the ACS is able to provide to the organizations that  
7 are facing you know financial struggles, like  
8 Sheltering Arms that were providing you know decent  
9 services and just you know kind of I guess hit a  
10 really rough, turbulent time that render them you  
11 know broke?

12 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I don't want to speak to  
13 Sheltering Arms in particular but I will say in  
14 general, we work very closely with our providers and  
15 with Kafka to hear what their needs are and see how  
16 we can address them. I would like to think we're one  
17 of the better agencies at making sure our contracts  
18 are registered on time and that we're paying our  
19 providers. I guess they're here and they can testify  
20 about whether or not that's true but I'm pretty sure  
21 as Chair and our Finance team does office hours with  
22 the provider agencies and we really look to see how  
23 we can best support our providers. They are an  
24 essential as you know part of the work. We can't do  
25 the work without them and so ensuring that they're

3 stable is critical to the children and families of  
4 the city.

5 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yeah, I just, I felt it was  
6 very abrupt and somebody should have known right that  
7 they were in trouble and then maybe creating some  
8 sort of transition plan because I think  
9 inadvertently, you know Rising Ground actually lost a  
10 lot of funding, right because there was that gap and  
11 you know in the middle of budget and they're still  
12 doing the work. So, I think there has to that level  
13 of support for our nonprofit providers is really  
14 critical because you know we need them and so we want  
15 to make sure that they're stable and strong.

16 And then in Fiscal Year 2023, ACS's Fair Future  
17 program, which previously helped foster youth  
18 transition from foster care to independent living was  
19 expanded to serve justice involved young people age  
20 21 to 26 who are in need of intervention. How many  
21 young people in justice involved youth have been  
22 served by the Fair Futures program and what are the  
23 metrics for success used to evaluate the efficacy of  
24 this program?

25 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, as of December 7, 2023,  
there were 94 Close to Home youth with Fair Futures

3 coaches and 29 youth from FAP with coaches. So,  
4 based on my math, that is a total of 123. So, 123  
5 youth are currently being coached in Fair Futures  
6 through the Juvenile Justice program.

7 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I'll just add that we use the  
8 initial time to work with Fair Futures on the plan to  
9 how to adapt the foster care model to juvenile and  
10 so, the juvenile justice portion officially started  
11 in April of 2023.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Okay, will there be an  
13 expansion of the Fair Futures program to the justice  
14 involved? Will wait, let me read that over. Will  
15 the expansion of the Fair Futures program to the  
16 justice involved be eliminated or reduced in the next  
17 round of budget cuts?

18 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Not to our knowledge.

19 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Not to your knowledge, okay  
20 great, great. Alright, I'm going to yield to my  
21 colleagues but before I do, I just really need to go  
22 on my mother rant a little bit because one of you  
23 know as we've been having conversations and I've been  
24 having conversations with the Commissioner you know;  
25 we speak you know weekly. We're looking into a  
reduction of numbers at the Detention Centers and

3 trying to figure out you know why we are in a  
4 position that we are - that we're seeing ourselves in  
5 today and why so many of the young people that happen  
6 to be in detention, happen to be there for very  
7 serious felony cases when we are spending so much  
8 money on preventive care.

9 Uhm, I go out into my community and I'll tell you  
10 that you know if I had the power to do it, I would  
11 strip everybody of their money and I would start  
12 over. I would because I have gone and had  
13 conversations where with my young people and tried to  
14 have a conversation where I asked them to imagine a  
15 world that is intended for them where they could live  
16 with the resources that you know uhm, that they wish  
17 they had right. And so, when I asked them "well,  
18 what are those things that you would like?" They're  
19 like, "Miss, can you please bring in garbage cans?"  
20 "Miss, can you bring somebody to pick up the dead  
21 rats and the dead animals on the street?" "Miss,  
22 could you do something about the gun violence?"

23 I'm walking into very dilapidated community  
24 centers with leaks, stinky bathrooms, no maintenance,  
25 no staff. Usually staff by young people which I  
completely uh, support but that doesn't mean that

1  
2 there should not be an adult in the room that is  
3 guiding, that is providing staff training. Uhm, that  
4 is ensuring that the spaces is clean and ready for  
5 when kids are coming. That there's not food all over  
6 the walls. That you could see out the window because  
7 they're not so disgusting that you can't look out of  
8 them. The fact that these kids have never left their  
9 community and gone into a space that is beautiful and  
10 welcoming and ready for them with enrichment services  
11 and that they're learning and playing and don't want  
12 to go home. Those services do not exist in our  
13 communities. They don't and I don't understand why  
14 because I feel like every year, this Council is  
15 consistently fighting and fighting for more and more  
16 money to ensure that these services are being  
17 provided. So, either we're lacking oversight, we  
18 have - we're not expecting much of you know of some  
19 of our providers and I'm not speaking for all of them  
20 because they do, you know really - you know many of  
21 our providers do really, really good work with what  
22 they're given, what they're provided. Uhm, but  
23 that's barebones and so, I have to get my kids out of  
24 East Harlem to go to Asphalt Green on the upper east  
25 side, so that they can see what a functional,

1 beautiful space looks like. Why? What's so  
2 different about those kids? What's so different  
3 about the community programs in the South Bronx? If  
4 I went there now, they're probably three kids there.  
5 Three young people. We have the highest rates of gun  
6 violence. We're doing absolutely, you know we think  
7 that we're doing - on paper, it looks like we're  
8 doing you know a lot of work. In these conversations  
9 it sounds great but the reality is that on the  
10 ground, when I walk into my community centers, either  
11 there's no one there or there's nothing happening.  
12 And that to me is a failure of whatever system or  
13 structure we're creating here and somebody has to be  
14 responsible for that. I asked the Commissioner of  
15 DYCD for a tour of some of my sites. We had a  
16 conversation about workforce development. The  
17 importance of workforce development as a young  
18 person. Now I'm not that young but when I was a  
19 younger person, one of things that got me out of you  
20 know that world that I grew up in and I'm talking  
21 about a world where I was in homes where I was seeing  
22 you know people hack up crack. Where I was seeing  
23 people cleaning guns. Where many of my friends were  
24 court involved, selling drugs, you know probably out  
25

1 there shooting people. Like that's the environment I  
2 was raised in, right? But there were really good  
3 people and really good programs that invested in me  
4 as a human being and gave me a world to dream about.  
5 Gave me hope and expectation.

6  
7 And I go into my community center and it really  
8 pisses me off that none of that is happening and I  
9 think that that is uh, you know I really want, I want  
10 to understand why we don't have a standard that is  
11 shared across all of the city agencies, all of the  
12 agencies and all of the groups that are funded to  
13 provide a semblance of the same type of programming.  
14 If I have young people - I'm like, they're coming in  
15 there, why don't we have dance? Why don't we have  
16 culinary skills? It's an employable skill right? We  
17 should be equipping them with employable skills so  
18 that when they leave to go to the real world and I'm  
19 not talking about OSHA classes. I'm so sick and  
20 tired of people coming and telling me I want to send  
21 my kids to OSHA classes because the only they can do  
22 is construction. It's insulting. It is freaking  
23 insulting.

24 I am sick of that. We can do culinary art. Kids  
25 are so talented. We could be doing microbusinesses

3 and teaching them the art you know of creating their  
4 own small businesses. We could be doing art, we  
5 could be doing I mean there's just, I can sit here  
6 for days and go over all of the things that our kids  
7 could and should be doing that we are already funding  
8 these groups to do. What level of oversight does  
9 DYCD have to ensure that this level of programming is  
10 consistent across all boroughs, regardless of your  
11 economic status to ensure that our kids are walking  
12 into spaces that are clean. That are appropriately  
13 staffed. My kids are food insecure. Some of them  
14 are housing insecure. Some of these young people are  
15 sleeping in the hallways of their public housing  
16 developments because they don't - they may not be  
17 connected right. They probably haven't heard about a  
18 Respite Center. They probably don't want to go to a  
19 Respite Center. I don't know but the fact that we  
20 have so many of these programs that we are busting  
21 our butt every year to fight to ensure that you do  
22 not get a single dollar cut and that you get an  
23 enhancement and then I still walk into my center and  
24 they look like that, is a problem.

25 And that's my mother rant but I would really love  
to hear what level of oversight and what changes are



3 going to be made because the kids get to your first  
4 and then they end up in these detention centers and  
5 quite frankly the fact that so many of them are in  
6 there for such serious felony arrests that are  
7 usually tied to gun violence while we're putting in  
8 all of this money, to me is mindboggling. So, I  
9 really need somebody to explain that to me. No, it  
10 is a question. It's a serious question.

11 DARRYL RATTRAY: Deputy Speaker Ayala, uhm two-  
12 fold. One, we have full oversight of our programs of  
13 course and we have an evaluation too that we go out.  
14 Every program area where they're speaking cornerstone  
15 compass, we have programming frameworks that our  
16 community-based organizations have to program within.

17 So, to create those activities, we go out for  
18 support, assistance, capacity building. We have  
19 quite a few programs that do culinary arts. Quite a  
20 few programs that do job development, work readiness,  
21 life skills. The give young people the opportunity  
22 for leadership, opportunities in leadership  
23 development. We placed you know and through your  
24 support early on, we placed a social worker at Wagner  
25 who worked with young people who were at the highest  
risk that have been naturally walking through that

1 door. I would request with you to have a local  
2 meeting so we can talk about some of the concerns  
3 that you have and which you can see during that  
4 meeting. I also want to be able to let you know  
5 exactly what's happening with those programs and  
6 those providers. I know you spoke about  
7 infrastructure. Some of the centers are in old,  
8 dilapidated structures and we are doing our best to  
9 work with NYCHA and also directly support some of  
10 those repairs and renovations. In comes cases this  
11 is happening but that leak that's been happening for  
12 20 years - we're working to fix those items like  
13 that.

14  
15 But I would love to again and we can reach out  
16 but I would love to sit down -

17 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I would love to do that. The  
18 social worker was there because you know the reason  
19 for the advocacy for the social workers was because  
20 specifically at that community center, we had some of  
21 the highest number of young people that were court  
22 involved that were either shooting people or somebody  
23 was looking for them to shoot them and when I walked  
24 in there, there was no programming, there was no  
25 adult, there was no structure and I found it

1 mindboggling that that did not exist especially  
2 because the group was so good at bringing them in  
3 because they're sitting there and the cops are  
4 telling me, "well, they're there, yeah." You know  
5 they're there strategizing now on who they're going  
6 to shoot and like two weeks later, they come in and  
7 they take all of them. The FEDs took all of them.  
8 All of the kids that we met with that day and I'm  
9 like how is this happening? This is a systemic  
10 failure on our part. You know to provide this level  
11 of oversight and I would love to see like what that  
12 guidance is, right? What the expectation is because  
13 I would love to go to every single one of my programs  
14 and do a checklist and see if they are meeting up to  
15 that standard because I do not believe that that is  
16 true. And the problem is not that. Well, that is a  
17 huge part of it but what bothers me the most is that  
18 I can leave my community and go to 70 something  
19 street and go into a community center that looks  
20 completely different. And you know what? The  
21 executive directors, the top folks that are running  
22 these programs are making really good money. I used  
23 to make \$34,000 running a senior center. I used to  
24 have my husband there at night, striping and waxing  
25

3 the floors because I wanted my seniors to come in  
4 there and to have a beautiful space to come in that  
5 said, we welcome you. We want you here. We used to  
6 [INAUDIBLE 01:23:02] just to fund raise so that we  
7 could buy the materials so that we could make our own  
8 curtains and buy our own tablecloths so that these  
9 spaces were decent. We went out and recruited folks  
10 to do art classes so that then we could install and  
11 you know present in a way that said to those older  
12 adults, "hey, this is your house, right. This is  
13 welcoming. It's warm, it's clean. Uhm, we are  
14 providing the things that we know that you need.  
15 That is not happening but I would love to go out and  
16 I would love to look at that but it would be a huge,  
17 you know disservice if I sat here today knowing what  
18 I know and did not say all of that. So, I apologize  
19 to my colleagues because I know I have taken way too  
20 long but I have to say what I have to say because as  
21 a person of color that represents a community that is  
22 on the receiving end of these injustices, it is my  
23 responsibility to speak on their behalf and that is  
24 exactly what I'm doing today.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: On your tools because I  
will definitely - we'll set that up but uhm, I'm

3 going to have to talk to my colleagues but I just  
4 wanted to say you know uhm, even some of the things  
5 that Deputy Speaker just spoke about around like  
6 well, why are these programs not reaching the young  
7 people? Because we're not listening to them and I  
8 just want to say again, we have young people in here  
9 who will be testifying so my hope is that everyone  
10 from the Administration stays and not just the lone  
11 survivor that they usually leave behind because I  
12 think that this is a start of how we are really  
13 listening to what needs to happen in these programs  
14 and listening to the people who are actually effected  
15 or in the programs.

16 So, I'm going to turn it over to Council Member  
17 Williams and then Council Member Restler.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you and  
19 appreciate the leadership of both Co-Chairs and their  
20 experiences. And just to piggyback on one of the  
21 last things, I'll go to my first question, which is  
22 my last question but it does tell as well. So,  
23 overall, how are you measuring the success of the  
24 plethora of preventative programs? Both DYCD and  
25 ACS? I know you mentioned the evaluation tool but if  
you can like give us because the devil is in the

1 details. So, if you can give us like the details,  
2 what is the methodology? What does this evaluation  
3 tool look like? Can you share the evaluation tool?  
4 Because one of the things me and Council Member  
5 Stevens talk about this all the time is sometimes  
6 it's not the provider. It's the expectation on the  
7 provider. And so, what are you actually measuring  
8 them on and how do you measure whether or not it was  
9 a success because I think as so eloquently stated by  
10 Deputy Speaker Ayala, like it's clear that these  
11 programs are not working to the best of their  
12 abilities.

14 DARRYL RATTRAY: I guess two-fold, one, that's  
15 not entirely what I heard. I heard that many of the  
16 providers are doing quite an excellent job with their  
17 programs and that what we see across the city.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I know, I know but we  
19 also, she also mentioned that like, the impact at the  
20 end is those kids are ending up in jail and arrested  
21 and unfortunately committing crimes and so, what is  
22 the methodology behind your measure of success of  
23 these programs?

24 DARRYL RATTRAY: Got it and I just want to touch  
25 on that because you brought it back Council Member

3 Williams. One, again I don't want to – that anecdote  
4 that happened where young people who are at the  
5 highest risk were at the community center having  
6 discussion, the conversation and again, when we meet  
7 locally, we can have that provider talk about that  
8 work that they do in that community.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I want to know  
10 what DYCD is doing to measure the success –

11 DARRYL RATTRAY: We're part of that plan. We're  
12 part of that proposal. We created that initiative  
13 that is supporting that social worker, those outreach  
14 workers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I know but how are you  
16 measuring the success?

17 DARRYL RATTRAY: Alright, I get to you then. So,  
18 our evaluation tool is a site visit monitoring tool,  
19 so we are assessing those programs against a  
20 framework that they're operating within. So, whether  
21 it's a beacon, a cornerstone, a compass program, any  
22 of our programs, we're looking at both the activities  
23 that are happening, are they structured? We're  
24 looking at the space. We're looking at staffing.  
25 We're looking at the work that is being directly done  
with young adults and we're using our evaluation

3 tool. We're waiting and grading and then we're  
4 providing if needed technical support, capacity  
5 building. We're also, if it calls for it, I did  
6 define best practices that we didn't share across the  
7 system. And again because this is not - this is a  
8 consistent kind of discussion. I would love for us  
9 to sit down and go over our evaluation tool and go  
10 over some of those frameworks that are happening with  
11 programs within your district.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay and ACS.

13 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, thank you for this question  
14 Council Member Williams. I mean I think, I know the  
15 way we approach it is we look at the purpose of the  
16 program, right? And determine whether the agencies  
17 that we have contracted with are meeting that  
18 purpose, so let me give you examples. So, for the  
19 FAP program, it's a PINS prevention program right.  
20 And so, the outcome that we look at is how many young  
21 people are ultimately placed on PINS petitions at the  
22 end of the year.

23 So, I mentioned in my testimony that there were  
24 822 PINS placements in 2002 when you know at the  
25 beginning of the FAP program. In 2010, we



3 implemented our evidence-based models and we've seen  
4 the number of PINS placements drop every year since.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How do you know that  
6 the placements have dropped because of the PINS  
7 because from talking to parents and the antidotes I  
8 had, parents have stopped doing PINS because they  
9 didn't feel like it was useful. So what evidence or  
10 data do you have to support that it's because of the  
11 programming.

12 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, it's impossible to create a  
13 direct nexus between the FAP program and the number  
14 of PINS dropping but we know that the number of PINS  
15 placements has decreased right? We look at it every  
16 year. We know that there were nine PINS placements  
17 this year and so.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So, that's what I'm  
19 saying so we can't actually prove that it's the  
20 program affecting it because again, I've heard from  
21 multiple parents that they have stopped doing PINS  
22 because it was useless. So, they were like, "what am  
23 I supposed to do? Show this paper?" And like, they  
24 weren't getting the support sort of things and so,  
25 and it was an arduous process to get the PINS put in  
place and so, they got the PINS and nothing happened.

3 So, I think we don't have evidence to support that  
4 this is a direct correlation, we shouldn't be using  
5 that as evidence and having it on testimony. I'm  
6 sorry to cut in.

7 RAYMOND TOOMER: Well, well, one thing that I can  
8 say is that we know that we serve over 2,700 families  
9 each year. The majority - we are PINS prevention  
10 right. So, once a PINS has already been issued you  
11 know, there's nothing more that we can do after that  
12 process, at least from my perspective. And my  
13 programs. We try to prevent PINS, so we know that we  
14 see 2,600 families every year. The majority of those  
15 families are coming to us for PINS petitions. We  
16 have a responsibility to try and divert those  
17 families, keep them together and away from PINS. And  
18 so, we know that there were only nine PINS placements  
19 this year and so to me, that is a measure of success  
20 in that when families come to us, they're looking for  
21 PINS and ultimately they get our services and then  
22 they don't wind up placing their young people in  
23 foster care and they remain intact.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. Chairs, may  
25 I have a few more minutes. Thank you so much. Uhm,  
similar to what I just said with DYCD, I would love

3 to see like the methodology behind and like thank you  
4 to ACS because I know you've helped me ascertain some  
5 of your other tools because I think it's important  
6 like the type of questions you're asking, how you are  
7 assessing the data you're collecting to really tease  
8 out what's truly effective, so would love to get into  
9 the details a little bit more.

10 So, how is ACS incentivizing the use of voluntary  
11 programs? Specifically the preventative ones, like  
12 Family Connections, Strategic Family Therapy, FAP,  
13 FHEPS is kind of voluntary as well. Like how are you  
14 incentivizing those programs, especially for our  
15 young folks who might be in need?

16 RAYMOND TOOMER: Yeah, so FAP is a completely  
17 voluntary program. We don't force families to engage  
18 in our services. We partner with them to determine  
19 what the most appropriate service is. We have a  
20 suite of evidence-based models that we can refer  
21 families to but reality is, some of the families that  
22 come to ACS are uhm, are concerned with the stigma  
23 attached. And so, we will make referrals to  
24 community-based organizations. For us the most  
25 important thing is that they get the support that  
they need and so, we incentivize that by again,

1  
2 making it voluntary for families. I mentioned our  
3 \$1,000 stipend for young people in ATD programs.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Wait, I have a  
5 clarifying question, just so I understand the  
6 interworking's of the agency. The FAPs program  
7 provides like the suite of services, like Family  
8 Connection, Strategic Family Therapy etc. and if  
9 it's determined, a young person then can become a  
10 PINS. Because I feel like these terms are used  
11 interchangeably, so I just wanted to make sure I  
12 understood so I can ask my question properly.

13 RAYMOND TOOMER: But before a family is able to  
14 file a PINS petition, they have to attempt FAP  
15 services, right? So, they have to you know make a  
16 diligent effort to engage in our services. And so,  
17 that where we you know either refer them to one of  
18 our contracted providers. The ones you mentioned  
19 with the evidence-based models.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: The services are the  
21 functional family therapy, family - okay.

22 RAYMOND TOOMER: Yes, exactly. We have a  
23 mentoring program. We have our Fair Futures attached  
24 to that mentoring program, so it really is about what  
25

1  
2 the family needs, what the young person needs. And  
3 that's how we approach it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, how is DYCD and  
5 ACS working together? I'm sure there are young folks  
6 circling between a DYCD program and an ACS program,  
7 uhm, so how are you all coordinating efforts and  
8 working together to best serve our young folks in New  
9 York City?

10 RAYMOND TOOMER: I mean I can talk about from  
11 our perspective.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Like, doo you all know  
13 each other? Do you all talk?

14 RAYMOND TOOMER: We do. We do. Darryl and I go  
15 way back, yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, okay, okay, good,  
17 alright. Alright.

18 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, you know obviously our young  
19 people are involved in after school programs. Things  
20 like SYEP. We coordinate regularly with the United  
21 Way through the FAP program to discuss families who  
22 maybe uh, - you know we can make a referral to the  
23 Atlas program and vice versa. So, we're working  
24 regularly with the DYCD to engage our young people  
25 and their programs and vice versa.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, I'll just ask the  
4 rest of these questions. I know like the buzzer is  
5 going to go off right now. Oh, okay, okay, I will  
6 wrap it up right now. Can you share more on how and  
7 this is specific to DYCD. Can you share more on how  
8 you've integrated and better coordinate your suite of  
9 existing services with now ONS coming in to your  
10 agency? And then, the other question is why isn't  
11 the DYCD Atlas program connected to the court? So,  
12 in our briefing papers, it says that Atlas is not  
13 connected to the court. And so, I just wanted to  
14 understand why isn't it similar to some of the ACS  
15 programs which are kind of court related?

16 DARRYL RATTRAY: Alright, so two-fold and we  
17 mentioned this earlier during the Q&A but the first  
18 thing that we're doing with our ONS portfolio is we  
19 are - the first thing we did was introduced them to  
20 all of the DYCD programs. So, they can get a full  
21 explanation and definition of the different programs  
22 that are in their neighborhoods and we call that  
23 phase one. Phase two was, connecting them locally on  
24 the ground. Having those meet and greets where that  
25 cure violence teams, the CMS groups can meet the

3 directors of the after-school program, the beacon,  
4 the cornerstone.

5 And again, with our push, the underlying  
6 foundation is that we are working together  
7 collaboratively to support young adults, support  
8 families and support their communities.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: But how are you doing  
10 that as an agency? Like you're saying you're doing  
11 it but how?

12 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, they -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Like, are you holding  
14 meetings? Like how is the work -

15 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, so share how  
17 you're actually doing it.

18 DARRYL RATTRAY: No, we're literally having - so  
19 Chair Stevens actually attended some of those phase  
20 two meetings where on the ground we're having meet  
21 and greets. So, meetings in the community with the  
22 staff who are out there doing the cure violence work,  
23 doing the crisis management system work, along with  
24 our other providers. So, after school HRY, Youth  
25 Shelters, uhm Compass, Cornerstone, everyone getting  
together and having a discussion, that networking

3 conversation and our rules again and by borough. I  
4 know we don't have that much time. Our rules is to  
5 make sure that those relationships are working and  
6 folks are networking and making referrals.

7 I do want to touch on the Atlas which gets direct  
8 referrals.

9 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: Thank you. Atlas began as  
10 a court-based program and we actually expanded to  
11 have community-based referrals but the way that it  
12 works is every single person who comes through the  
13 arraignment process or who has [01:36:06] and then  
14 returns community, they are, if eligible, meaning  
15 that they are in the right age range for the service  
16 because the services are very much around where  
17 people are in their life so it's really geared  
18 towards young people right now, 24 and younger. So,  
19 they're eligible based on age and if it's not their  
20 first arrest, that they are reaching that level of  
21 risk where they're returning to court, they are  
22 contacted through every means possible to let them  
23 know that they're eligible and to bring them into  
24 services.

25 So, it is, it's our way of you know RCV work is  
street outreach. Our Atlas work in some ways is



1 court in reach. So, we're at the courts, CJA is the  
2 agency that does all the arrest or arraignment  
3 processes and there are primary referral partners.  
4 So, we're really trying to reach every single person  
5 whose coming through the court process and is  
6 returning and to let them know that it is entirely  
7 voluntary and community based therapeutic services  
8 that's there for them.

9  
10 But it's not tied back to their case. So, it  
11 doesn't matter where their case ends up, it's not an  
12 ATI. It's entirely community based, entirely  
13 voluntary.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. I  
15 think that some of the frustration that I know I feel  
16 is a lot of the programs feel duplicative in certain  
17 spaces and places and to sort of couple that with  
18 this idea that as much as you're saying best  
19 practices are being spread amongst CBO's and  
20 specifically let's just use the CMS system. I don't  
21 think they're being spread amongst these different  
22 groups. And so, I do hope like through ongoing  
23 hearings and like work directly with your agencies,  
24 you can really make these programs a little bit more  
25 efficient and effective because we care about them.

3 I know I care about them but I think the outcome  
4 really just doesn't reflect a lot of the hard work  
5 that you're talking about right now and figuring out  
6 where that disconnect is is critical to the lives of  
7 our young folks. So, thank you for being here.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Council Member Restler  
9 followed by Council Member Lee.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you Chair Stevens  
11 and Chair Ayala. I just want to echo Council Member  
12 Williams sentiments and just thank Deputy Speaker  
13 Ayala for her remarks and for her leadership.  
14 Especially heartfelt and exceptionally compelling.  
15 It's good to see DYCD, ACS teams. Thank you Darryl  
16 and Stephanie and all of you for you for your hard  
17 work. I'm mostly concerned about just the extreme  
18 increases we've seen in the juvenile detention  
19 populations and everything we're doing to try to  
20 prevent it.

21 So, could we just begin, what's the current  
22 census today between Horizon's and Crossroads?

23 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Hi, thank you for that  
24 question. Today, the census in total is 228 and  
25 that's 107 at Horizon and 121 at Crossroads.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, 228. 12 over the  
4 traditional capacity of the programs. We did note in  
5 our Committee -

6 STEPHANIE GENDELL: The capacity has been  
7 increased with approval from OCFS up to 267.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right, I will come back  
9 to that in a moment but I did note in our Committees  
10 report that the adolescent offender population was  
11 significantly above capacity at Horizon's I believe  
12 and significantly under capacity at Crossroads. Do I  
13 have that right?

14 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I don't think so. So, the  
15 population fluctuates each and every day. So, I'd  
16 have to look at what specific day that is.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It's December 11<sup>th</sup>. I  
18 mean according to this, the Crossroads Secure  
19 Juvenile Center had nine available secure and  
20 specialized secure spaces for youth classified as  
21 juvenile offenders and was over capacity by 21 beds  
22 for youth classified as adolescent offenders. The  
23 inverse was true at Horizon's.

24 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Right, I'd have to double  
25 check that because I think that's also drafted as  
though the capacity wasn't 267. I'd have to double

3 check whether or not there's a difference in how many  
4 beds were AO's and how many AO's were in the beds. I  
5 can say the overwhelming majority of young people at  
6 Crossroads and Horizon are AO's.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes, they're not all  
8 AO's but the majority indeed. I'd like to come back  
9 on how we drive down the population a moment but  
10 first, just on the OCF piece, since applying for the  
11 waiver, temporary waiver that expired in about two  
12 weeks, what steps is ACS taking to reduce the  
13 population?

14 STEPHANIE GENDELL: So, just to be clear, ACS  
15 does not have a lot of control over the population of  
16 young people in detention. They are placed there by  
17 the court. Uhm, when young people are placed there  
18 by the court, we are required to provide the best  
19 possible safe and supportive environment for them.  
20 We have taken some steps within the limited powers we  
21 have. We've been working closely with the Sheriff's  
22 Office so that more young people can be on electric  
23 monitoring and not in detention. We've also been  
24 working with OCFS to ensure that young people who are  
25 ready to be transferred to OCFS based on their court  
proceedings, transfer expeditiously. Uhm, I mean one

3 of the good things we've seen in all of this with  
4 raise the age is that there are very few juvenile  
5 delinquents. So, young people with the lower level  
6 of crimes coming through secure detention and so, the  
7 other piece that we do though is try to limit as much  
8 as possible an AJD from touching secure detention.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Look, I generally agree  
10 that ACS has too little control over the census in  
11 our juvenile detention centers and that many of our  
12 ATI and ATD programs are held by other agencies that  
13 don't have the same investment in reducing our  
14 census. In fact, the Department of Probation seems  
15 to not care at all and they're eliminating programs  
16 willy nilly that would have a dramatic impact on  
17 reducing the population in secure detention. Have  
18 they eliminated the impact program? Have they  
19 eliminated next steps? Have they cut \$1 million off  
20 of arches? I think it's disgraceful and it's making  
21 your job a thousand times more difficult to manage a  
22 census where you have kids sleeping in classrooms,  
23 where there are allegations or reports of slashings  
24 and stabbings in those dormitory settings, of  
25 somebodies teeth being knocked out. I don't know if  
those incidents are true, I'd appreciate it if you

3 could confirm and have those incidents been reported  
4 to OCFS?

5 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Sure, so actually I really  
6 appreciate the opportunity to have a moment to clear  
7 some of -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Criticize Department of  
9 Probation, slashing of essential programs.

10 STEPHANIE GENDELL: No, to clarify some of what's  
11 been said about what's happening across at Horizon,  
12 so first of all, there is no young person sleeping on  
13 the floor or the ground, which I know has been  
14 reported several times. There are, when we don't  
15 have a bedroom space, we have temporary beds that are  
16 in the classrooms, only in the evening, not during  
17 the day the young people go to school and they have  
18 pillows, blankets and all the sheets, you know all  
19 the proper bedding. And so, I just want to be very  
20 clear that we do not have any young people sleeping  
21 on the floor. It is a - when the young people are  
22 sleeping I the classrooms, which is very few now  
23 because actually the population has decreased over  
24 the past few weeks, which is a good thing. They are  
25 supervised the entire time. We unfortunately do have

3 incidents in detention regardless of whether young  
4 people are sleeping in classrooms or in the halls.

5 Our data on that, which is available and also we  
6 have you know Nunez Monitors for Horizon has shown  
7 that the incidents have been coming down just by the  
8 increase in the population. We think that's in large  
9 part due to the incredible leadership we've brought  
10 into detention and in also sort of this culture of  
11 safety and education and it's really starting to make  
12 a big difference.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Any incidents in the  
14 dormitory cell settings where there's a temporary  
15 waiver to allow people to sleep there have to be  
16 reported to CFS, correct?

17 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Any incident, yeah.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And any incident indeed  
19 of course and is there a plan for post January 5<sup>th</sup>?

20 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Uhm, I'm not totally sure  
21 what the plan would be. I'd have to check about  
22 whether or not there would be an additional waiver,  
23 I'm not sure, I'd have to check. We do have a  
24 longer-term plan to increase capacity at Horizon and  
25 to not only increase capacity but really increase the  
programming, space, the education space, the health

3 and mental health space. These detention centers  
4 were built and created before Raise the Age. Half of  
5 the young people who are with us are over 18. And  
6 so, we really need to make the facilities better meet  
7 the needs of an older population.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Significant investments  
9 were made to renovate and upgrade the facilities at  
10 the time of the passage of Raise the Age to  
11 accommodate that transition and frankly, I'm  
12 incredibly disappointed that we're talking about  
13 investing in an expansion of juvenile detention  
14 capacity, rather than invest while we are slashing  
15 programs that keep people out, right? That give  
16 young people opportunity. I just think it is an  
17 absolutely backwards set of administration wide  
18 priorities and I recognize that ACS in our – the way  
19 that we structure things currently, is basically  
20 responsible for managing what happens within those  
21 four walls. But, sorry, I'm a popular guy. Uhm,  
22 just kidding. They didn't think that was funny.

23 But no, that was joke, I apologize. But in all  
24 seriousness, it doesn't make any sense and we need to  
25 see greater leadership from this Administration as it  
relates to managing and implementing the alternative



3 to incarceration, alternative to detention programs  
4 for our young people to ensure that every single slot  
5 is being filled. That we're everting detention and  
6 incarceration at every possible turn and I don't  
7 think that's happening right now.

8 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I can speak a little bit to  
9 ACS and so can Ray. So the Alternative to Detention  
10 program, we do manage that but that's for young  
11 people and family court and the good news is very few  
12 young people from family court are in secure  
13 detention. 96 percent of the young people don't have  
14 a case in family court. So, we are - you know that's  
15 where we want to keep young people from ending up in  
16 secure detention as a 16, 17-year-old. It's really  
17 about serving them and working with them and their  
18 families.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We've heard some  
20 providers that are serving - that have contracts that  
21 limit what providers can do in family court were  
22 allowed to operate in Supreme Court and vice versa.  
23 I mean, has a comprehensive review been conducted of  
24 RATI and ATD contracts post raise the age to make  
25 sure that we're effectively serving our young people  
as well as possible and reducing entries into

3 incarceration and why is it makes sense to split  
4 these programs up across multiple agencies? Why not  
5 have the agency that's most invested in reducing the  
6 census also be responsible for managing the programs  
7 and providing those connections to alternatives to  
8 incarceration to detention?

9 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I mean I think that's part of  
10 the analysis and thinking that went behind moving the  
11 Alternative to Detention programs over to ACS. They  
12 had been at MOCJ previously so that we now operate  
13 sort of that full continuum services on the family  
14 court side, which Ray oversees.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I have a lot more  
16 questions but I think that I'm going to get in  
17 trouble and Chair Stevens is the best, so let me shut  
18 up and maybe there will be a time for a second round.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you Lincoln, those  
20 are a lot of questions and just to piggyback on  
21 something you said even about the expansion and I  
22 know I've spoken to you guys but I still feel  
23 strongly they will come. So, investing and building  
24 more facility, just doesn't sit right in my spirit,  
25 so I just have to make sure we put that on record.  
And I know that the reason the increase isn't your

3 fault but it's just not - it doesn't feel right that  
4 that's the rath that we're taking. But I'm going to  
5 turn it over to Chair Lee.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you. Hi everyone.  
7 So, I just and thank you Co-Chairs for just your  
8 experience, passion, everything on this topic because  
9 I think it's extremely important and I just had a few  
10 questions. The first one was around the respite  
11 centers because I know that that was also part of the  
12 mental health roadmap that we had created with the  
13 City Council and they're at least on - I know that  
14 there's only about 50 beds across the entire city and  
15 I just was curious to know if there were some that  
16 were separated out or different ones that were  
17 separated out specifically for youth. And if there's  
18 enough and what the waitlist looks like and how  
19 that's being addressed?

20 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, I just want to clarify  
21 because we do - we're contemplating two different  
22 respite programs. The respite program that I manage  
23 if for young people who are at risk of juvenile  
24 justice intervention and then we have a program on  
25 the child welfare side that's coming along that is

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3 geared toward young people on the child welfare side.  
4 So, I'm not sure which program you're referring to.

5 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Or is it a third program?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: No, I mean yeah, no I just  
7 know that in terms of the respite centers that we  
8 have across the city, there's just very few and far  
9 between and so, I just wanted to know for your  
10 programs, you know how many beds and also how many -  
11 uhm, what the waitlist looks like and what that -

12 RAYMOND TOOMER: Right, so we actually don't  
13 operate Respite Centers. They're very you know  
14 Respite homes. We have five Respite homes on the  
15 juvenile justice side. Again, a very small program.  
16 One per borough. There are no young people in the  
17 program right now. It's a 21-day program and we  
18 serve 14 people, 14 young people in 2022. On the  
19 child welfare side -

20 STEPHANIE GENDELL: It will be ten beds but it  
21 hasn't opened yet.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

23 STEPHANIE GENDELL: And it will be the same  
24 thing; it won't be a center; it will be people's  
25 homes.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Uhm, and as a former  
4 nonprofit executive as well that dealt with many of  
5 the contracts from several different agencies, I know  
6 that one of my frustrations was always that  
7 everything seemed very siloed. So, it is good to  
8 Council Member Williams earlier point that you guys  
9 are working together. So, is there a monthly  
10 taskforce meeting or do you guys have regular  
11 meetings where you're sort of coordinating efforts  
12 with each other?

13 STEPHANIE GENDELL: The answer is yes but we're  
14 trying to figure out who is going to provide more  
15 detail.

16 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, the answer is yes. We work  
17 closely together. One of the meetings that we do  
18 have quarterly is to discuss our youth programs that  
19 are in this nonsecure and secure locations. So, we  
20 talk about the activities, we talk about the  
21 outcomes, the performance, the changes should be  
22 made, any recommendations, but we do that as a  
23 quarterly meeting. But we speak with ACS quite  
24 often.

25 RAYMOND TOOMER: And also DYCD - alright thank  
you. DYCD participates on the new Juvenile Justice

3 Advisory Board that we've convened. We've only had  
4 one meeting so far but it does meet quarterly and  
5 DYCD and both ACS are major pieces to that.

6 STEPHANIE GENDELL: And here's one more.

7 JOHAN PEGUERO: Yeah, and they are - we also meet  
8 with them monthly to discuss our after-school  
9 programming when District 79, which CCA participates.  
10 So, we do talk regularly.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and uhm, for you know  
12 if I'm a parent, I'm feeling very overwhelmed with  
13 everything and I know that you said that they're  
14 located and your services are near the court houses  
15 but are there other places where you're able to reach  
16 out to families in case you know for preventative  
17 services before they get to that point? You know are  
18 there ways that they can find out about these  
19 programs, especially the ones that maybe are not  
20 directly - you know if they haven't reached the court  
21 system yet but if there's preventative programs if  
22 they -

23 RAYMOND TOOMER: Yeah, sure so we actually have a  
24 small team of community engagement specialists that  
25 goes out into the community, nights and weekends,  
attends resource fairs to market the Family

3 Assessment Program and just let folks know that it  
4 exists. We have done some social media marketing in  
5 the past. We have a pretty robust website that has  
6 you know stories from families who have engaged in  
7 our services. They can always reach out to us  
8 through our website. You know, they can all our  
9 offices. They don't have to walk into our offices.  
10 So, you don't have to be involved in family court,  
11 child welfare, or juvenile justice to receive FAP  
12 services. Any family can contact us. We can do the  
13 assessment virtually.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

15 RAYMOND TOOMER: So, we've uhm sort of been a  
16 little more nimble since the pandemic in that we are  
17 now doing you know assessments virtually and we're  
18 able to connect with families that way, so they don't  
19 have to come through the family court you know metal  
20 detectors to get to us.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right, okay.

22 DARRYL RATTRAY: And for DYCD, we actually have  
23 an interactive website called Discover DYCD, where  
24 families can put in zip code, borough, address, and  
25 learn about the programs within their neighborhood.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And just - oh sorry,  
4 just two more quick questions. So, the uhm, I know  
5 that you had mentioned you do very tailored referrals  
6 and you know I think we know that based on evidence  
7 and all of that, the research that if it's tailored  
8 to the needs of the individuals, there's a lot more  
9 success and less recidivism. But just wanted to know  
10 what your definition of tailored referrals look like  
11 and how does that happen and what do you mean by  
12 that? Because as the Deputy Speaker Mayor mentioned  
13 - mayor - Deputy Speaker mentioned, uhm, you know I  
14 think there are a lot of perhaps areas and skill sets  
15 and programs that youth have a lot of talent in that  
16 maybe you know of course due to constraints are not  
17 available but just if you could go through that  
18 process, that would be great.

19 RAYMOND TOOMER: Yeah, so when a family walks  
20 into one of our Family Assessment programs, they are  
21 greeted by a license social worker who is trained in  
22 engagement. And it isn't us sort of dictating to a  
23 family what their needs are, it's a partnership where  
24 we sit down with them, try and identify what the  
25 underlying issues are and then make a referral  
specific to whatever that issue is, right? So, for



3 some young people, you know their family comes to us  
4 and the parent may say, look, my young person is the  
5 one with the issue, I don't want to undergo an  
6 intensive evidence-based model and so, for that  
7 family, we may just say alright, well, maybe we can  
8 attach mentoring support or a mentoring program to  
9 your young person.

10 And so, it really is about the needs of each  
11 individual family and we tailor whatever support they  
12 require specific to them. So, even if we don't offer  
13 a contracted service that would address the need, we  
14 look to the community, agencies like DYCD, to figure  
15 out what the most appropriate service is and referral  
16 the family that way.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, and just my last  
18 question real quick is, you know in talking about  
19 prevention and all these preventative services, I  
20 guess my question is what is your relationship with  
21 DOE? Because a lot of the students are spending all  
22 day in school. And what is the connection there and  
23 the relationship there to all these programs, because  
24 that to me is a good place to start because if for  
25 example, you're noticing that something is off and  
someone is acting out and there's a couple

3 incidences. Maybe something's happening at home or  
4 there's you know a death in the family that really  
5 impacted the student or something right. So,  
6 whatever the trigger may be, how does that sort of  
7 flow chart happen if you will?

8 RAYMOND TOOMER: Sure, so the DOE is actually our  
9 largest referral source for the Family Assessment  
10 program. About one-third of the families that come  
11 through our door are referred to us by the Department  
12 of Education. Our borough director, so each of our  
13 offices is staffed with a borough director. They are  
14 intentional about making a connection to the middle  
15 schools and high schools in their borough and we  
16 specifically look at zip codes where young people are  
17 struggling the most with behaviors right? And so, we  
18 target schools in those areas to send our community  
19 engagement teams out into the DOE offices in order to  
20 engage with you know the social workers there, the  
21 parent advocates to ultimately make sure they know  
22 about our services, handing out brochures. We have  
23 brochures in over 20 different languages. And so, we  
24 try and make our presence felt through the Department  
25 of Education.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, great, thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I just have a  
4 couple more questions and just to go back to the  
5 Family Enrichment Centers, which I'm really excited  
6 about and I know you said you're getting 30 more.  
7 And just my question because one of the things I  
8 often find is like in certain areas, there's a  
9 saturation of programs and then like, you go in parts  
10 of my district where there's nothing going on. And  
11 so just thinking about how are you guys going to be  
12 placing these and thinking about is there like some  
13 interactive map that can show like where we have a  
14 lot of programs and concentrations. Because I know  
15 that was something that I've been like working on and  
16 with Council Member Restler of like literally mapping  
17 out these programs and like you can see like hot  
18 spots where there's like all the programs. Like all  
19 the things and then other places where there's  
20 nothing. So, how are you going to be thinking about  
21 that in placement?

22 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Sure, so actually I  
23 appreciate the question about the Family Enrichment  
24 Centers. I was thinking about -

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm coming to visit too so  
I'm really excited.

3 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Yeah, we would love to have  
4 you. I was thinking about the FECs while Deputy  
5 Speaker Ayala was talking about what she would want a  
6 community center to look like. I think a lot of the  
7 FECs hopefully are that they're developed by the  
8 community members themselves. We had three  
9 demonstrations and then we've done three rounds of  
10 RFPs. So, we now have 12 open. There will  
11 eventually be 30. The next 9 in the next year should  
12 be open and another 9 after, 10 after that.

13 Uhm, how ever you get to 30. My math may have  
14 just been wrong but -

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's alright, nobody's  
16 counting.

17 STEPHANIE GENDELL: There are 12 open and they  
18 are in the tree neighborhoods that at the time of  
19 when we decided to expand from 3 to 30, those were  
20 the neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID and poverty  
21 and so, those were how those were selected. And I  
22 could put in a plug for my former organization so  
23 this is coming for children where I come from who has  
24 probably the best mapping of where our programs and  
25 services are located in the city.

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so, you worked with  
4 them as well as far as like locations? Because even  
5 when I think about like when we look at like where  
6 the concentration of poverty and where COVID hit.  
7 All those things are the thing right?

8 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Yes, correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And like even when I think  
10 about Districts like mine, the whole district is  
11 that. But literally all the programming is  
12 concentrated in specific areas in those  
13 neighborhoods. And so, I just – I just feel like  
14 it's incumbent upon me to make sure that I'm pushing  
15 to make sure we're looking in other spaces that are  
16 not getting any resources. And not just for ACS but  
17 like DYCD as well. Like my Highbridge area, we're  
18 getting a community center, thanks to the advocacy –  
19 I'm assuming we're back in the game. We fought  
20 really hard for that community center and so, you  
21 know they don't have a lot of resources there but you  
22 know and it's one of those things that's constantly  
23 overlooked.

24 Uhm, DYCD, I have a couple of questions regarding  
25 the November PEG. The Office of Neighborhood Safety  
inquired a \$5.5 million PEG in FY25 and the outyears.

3 Please provide a breakdown of which ONS programs or  
4 services will be cut as a result of the PEG. And  
5 what are the tangible effects of the cuts for the  
6 youth justice program providers and young people  
7 enrolled in those ONS programs?

8 Because you all told me the other day that it was  
9 just savings and those are supplemental programs, so  
10 I would love to hear what those supplements are.

11 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, Chair I'll start with – so  
12 one, none of the November PEGs affect direct services  
13 provided through our ONS CMS providers.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sorry PEGs in FY25,  
15 sorry.

16 DARRYL RATTRAY: Yeah and those were actualized  
17 in November. None of that affects our direct ONS CMS  
18 providers. The reduction includes projected  
19 accruals. Some events, legal services and some  
20 capacity building, we believe that the capacity in  
21 part will make up for it with the DYCD capacity  
22 building, technical assistance being provided but we  
23 can get back to you with a more extensive overlay of  
24 the PEGs.

25 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, I would really love to  
just kind of see what that breakdown is because it

1 was just like, oh, it's just savings, it will be fine  
2 don't worry about it.  
3

4 And so, just to move on to RHY, Homeless and  
5 Runaway Youth, a topic that I think is important for  
6 us to bring into this conversation. Does DYCD fund  
7 RHY programs that have specific services for justice  
8 involved youth? And if not, what barriers does DYCD  
9 face in providing those services?

10 DARRYL RATTRAY: So, I believe that all of our  
11 RHY programs work with all young people. Many of  
12 them may, I mean some of them may be justice  
13 involved. Sometimes it's hard to know in the very  
14 beginning whether they are. But they're working with  
15 all young people on referrals, on what the young  
16 people need to both develop and then move on and  
17 sustain and grow, if you will.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, the answers no? You  
19 don't have specific programs for justice involved  
20 youth in RHY community? You work with everyone, so  
21 it's nonspecific.

22 DARRYL RATTRAY: I can double check and get back  
23 to you but -

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.  
25

3 KARINA CHRISTIANSEN: I could also add and maybe  
4 Johan could add. Like, we wouldn't discharge a young  
5 person from Close to Home to homelessness.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I mean and that's not  
7 a question right? Like a lot of these young people  
8 do go home and then they run away and they end up in  
9 these programs and I'm asking, do we have specific  
10 programs who have young people who like have those  
11 issues that are probably for sure ending up in these  
12 drop-in centers and our shelters and all the things.  
13 And so, just trying to see if there's specific  
14 programs for them.

15 Uhm, does DYCD track whether RHY has some  
16 involvement with juvenile justice? I know you just  
17 said that sometimes you'll find out as it goes on but  
18 is that like part of the intake process to try to  
19 like track that information?

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: In some cases we know that so,  
21 in our discharge sort of report, we know whether or  
22 not someone was discharged because they actually were  
23 detained in some capacity. Uhm, last year, 2022, we  
24 had eight of those cases. Six in our crisis shelters  
25 and two in our TILs.



3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I guess this question  
4 would probably be more for ACS but thinking about  
5 when young are discharged and I know that there's  
6 usually an aftercare plan. Are we also coordinating  
7 with DYCD with some of the programs that they have  
8 locally in their community for them to be able to be  
9 connected back to the community and being integrated  
10 in that way?

11 JOHAN PEGUERO: Uh, yeah we always in Close to  
12 Home and especially for the aftercare piece, we  
13 always try to connect our youth to whatever their  
14 needs are and the good thing about Close to Home is  
15 that we are able to connect them to community-based  
16 organizations. They don't necessarily have to be  
17 attached to ACS but they are services that DYCD does  
18 provide. Like credible messaging that we could  
19 connect the case to.

20 DARRYL RATTRAY: And just - and Chair, just to  
21 add to that. Uhm, in the locations, they're secure.  
22 Not secure locations that we have the Center for  
23 Community Alternatives working in. They also operate  
24 in Next Gen program that provides reentry mentors who  
25 connect to these young people. Again, connect them  
to resources. There's about 11 providers, 11 or 12

3 providers that also provide that service to ensure  
4 that that young person does come home, that they have  
5 connections and attachments to other positive things  
6 to support them.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. Well, he ain't  
8 here, so I guess he going to miss the second round.  
9 Aren't you guys lucky? Lincoln once, Lincoln twice.  
10 Alright well, he's done. Alright, so uhm that  
11 actually wraps up the questions I have. Do you have  
12 any more questions Deputy or? Alright, so we are  
13 done with that. Oh, look at that, he must have  
14 heard. He must have heard me.

15 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: She tried.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I did and you have five  
17 minutes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We'll see. Linda  
19 doesn't believe me.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Three, you have three  
21 minutes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Alright, I'm hustling  
23 okay. Uhm, could I - I imagine, first let me just  
24 say thank you again to Chair Stevens for your  
25 leadership on this and it's great to see so many  
folks from the community out for this just

3 incredibly, incredibly important hearing. Uhm,  
4 Stephanie can you speak to the Impact program and how  
5 consequential it is for as a potential source of  
6 diversion for ACS entrance into juvenile detention.  
7 Is this on your radar? Are you concerned?

8 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I'd need to look into the  
9 Impact program. I don't have much information about  
10 it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: My understanding was  
12 previously [INAUDIBLE 02:06:42]. It was designated  
13 to cases. The RFP process had been completed and  
14 then probation pulled back and eliminated among the  
15 other programs that's it's chosen to wrongly  
16 eliminate.

17 And it's just you know; a critical diversion  
18 program and you know the Mayor talks about upstream  
19 thinking as if it's a you know the right way to think  
20 about things and we're cutting the diversion programs  
21 and expanding jail capacity. It's like the true  
22 opposite of that mentality approach.

23 STEPHANIE GENDELL: The colleagues from probation  
24 are going to need to answer the question.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I know but -

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3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You wasted your three  
4 minutes on a question again?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just, I'm so  
6 frustrated with them. I want to say it at every  
7 turn. Uhm, okay, uhm could you speak to the  
8 vacancies and case management positions at Horizons  
9 and Crossroads at this time?

10 STEPHANIE GENDELL: I don't have numbers and I'm  
11 not sure if you specifically mean the Case Managers  
12 or the Youth Development Specialists.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I was specific-

14 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Actually the Case Managers,  
15 okay. Usually people ask me about Youth Development  
16 Specialists. Uhm, I need to get the data on how many  
17 vacancies. It's obviously a really important role  
18 working with the young people and their families.  
19 Uhm, the work that they do has not been negatively  
20 impacted. They're still working with the families  
21 arranging for visits and working with the young  
22 people on site.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What's been reported to  
24 us is that there is supposed to be one case manager  
25 per hall. There's less than half of that in place  
now. IT's critically important that we get those

3 roles, positions filled. So, if you could follow up  
4 with the Committee, that would be very helpful and  
5 another question is how many staff does ACS have that  
6 are focused on reentry work at Horizons and  
7 Crossroads?

8 STEPHANIE GENDELL: So, we don't have specific  
9 reentry staff from Horizon and Crossroads.  
10 Unfortunately most of the young people from Horizon  
11 and Crossroads are not going back to the community  
12 from Horizon and Crossroads. The small number of  
13 JD's who are in and out quickly, they have a case in  
14 court and the court is connecting them to whatever  
15 court ordered services and ACS has very limited  
16 involvement with them. But for young people who are  
17 with us for a substantial amount of time and are  
18 going back to the community after leaving Crossroads  
19 and Horizon, which again is small. The way it works  
20 is that the Department of Education which is on site  
21 providing school at Horizon and Crossroads, they are  
22 working to connect the young people back to school  
23 and they work with the young people for six months  
24 after transitioning back.

25 And then Bellevue, which provides the onsite  
mental health services if needed would connect the

3 young person to those types of services in the  
4 community. And then uhm, there's the program that  
5 DYCD spoke about with CCA where mentors and help  
6 connect the young people when they return back and  
7 they're credible messengers and work with them.

8 And then the sort of last piece is the case  
9 managers who have been working with the family and so  
10 if we know there is something that the family needs  
11 that we can help connect them to services, whether  
12 it's FAP or some other type of service in the  
13 community.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Appreciate that not  
15 everyone who is at Horizons and Crossroads is  
16 immediately going back to the community but it's  
17 always been said to me, reentry begins on day one and  
18 not having a more robust dedicated team that's  
19 focused on that work seems like uh a misaligned  
20 approach. Uhm, I do just want to come back -

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You want to wrap up please.  
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm wrapping up. On  
24 something and you may again tell me and the Chair  
25 will kick me that I'm still fixated on the Department  
of Probation but programs like Arches, AIM, Advocate,

3 Intervene, Mentor, we've been advised there not at  
4 capacity. That there are slots available. Is ACS  
5 tracking capacity in these programs? Are you all  
6 trying to make sure that young people that are at  
7 risk of potentially entering into your facilities are  
8 maximally benefitting from the high-quality young  
9 adult development programs that we have available?

10 STEPHANIE GENDELL: So, we track our own program.  
11 Like, our own Alternative Detention program. It  
12 wouldn't track vacancies any other program or not in  
13 court on those.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And so I get that and I  
15 just think it comes back to the fact that we have  
16 these programs wrongly disbursed across multiple  
17 agencies and some of these agencies are not clearly  
18 invested at all in reducing the incarceration rate or  
19 number that we're dealing with in New York City  
20 today.

21 And so, I really think it's time for us to  
22 revisit this and start to consolidate these programs.  
23 I think ACS would be a more logical home for a number  
24 of these initiatives. I don't think you all would  
25 have ever cut these very good programs like the  
Department of Probation has. So, I hope that we can

3 revisit this together and I want to thank the Chair  
4 for the additional time.

5 STEPHANIE GENDELL: As you know, we're always  
6 happy to talk to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're probably the only  
8 one.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Darryl's happy to talk  
10 to me too.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Oh but thank you  
12 Council Member Restler. I'm going to turn it over to  
13 Committee Staff to get rolling into the testimony and  
14 again, I hope that you guys can stay around to listen  
15 to some of the young peoples testimony. I would have  
16 had them testify in the beginning but a lot of them  
17 decided to do it last night. So, I would love for  
18 you to make sure you guys stay around to hear some of  
19 their testimony. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. We  
21 will now turn to public testimony. We will be  
22 limiting public testimony today to three minutes  
23 each. For in-person panelists, please come up to the  
24 table once your name has been called. Our first  
25 panel will be Makeda Byfield, Ali Sabawa, Joan  
Rodriguez Flores and Suekanya Meaks.



3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'd like to also say I  
4 didn't prep them or anything. They did this all on  
5 their own, so I'm very excited.

6 JOAN RODRIGUEZ FLORES: Hello everyone, my name  
7 is Joan Rodriguez Flores, I am from District 16 and I  
8 am in favor of Preventative Services for At-Risk  
9 Youth. Thank you for the time you guys are giving me  
10 to speak.

11 I was born and raised in the South Bronx to  
12 immigrant parents from Mexico all while growing up in  
13 one of the most impoverish districts in the United  
14 States. As a current student in the public school  
15 system in the Bronx, I witnessed first hand the  
16 detrimental effects of budget cuts and the lack of  
17 funding for low-income students or schools. The  
18 general lack of funding for education in public  
19 schools is - it leads to bigger classrooms, advanced  
20 classes and cuts on essential after-school programs.

21 Less funding means less support for many low-  
22 income students who need extra support to graduate  
23 from high school and attend higher education.  
24 Combine all of these factors, we come out with very  
25 few opportunities for our youth to find other ways to  
succeed. The existence of youth programs allow

3 students whose schools can't provide for them to have  
4 options to learn what they are interested in art,  
5 tech, business, trades, college readiness and  
6 anything else you can think of. It's taught in these  
7 programs and by getting rid of them, you get rid of  
8 the last hopes of our youth trying to make something  
9 out of what practically already is nothing.

10 In my experience, coming across life changing  
11 opportunities are rare. When I was in middle school,  
12 I did the most I could with what my school could  
13 provide, which was simply maintaining good grades.  
14 However, I gravated to learn more and I wanted to try  
15 new experiences. I came across scholars and I  
16 majored in career readiness programs by approaching a  
17 block, a Tik Tok my sister showed me is what  
18 introduced me.

19 Thus, I walk the path I do today. It led me to a  
20 journey to live in Washington DC and live out and  
21 learn about my passion for politics and public  
22 service. I even got to speak with the Supreme Court  
23 Justice all because SEO, a youth program had helped  
24 me with my application and funded my entire trip.

25 The start of my life was sparked because of youth  
programs. Now, imagine if she had never come across

1 that Tik Tok video. I would have never known of SEO.  
2 I would have missed the only opportunity I could  
3 apply and everything I've done till now would have  
4 just been a dream. By getting rid of such valuable  
5 youth programs similar to mine, this will be someone  
6 else's experience. Our youth will miss out on life-  
7 changing experiences because there will be fewer  
8 places to learn. By coming across a youth program  
9 such as SYEP their entire life and career can begin.  
10 It could lead them to meet people they would have  
11 never thought of meeting and get a job they could  
12 have never thought of achieving. There can not be  
13 anymore less or any more funding not going to  
14 education or youth programs as we already live in a  
15 society that values money over future doctors,  
16 lawyers and leaders. Thank you.

18 MAKEDA BYFIELD: Good afternoon, my name Makeda  
19 Byfield. I'm a proud New York City Native and  
20 resident of District 16 in the Bronx. I've lived and  
21 attended school in ten different neighborhoods  
22 throughout four of the New York City boroughs. While  
23 I didn't grow up in stable housing, I could depend on  
24 different social services targeted towards youth to  
25 me my constant. I look back on my childhood and

3 smile as I recall afternoon spent in New York public  
4 libraries and community centers. I am grateful for  
5 the chance to do things like Summer Youth. Being in  
6 these spaces allowed me the opportunity to see that  
7 there is more to life than the poverty and hardship  
8 that I was experiencing at the time.

9 Growing up homeless and under constant  
10 surveillance by the Administration for Children  
11 Services should have made me at risk. My family has  
12 gone through ACS Preventative Services such as family  
13 therapy and found that they treated my parents, my  
14 siblings and myself as if we were criminals. We were  
15 simply people in need of assistance and the agency  
16 did not treat us that way.

17 However, thanks to some of the community-based  
18 services that are now facing budget cuts, I was able  
19 to thrive. I'm now in social work and psychology  
20 student at Fordham University. I have permanent  
21 housing now. I appreciate everyone who took a chance  
22 on me and saw my true potential. And now, I'm giving  
23 back to underserved folks. I volunteer and dedicate  
24 my time to serving at-risk youth throughout New York  
25 City. For example, I am a court advocate for the

3 Justice Ambassador Youth Council, where I work with  
4 youth ages 18-25 who have open criminal court cases.

5 I made countless referrals to services similar to  
6 the ones I received growing up because I want them to  
7 have the same opportunities I did. This includes  
8 things like housing, employment, family services,  
9 mental health treatment and more.

10 To be clear, we cannot incarcerate our way out of  
11 social problems like homelessness, lack of quality  
12 education, poor healthcare and community violence.

13 It is all of our responsibilities to find approaches  
14 routed in care and support, not just punishment. I  
15 wish such a model existed when my parents were being  
16 investigated by ACS. I wish the young people I  
17 served were given more alternatives to incarceration  
18 that acknowledged their potential for growth.

19 In both these instances, my parents and clients  
20 were punished for mistakes they made without  
21 alternative options offered to facilitate  
22 rehabilitation. I say all this to say that I am in  
23 support of offering services and alternatives to  
24 carceral means of surveillance on vulnerable children  
25 and families. Thank you for your time.

3 ALI SIBAWA: Hello, my name Ali. I come from  
4 YMEN, which stands for Young Men Establishing a  
5 Narrative. I'm from District 16 and I came here to  
6 talk to you guys about what YMEN has done for me, a  
7 nonprofit organization. Oh, and I'm also fighting  
8 for Preventative Services for at-risk youth and  
9 justice involved youth. So, before I joined YMEN, I  
10 was just wondering around, I didn't know what I  
11 wanted to do with my life. I was getting into  
12 trouble at school, fights all the time. I went to an  
13 alternate school and I was over there doing school  
14 with kids who brought guns to school, so that wasn't  
15 really a good thing. And one day, my friend invited  
16 me to go over to this hang out spot that he knew. He  
17 didn't want to tell me what it was. I don't know why  
18 but he told me to come and it turned out to be a  
19 nonprofit organization called YMEN.

20 At YMEN they taught me the meaning of living a  
21 full and meaningful life. Like hanging out with  
22 other people my age, it gave me new experiences in  
23 life and handed out food to the needy. It gave me a  
24 new perspective on life. Like, to see the great  
25 community come together as one, it really changed me  
and now I work as a Team Advisor for YMEN and it

3 frustrates me to see how top down it is. I know you  
4 guys were elected to your positions because you care  
5 but because you care, you're here all the time and  
6 you're not here to see the finer details. You're not  
7 here to see like how kids go down to Town Square just  
8 to cause trouble because they have no advisor at  
9 home.

10 You're not there to see how kids can cry at our  
11 services because they don't have nobody to look up  
12 to. So, I'm asking you to not cut the funding and to  
13 look at the finer details. I'm asking you guys to  
14 uhm just give more consideration to the people down  
15 below. The leader of the nonprofit organizations.  
16 They do a lot but they can only do so much. That's  
17 it, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We're not supposed to  
19 applaud, so you can silent applaud. It's more  
20 appropriate. Thank you. I'm excited too. They  
21 don't agree.

22 SUEKANYA MEAKS: Hello, I'm Suekanya Meaks, a  
23 member of the Youth Justice Network here in Harlem  
24 and I'm a resident of Jamaica Queens. I wanted to  
25 come down here to really just to like talk off the  
head. I didn't really prepare anything but my

3 concerns is like always there. So, uhm, my concern  
4 basically is for the cut of the nonprofit programs  
5 that uhm is being cut off. The Youth Justice  
6 Network, they saved me from being incarcerated on  
7 Rikers, so I just want to just like push my story out  
8 there to let you guys understand like, these  
9 nonprofits, they actually care about us and they're  
10 not doing it or social media attention and they're  
11 not doing it for clout or anything like that.  
12 They're doing it because they generally care about  
13 our generation. I'm 20-years-old and I see kids  
14 younger than me going through things that they  
15 shouldn't have to go through. For example, Covenant  
16 House right now, that's located on 41<sup>st</sup> West and in  
17 Time Square.

18 The amount of homeless kids or just like kids  
19 that's just like parentless or just don't have no  
20 guide in the world, like they need help and our youth  
21 is really failing. Like, there's no positive leaders  
22 out there. There's nobody that's really getting out  
23 there in the streets and letting these kids know like  
24 is something wrong and there's something going on and  
25 we grew up especially in low-income communities. We  
grew up not knowing how to deal with mental emotions



3 and grew up dealing with like, super like problems  
4 that just like could like really like affect us like  
5 when we get older.

6 So, I really just want to draw attention and ask  
7 for more community support and more support from the  
8 Councilmen within our low-income communities just to  
9 get out there in the streets and see what we have to  
10 go through every day and see that there's kids that  
11 have to - there's kids younger than me that has to  
12 provide for their younger siblings and they can't  
13 positively do that and expect to go to school and  
14 manage all of this. So, we do need the help and we  
15 do need the funding for this stuff.

16 I also wanted to talk about the seriousness of  
17 alternating. Instead of sitting these youths to  
18 chill environments and these survival environments  
19 and expecting them to come home and be able to just  
20 jump back into nature and jump back into going to  
21 school and going to class, like to understand the  
22 pressure that they are being put down in Horizon.  
23 There's kids being cut every day. There's kids being  
24 affected by gang violence even if they're not a gang  
25 member. They're still being affected by this stuff  
and I feel as if bringing community centers into

3 these communities and letting these kids understand  
4 that we hear your all's story. We see what you guys  
5 are going through. Like, we really understand and  
6 not just saying we understand for media attention or  
7 for the news attention, really hearing these kids  
8 story and like, just really just getting a real  
9 understanding that I feel like our youth will be so  
10 much better. We just need to be heard. Like, that's  
11 one thing I had a problem with growing up. I was  
12 never being heard because they felt like kids, we  
13 didn't know really that much but when we're really  
14 going through it, like we have to fight day to day  
15 life skills and when our parents are at work like  
16 24/7, like what brought me outside and into the  
17 streets was, I didn't have a mom and my dad at home.  
18 My dad was incarcerated for my whole entire life. My  
19 mother, she was always working, so she never had time  
20 to really sit down and figure out what was really  
21 gone with us. So, stuff like that, I feel like if  
22 our youth just had somebody just to listen out to  
23 them and also, these people that's dedicating their  
24 time, they also have families too. So, these  
25 nonprofit organizations, they have families that they  
have to feed as well, so you guys cutting our

3 fundings from those and cutting down middle schools  
4 and pushing them into high schools and stuff like  
5 that, it's really, it's really putting a big toll on  
6 us and I just want to let you guys hear like we  
7 really do need help out here. Like, not only low-  
8 income communities, we need help just spreading the  
9 word for this generation and next generation, even in  
10 a generation after that.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want — where you  
12 going? Well, one, thank you guys for showing up. I  
13 just want to say, I think it's extremely important  
14 that you know you guys are part of this process and  
15 you're preaching to the choir. We hear you. We are  
16 all on the same team and we're all saying the same  
17 things and I'm just so proud of each one of you guys  
18 just stepping out and saying like, hey, we want to be  
19 heard. And so, we're here to listen but I just  
20 wanted to clarify and to Ali, because I know you had  
21 specific things you feel like are lacking in programs  
22 because I know you talked that you feel like it's  
23 very heavy top, so you feel like a lot of things are  
24 just coming down. What are some of the programs or  
25 ideas that you had around what we should be really  
investing in?

1  
2 ALI SIBAWA: Uhm, I would say like after school  
3 programs for the kids where we all come together. It  
4 could be simple stuff like playing games together but  
5 you get to know them and you get to know kids around  
6 like your block. I went to school with some of these  
7 kids and I never spoke to them. Then after that,  
8 they were my friend. I see them in school. I say  
9 what's up to them and it's like I get a new brother.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, basically you're  
11 looking that we should be fostering more programs  
12 that is fostering community?

13 ALI SIBAWA: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And if anyone else wanted  
15 to add.

16 SUEKANYA MEAKS: I wanted to add on to building  
17 more programs to alternate instead of sending them to  
18 like Horizons and Crossroads. Build programs that  
19 allow kids to do at least like a week or two and like  
20 this program where they can like learn new building  
21 skills and life skills and stuff like that. I feel  
22 like if we take a child out of uh a tormented like  
23 mindset and put them in a mind set where they're  
24 doing resume building or even computer coding or  
25 things that you don't usually do in the hood. Like

3 you show them - give them like a different side of  
4 life. I feel like that would really like help out.

5 JOAN RODRIGUEZ FLORES: Additionally, uhm I think  
6 having resources for kids who are maybe school isn't  
7 the best thing or academics aren't the best thing for  
8 them and more of like a creative, artsy type of you  
9 know community. Right, it's already hard enough for  
10 a normal you know just people who are into arts to  
11 you know be successful, right? And because we're the  
12 Bronx, the boogie down Bronx, right, hip hop, there's  
13 so much people to look up to in our community who  
14 want to pursue music, arts, anything fashion right?

15 And so, by not having those resources for kids to  
16 use, they're not able to achieve that potential that  
17 they want or the career that they want. And so,  
18 allowing kids to have youth programs that you know  
19 encourage that will you know, that's just another way  
20 of you know people of color and just those who are  
21 less privileged to you know make it out to be  
22 successful.

23 MAKEDA BYFIELD: I agree with everything that my  
24 peers said. Another hyper specific example to my  
25 community would be the fact that we don't have a  
library. The Morris Library has been being built for

3 years now and I'm still not sure what the update is  
4 on when it will be opened. As I said, I've lived in  
5 ten communities throughout four of the New York City  
6 boroughs. When home was shaky, I was able to go to  
7 the library. Yes to read, yes to use a computer to  
8 do my homework but also to find a sensitive  
9 community.

10 My dad used to volunteer and teach karate classes  
11 at the Laurelton Library. I used to go to the  
12 Williams burgh Library and do arts and crafts classes  
13 once a month. Things like that can be so beneficial.  
14 I think libraries are great organizing centers. They  
15 can give up so much information in addition to just  
16 literacy and reading. There's also immigration  
17 information that can be given out. I know the Mott  
18 Haven Library is really great at that. And so,  
19 that's something that I would like to see in my  
20 community in District 16 and more.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you and just to  
22 piggyback. I know that Deputy Speaker Ayala  
23 literally uses the things that you were saying, so  
24 you just kind of like echoed how she doesn't feel  
25 like there's enough diverse programming for young  
people in the community.

3 And so, it's just really good to hear that that's  
4 you're saying it. It's coming from your mouth, so  
5 making sure that that is being pointed out. So,  
6 thank you. I don't have any more questions. Oh, of  
7 course Lincoln has a question.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to say each  
9 of you spoke so beautifully and persuasively and I  
10 really appreciate your thoughtful advocacy. It  
11 matters and really, if there's anything that each of  
12 us can do to be helpful to you, let us know but we're  
13 going to keep fighting for each of the things that  
14 you're laying out because it's so important. Thank  
15 you.

16 PANEL: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to this  
18 panel. Our next panel will be Lauren Galloway,  
19 Cheniah Ingram, Christopher Maspons, Julia Davis and  
20 Caitlyn Passaretti.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can begin whenever you're  
22 ready.

23 CHENIAH INGRAM: Okay. Hi, I'm Cheniah Ingram.  
24 I live in the Bronx New York in Moore Houses and I'm  
25 not here to like you know put it, like put the - I'm  
representing for the uhm the nonprofit organizations

3 but I'm not here to put it down. I'm here to talk  
4 about all the good things that they did. Like I've  
5 been at like in SOS and BACGC since I was about like  
6 14 years old and like throughout the years I've been  
7 in internships like place keeping. I did digital  
8 media. Like you know like different things. I've  
9 got my OSHA Flag 40, my certificate. I've received  
10 my security license and stuff like that. And like,  
11 you know like it's like a second home to me and like  
12 in the centers and stuff. Like you know they keep on  
13 expanding and like we like that because it's like you  
14 know in the low income like you know everybody thinks  
15 the lowest. You know everybody in low income is like  
16 you know we come and then like people visit us and  
17 they like, you know they get excited and stuff.

18 We had a carnival on our block. Like, yeah, like  
19 who has carnivals? Like, you know like everybody was  
20 so happy. Like everything was free. Everybody  
21 enjoyed their self, so we did it a second year. Like  
22 you know like it's just stuff like that. People  
23 really look forward to like you know you don't know -  
24 like how she said, like you don't know what people go  
25 through in their homes and stuff. So, like to have a  
place like a community center or something that they



3 can actually come to and feel comfort like you know  
4 they could have a counselor and stuff like that.  
5 Like you know like, I feel like they need that. Like  
6 you know there's people that might go to that, go  
7 there, like go to one of the programs and then they  
8 go home and they get abused or they go home and they  
9 got to worry about what they have to eat and stuff  
10 but like, you know you don't know. So, it's - I  
11 consider it as like a safe haven you know for people  
12 that really, like really need it. Like, you know  
13 people may not - people don't have programs and they  
14 just run around and then you know they in the system  
15 and then they're treated wrongly in the system as  
16 well. You know so they come home and then it's like  
17 - it's just a domino affect to everybody. And it's  
18 like everything could be stopped.

19 Like, I think there's a lot of room for  
20 improvement and you know I don't think there's enough  
21 when it comes to the nonprofit.

22 CHRISTOPHER MASPONS: My name is Christopher  
23 Maspons. Good afternoon everyone attending this  
24 hearing. I'm a 19-year-old Latino kid representing  
25 SOS in the Bronx Community Justice Center. We are  
here gathering together to speak in trying to stop

3 the gun violence in the Bronx. A lot of people might  
4 look at it as a big crisis but if I said more than to  
5 it than you can imagine. They have so many kids ages  
6 12 to 24 who need real guidance and not to be thrown  
7 in the cage like an animal and being humiliated.

8 I feel that people don't know the type of trauma  
9 kids have been through. You don't know whether a kid  
10 have to sleep on night - sleep on the street at the  
11 night and the next in a staircase when it's too cold  
12 outside because you don't got no family to go home  
13 to. Things like that can really make a kid feel lost  
14 and alone and scared. They feel like nobody cares  
15 for them. It's little stuff like that that could  
16 really make or break a person and some people are  
17 left broken and left to fend for themselves in the  
18 streets. People are so quick to judge the youth  
19 instead of trying to help and understand the trauma  
20 youth faces.

21 Granted there's more to life than just picking up  
22 a gun and using it. When you wake up every morning  
23 and whether you have an issue - whether you have  
24 issues in the streets or personal issues going on  
25 with yourself, growing up in the hood is dangerous.  
You will never know where you can - uhm, what can go

3 wrong when you wake up and decide to leave your  
4 house. That night or that day or whatever and you  
5 get faced with people having a shoot out because  
6 someone probably said something disrespectful but now  
7 someone lose their life. These are all trauma  
8 experiences that impact anyone in the long run. Some  
9 youth then feel the need to carry a gun and protect  
10 themselves. People might look at it like it's just uh,  
11 act of violence. No, it is an act of PTSD and trauma  
12 experiences that the youth has experienced.

13 Thank you today for allowing me to be here.

14 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Afternoon you all. Lauren  
15 Galloway, they, she. I'm the Advocacy Coordinator at  
16 the Coalition for Homeless Youth. CHY Coalition for  
17 Homeless Youth has been advocating for the needs of  
18 runaway and homeless youth for 45 years. I want to  
19 thank Deputy Speaker Ayala as well as Chair Stevens  
20 and the rest of the members of the Committee on  
21 General Welfare and Youth Services for holding  
22 today's Oversight Hearing on the Preventative  
23 Services for At-Risk Justice Involved Youth, as well  
24 as Council's ongoing support for youth experiencing  
25 homelessness at NYC.

3 I'm going to submit longer testimony because you  
4 know I want to get into it but one thing I want to  
5 bring up is young people run away and/or becoming  
6 homeless for many complex reasons. As we know the  
7 young people living on the streets are those that  
8 don't have a stable, safe housing are highly  
9 vulnerable and therefore at risk or have touched the  
10 criminal legal system higher than their housed peers.

11 The disproportionately affects of those all sort  
12 of link to over criminalization of Black and Brown  
13 young people and those identifying as LGBTQIA+. In  
14 New York City Fiscal Year 2023, 3,182 RHY were served  
15 in DYCD residential RHY programs, including 326  
16 minors. 37,125 RHY residents receive nonresidential  
17 services at the drop-in centers and street outreach  
18 programs. That's close to 60 percent of the RHY and  
19 DYCD programs identify as Black. Whereas 29 percent  
20 of all NYC Youth identify as Black. So, out of those  
21 numbers, you're seeing more of those folks in the  
22 residential programs of RHY.

23 So, at the core, RHY programs are acting as both  
24 preventative services for young people at risk of  
25 juvenile justice involvement and supportive services  
for those already have being involved and yet,

3 they're not providing any additional funding or any  
4 means of recognition for the work that they are  
5 doing.

6 So, CHY wants to echo some recommendations but we  
7 also want to recommend that recommendations provided  
8 by our allies at Legal Aid Society as well as  
9 Children's Defense Fund. And so, a few things are  
10 recommended and I'll get into this more in my written  
11 testimony. One, make youth categories eligible for  
12 City FHEPs vouchers.

13 Two, restore funding for peer navigators in the  
14 DYCD RHY system. Three, increase DYCD RHY beds for  
15 young people ages 21 to 24. Create mental health  
16 focus RHY transitional independent living programs  
17 that is so needed. We need to make sure folks are  
18 receiving the services for mental health and in the  
19 housing that they deserve. Right size runaway and  
20 homeless youth service provider contracts.

21 And last, address the needs of migrant youth and  
22 young adults. Thank you and please let me know if  
23 you have any questions and I look forward to our  
24 continued partnership.

25 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Good afternoon and thank you  
for the opportunity to testify. My name is Caitlyn

3 Passaretti. I'm a Policy Associate at the Citizens  
4 Committee for Children of New York. Thank you Chair  
5 Stevens and Deputy Speaker Ayala and committee  
6 members for hosting this vital hearing on  
7 preventative services for at-risk and justice  
8 involved youth.

9 In order to foster youth development and success,  
10 it's imperative that we ensure our city has well  
11 equipped and supported youth service programs. The  
12 surge in youth entering New York City Detention  
13 Centers nearly doubling in recent years, stems from  
14 unnecessary arrests and slashed services that are  
15 aimed to prevent arrests or divert young people post  
16 arrest.

17 This overcrowding leads to longer detention stays  
18 where right now; we are reaching about 85 days for  
19 unsentenced youth. The increase in arrests is  
20 directly linked to Mayor Adams and NYPD's quality of  
21 life violations introduced in March 2022, leading to  
22 more severe criminalization of acts like turnstile  
23 jumping or loitering. This results in court summons  
24 and arrests warrants if missed. This has notably  
25 increased the number of youth summoned to court

3 solely for quality-of-life violations, which is a new  
4 era broken windows policing.

5 The racial disproportionately and arrests mirrors  
6 past over policing trends with 90 percent of NYPD  
7 stops from 2003 to 2002 involving people of color.  
8 Mayor Adams Administration and NYPD recorded over  
9 15,000 stops in 2002, contributing to the  
10 overcrowding we're now seeing in detention centers.  
11 The November budget modification cuts in essential  
12 services like the Compass afterschool program,  
13 threatens to lose over 3,500 after school seats and  
14 also, the Summer Rising funding reduction will result  
15 in program length reduction for middle schools and  
16 thus, impacting academic, social and emotional growth  
17 of young people, especially in a post-pandemic era.

18 Probation program cuts to programs such as Arches  
19 and Next Steps, which offer critical mentorship and  
20 support, are jeopardizing crucial services for  
21 justice involved youth limiting therapeutic support,  
22 alternatives to detention and resources for families  
23 impacted by many co-existing systems.

24 Young people urgently need investments, not cuts  
25 and as highlighted by a survey conducted by the  
Citizens Committee for Children with over 1,300 young

3 New Yorkers, they are emphasizing mental healthcare,  
4 housing, employment with a living wage, and extra-  
5 curricular opportunities as top priorities. CCC  
6 urges the Council to reject the budget cuts, deepen  
7 afterschool and summer program investments, restore  
8 funding to crucial probation programs, invest in  
9 mental health services and protect critical youth  
10 services. Many of which will lose further funding  
11 with a termination of the Federal COVID Relief  
12 Funding ending and also reupping everything Lauren  
13 said and their priorities as well.

14 Our commitment is to oppose harmful cuts and  
15 champion investments that allow young people to reach  
16 their full potential. Thank you and we look forward  
17 to collaborating with the City Council and partners  
18 and everyone on this panel right here and on this  
19 crucial matter.

20 JULIA DAVIS: Good afternoon. My name is Julia  
21 Davis. I am the Director of Youth Justice and Child  
22 Welfare at the Children's Defense Fund New York.  
23 Thank you Deputy Speaker and Chairs for this hearing.  
24 This is an urgent moment for the over 200 young  
25 people in detention today and for all young people in  
New York City. So, thank you for your attention to



3 the many young people in this room who started their  
4 morning outside of this building chanting and  
5 demanding the things that they and their communities  
6 need to thrive and to promote community safety. I'm  
7 looking forward to hearing from more of them today.

8 At the Childrens Defense Fund, we work in an  
9 intergenerational collective with young people that  
10 have transitioned out of foster care, many of whom  
11 have also had system contacts with the criminal legal  
12 system, the housing system, the public benefit  
13 system, the mental health system. The number one  
14 thing all of these young people tell us they need is  
15 employment. Pathways to true types of compensation  
16 living wages and what we're doing by taking young  
17 people's opportunities away by cutting off the  
18 opportunities that remove them from detention, they  
19 take away their summer employment opportunities.  
20 They remove them from the programs that are the  
21 conduit into the opportunities that many of us in the  
22 room have had.

23 I mean we cut off their number one goal, which is  
24 self-determination, freedom and economic mobility.  
25 We need to really make the types of investments that  
will make a difference in young peoples lives. Not

3 the nickel and diming that we're doing right now.  
4 Big investments, big investments that change young  
5 people's day-to-day lives the opportunities before  
6 them. And so, in addition to some of the things that  
7 you heard today, I want to encourage you to focus on  
8 safe and stable housing for every young person in  
9 this city. Economic opportunities that lead to true,  
10 well-paying professional lives where they can remain  
11 in New York and build their lives here. And  
12 opportunities for safety and well-being in their  
13 communities and in their homes. That's what young  
14 people are demanding today and thank you for the  
15 opportunity to hear from me.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you uhm and just to  
17 echo what you were saying. I think uhm, and I say  
18 this all the time, if we invest in our young people  
19 in the front end, we won't have to invest in them on  
20 the backend and that's the mindset that we really  
21 need to get into in thinking about and I've also been  
22 yelling about for the last two years and even before  
23 I got into Council, that we need to reimagine what  
24 youth employment looks like in the city. It is not  
25 what it used to be and SYEP is such a low hanging  
fruit. We need to be thinking about how are we

3 getting young people employed throughout the year and  
4 meaningful jobs and not stipends. And making sure  
5 that there's equity and giving them opportunities and  
6 also thinking about vocational skills and employable  
7 skills and how are we investing in those. I mean,  
8 Deputy Speaker said it earlier, I am sick of hearing  
9 about OSHA. It's cute but enough. There's so many  
10 other things that we can be certifying our young  
11 people in. It's so lazy and enough of it.

12 And thinking about how are we getting them real  
13 skills that are going to lead to self-determination,  
14 generational wealth and building our communities  
15 because I don't want any of my young people to leave.  
16 I'm about you all building up your all communities so  
17 you could stay.

18 So, thank you to this panel. Thank you to these  
19 young people who stayed for this hearing, was outside  
20 rallying. Give it up for them. We are going to clap  
21 for all the young people in here because I'm just -

22 [APPLAUSE]

23 Honestly, I don't think you guys understand.  
24 This is like a dream come true. All I ever talk  
25 about is how we're making sure young people are in  
the room and like you are here. And so, this is like

3 something that I talked about coming into Council, so  
4 I'm like almost about to cry but I'm not. I'm not  
5 going to be a baby today. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next panel  
7 will be Ramón Caba, Sherlisely Vining, Jason Gordon  
8 and Jackie Shelton.

9 You can begin whenever you're ready.

10 RAMÓN CABA: Afternoon. Good afternoon Deputy  
11 Speaker Ayala, Chair Stevens and esteemed members of  
12 the General Welfare and Youth Committee. Thank you  
13 for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the  
14 Center for Justice Innovation to discuss the  
15 importance of preventive services for at-risk and  
16 justice involved youth. My name is Ramón Caba,  
17 Project Director for the Bronx Community Justice  
18 Center. I am joined by youth that will shed light on  
19 the impact youth programming has had on their lives.

20 Today, I would like to share strategies that will  
21 show great process in helping to possibly influence  
22 the lives of youth across the center. Projects  
23 citywide, gun violence prevention, youth mentoring  
24 and therapeutic support, restorative justice, place  
25 making and economic opportunity. This work helps to  
drive public safety and provide young people with the

3 tools to – with the tools and resources to de-  
4 escalate conflict that can lead to gun violence, heal  
5 from harm and historic systemic disinvestment,  
6 develop positive goals and futures, take pride to  
7 cocreate safe and revitalize spaces in their  
8 neighborhoods and learn how to financially sustain  
9 themselves, specifically the Bronx Community Justice  
10 Center. I would like to highlight that our programs  
11 help youth take ownership and revitalize their  
12 community by supporting them to disengage from  
13 criminal legal system and move towards positive  
14 future in partnership with community youth as part of  
15 our place making efforts.

16 We have been able to transport neighborhood  
17 spaces converting them, committing in high crime  
18 areas into places where the youth want to inhabit by  
19 creating places that are welcoming, familiar and  
20 conducive to economic development and social  
21 interaction place making can tip the scales in favor  
22 of safe and vibrant communities for youth to thrive.

23 In closing, our youth who engage in our programs  
24 are left with a high sense of ownership, trust,  
25 investment, and comfort in their own communities and  
resources to live higher, healthy, productive and

3 safe lives. Thank you for your time and your  
4 support.

5 SHERLISELY VINING: Good afternoon. Hi, my name  
6 is Sherlisely Vining and I live in Moore Houses,  
7 which is a low-income neighborhood with high rates of  
8 violence and crime. I received flyer from SOS about  
9 a justice community plus for an internship. I  
10 attended the program because I needed a job so they  
11 helped me with my ID, my resume, and my Social  
12 Security card. They made sure I was work ready.

13 Also, they helped me get clothes for the  
14 interview that was set up for me. At the time, I was  
15 18 years old. Since 2015, I have been an active  
16 participant at Bronx Community Justice and Save Our  
17 Streets. Both programs aim to put an end to gun  
18 violence and refer the community safe zone. So far I  
19 have been involved in shooting response, community  
20 events and healing process. I have been involved in  
21 so many place keeping events such as carnivals,  
22 giveaways, school supplies, painting, and so much  
23 more. At these events, we incurred over 1,000 people  
24 in our neighborhood and allowed them to see that we  
25 are more than just violence that helped in community.

3 I just wanted to be a part of the situation to  
4 make our community better. Ever since I've been a  
5 part of Bronx Community Justice and SOS, doors have  
6 opened for me. I've been a part of the Bronx  
7 Community Founder Gala that was just recently - uhm,  
8 I recently just went back to school because I had  
9 dropped out when I was 18 because I didn't feel like  
10 I could do it. SOS and Bronx Community Justice  
11 pushed me to where I am today. So, many doors have  
12 opened, like this is my last month of being a  
13 participant. I transferred over from a participant  
14 to a full-time scholarship with SOS.

15 JASON GORDON: Good afternoon Chair Stevens and  
16 members of the Committee on Youth Services. Good  
17 afternoon Deputy Speaker Ayala and members of the  
18 Committee on General Welfare. My name is Jason  
19 Gordon, I'm a Supervisor of the Youth Workers in the  
20 Assertive and Community Engagement and Success  
21 Program, the ACES program operated by cases.

22 ACES serves young people living in East Harlem in  
23 the South Bronx with two goals, prevent violence and  
24 save young peoples lives. We work with young men  
25 ages 16 to 24, nearly all are Black or Latino and are  
out of school and unemployed. Most have prior

3 arrests and are caught up in cycles of violence in  
4 the community. ACES may be the last chance as they  
5 enter adulthood to step away from a path of heading  
6 towards prison or death.

7 Participation in ACES is voluntary. We take  
8 referrals from community members, social service  
9 providers and the criminal legal system. Two of our  
10 largest referral sources are the NYPD and the young  
11 people already in the program. If both the police  
12 and the young people we serve believe in us, we must  
13 be doing something right.

14 I'd like to tell you about Jose. Like many of  
15 the young people who refer to ACES, when we began  
16 initial outreach, Jose dodged his assigned youth  
17 worker for months. It took four months of reaching  
18 out before he finally agreed to a full conversation  
19 with the team. Jose was gang involved, was about to  
20 become a first-time father and needed a job.

21 His ACES youth worker helped him to get his birth  
22 certificate, social security card, and ID so he could  
23 work. Eventually he enrolled in the ACES work crew  
24 where he could earn a wage while learning what he  
25 needed to do to become job ready. Jose eventually  
got a full-time job. Now he moves safely around his



3 community making deliveries with Amazon and earning  
4 money to support his family. The ACES approach comes  
5 from Roca, a nationally recognized youth violence  
6 prevention program that was developed with public  
7 health experts. I recently myself earned a master's  
8 degree from Columbia University in social work and  
9 let me tell you, the Roca program, it works. It  
10 works in part because it was designed to be delivered  
11 by people like myself. I don't mean just social  
12 workers; I mean people who grew up in the streets who  
13 have our own experiences of incarceration and who  
14 have been committed to helping - who have been  
15 committed to be helping young people in our  
16 communities to have a real chance in life.

17 Earlier this fall, I watched as successful cases,  
18 youth work programs were closed suddenly and without  
19 warning due to city budgets and cuts in the  
20 Department of Probation. ACES is funded by the  
21 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. The program  
22 costs about \$2 million and that's my time? The  
23 program costs about \$2 million a year and MOCJ has  
24 been a good partner for our program but it's December  
25 now and we have no contract to assure funding beyond  
this coming June.

3 The city's investments in ACES makes it possible  
4 for our team to work with young people for up to four  
5 years because that's what it takes. We believe in  
6 long-term work with the young people. Currently,  
7 ACES is working with 120 young people in East Harlem  
8 and the South Bronx and we work to see each and every  
9 one of them each day in the community at least three  
10 times a week.

11 Over the past three years, the ACES team has  
12 engaged our young people in more than 3,400 program  
13 sessions, our work crew has separately supported  
14 young people to complete more than 1,500 hours of  
15 transitional employment. Of those young people in  
16 ACES who had open court cases, 85 percent have  
17 successfully fulfilled their court requirements.  
18 Every day rain or snow or shine, in fact right now as  
19 we're sitting here, my team is in the field. Thank  
20 you.

21 JACQUELYN SHELTON: Good afternoon. My name is  
22 Jacquelyn Shelton and I am a Senior Criminal Defense  
23 Attorney on the Adolescent Representation Team at  
24 Brooklyn Defender Services. Thank you Deputy Speaker  
25 Ayala and Chair Stevens for hosting this important

3 hearing. It truly is an honor to be here especially  
4 with as many youth participants as we have had.

5 Brooklyn Defender Services represents  
6 approximately 22,000 people each year who are accused  
7 of a crime or facing the removal of their children or  
8 deportation. Our adolescent team works to eliminate  
9 contact and involvement within the criminal legal  
10 system for court involved youth age 18 and under. On  
11 the adolescent team and in my time at Brooklyn  
12 Defenders, I primarily represented young people who  
13 were charged with crimes which range from  
14 misdemeanors to serious felonies. Brooklyn Defenders  
15 also represents people who are accused of abuse and  
16 neglect. While the vast majority of these cases  
17 involve allegations of neglect that stem directly  
18 from poverty, the intervention by ACS can be  
19 traumatic for parents and children alike and it does  
20 not provide the kind of support that families and  
21 children need. The same agency that investigates and  
22 prosecutes families is also overseeing our juvenile  
23 legal system and preventative service programming.

24 I am here today to urge the city to invest more  
25 deeply in programs for youth that exist outside of  
that system. In order to interrupt the foster care

3 to prison pipeline, we need deep investments into  
4 communities and families, ensuring that communities  
5 have access to stable housing, jobs, childcare,  
6 employment, after school and summer programming and  
7 education. It is critical to invest in programming  
8 outside of ACS.

9 Contact with ACS even in preventative programming  
10 increases the risk of family separation which  
11 eventually we know leads to a higher risk of criminal  
12 legal system involvement. For youth who have become  
13 entrenched in the criminal legal system.

14 Unfortunately Raise the Age legislation reform has  
15 been critical to providing services for young people,  
16 treating children as children in the family court  
17 system rather than in the criminal system.

18 This has allowed youth that are up to the age of  
19 18 to receive appropriate treatment for family court.  
20 Many of the youth that I have directly worked with  
21 and that Brooklyn Defender Services works with, have  
22 been able to benefit from programming and services in  
23 family court as the result of Raise the Age. I have  
24 personally been able to witness the transformative  
25 power that the right program for the right kid has on  
preventing further legal involvement.

3 The family court model and the work that New York  
4 has done with Raise the Age to catch New York up to  
5 the rest of the country with treating children as  
6 children is incredibly important work. Successful  
7 preventative programs and alternatives to detention  
8 and incarceration have to provide the resources that  
9 level the playing field and give young people a  
10 fighting chance. There is simply no correlation  
11 between rehabilitation and lengthy prison stays in  
12 facilities such as Crossroads and Horizons. It leads  
13 to more system involvement and more serious crime in  
14 the future.

15 We thank you for your time and hope to keep  
16 families together while providing the individualized  
17 care the families need. I welcome any questions at  
18 this time and thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. Our  
20 next panel will be Reverend Wendy Calderon Payne,  
21 David Freudenthal, Jamel Burgess, and Jeconiah  
22 Vinson.

23 REVEREND WENDY CALDERON PAYNE: Shall I start?  
24 Okay. Okay, good afternoon Chairperson Stevens and  
25 Chairperson Ayala and the members of the Youth  
Service, General Welfare Committee. You know I'm

3 Reverend Wendy with Bronx Connect and you know us and  
4 I think actually everybody knows us. Everybody who  
5 is here and so let me kind of - I'm going to skip a  
6 little bit. I will send this in. You guys know  
7 Bronx Connect. We have been serving young people in  
8 the court system. We started in Family Court in the  
9 Bronx. We expanded to Supreme Court, Criminal Court  
10 and then the Judges that took our kids, expanded us  
11 to Manhattan and then we opened up a Manhattan  
12 Connect in Taino Towers. We actually have recently  
13 opened up Staten Island Connect and we expanded into  
14 Philadelphia about three years ago right in the  
15 middle of the pandemic.

16 In addition to alternative justice programs, we  
17 do Cure Violence in three neighborhoods of the Bronx.  
18 We also do reentry and employment services because I  
19 have to just echo that employment is the most  
20 important thing to get young people out of where they  
21 are. I would love to say that education is the most  
22 important but most of our young people are reading at  
23 a 4th and 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. So, they can't actually  
24 function in college yet. Now, they can, after  
25 getting the job, make a decision to go back to  
college and that's great and we've supported them

3 through that but they need to eat. They need to make  
4 sure their families are fed and they need to be  
5 provided for. So, we really focus on employment.

6 We also focus on mental health. We were able to  
7 launch – we're part of the Atlas Youth Service  
8 Coordination program. We are in seven housing  
9 projects in the Bronx and two in Staten Island and we  
10 also have FFT, Family Functional Therapy services in  
11 the Bronx and Staten Island and Manhattan.

12 Something I wanted to say. Extensive research  
13 reveals the secure youth incarceration increases the  
14 likelihood of recidivism and harms educational  
15 attainment of our youth and of course their ability  
16 to make money. I mean we don't even need research  
17 for that. Doesn't that make sense to us? So, New  
18 York State, can you believe spends \$250,000 each year  
19 to detain a young person. All of the ATI programs  
20 across the board cost them less than ten percent of  
21 that. Plus, it keeps them in the community and it is  
22 better for them and their community.

23 Oh gosh, I'm running out of time. I wanted to  
24 say two things. This whole idea of probation, we  
25 actually have a three works plus contracts. We  
served 79 people last year. We were only supposed to

3 serve under 60. We got 54 of them jobs. Even the  
4 Works Plus is a soft skills program because in my  
5 head, it doesn't matter what you tell me, everyone  
6 needs a job. So, we get people jobs. In addition,  
7 even with those who do get OSHA or Flaggers training,  
8 which are actually high paying jobs, we got 15  
9 percent of them full time jobs, which is in the union  
10 a living wage.

11 So, I just wanted to say that we need to focus on  
12 prevention so that we don't actually have youth  
13 committing these crimes that are leading to 15 to  
14 life sentences.

15 DAVID FREUDENTHAL: Hi Chair Stevens and  
16 Committee Staff. David Freudenthal from Carnegie  
17 Hall. Very good to see you again. I am Director of  
18 Governmental Relations at Carnegie Hall. I'm joined  
19 by my colleague Jamel Burgess who is the manager of  
20 our social impact programs, leads the team, the boots  
21 on the ground doing the work in ACS. We're here to  
22 talk to you about what we're doing there and to  
23 really to highlight the - our efforts to prioritize  
24 the mental health of the entire network of young  
25 people staff. Families and teaching artists by  
building a different type of community through the



3 infusion of music, joy, creative expression, humanity  
4 and togetherness but just wanted to take this chance  
5 to talk to you briefly about the work that we've been  
6 doing in this space for a dozen years. Future music  
7 project provides hundreds of kids every year teaching  
8 young adults opportunities that are justice involved,  
9 insecure, nonsecure and congregate care.

10 Opportunities to create, perform and produce their  
11 own original music. We do workshops with young  
12 people, song writing, digital music production,  
13 fundamental musicianship skills. There are these  
14 monthly listing parties. Jamel could talk to that if  
15 you want to Jamel.

16 Uhm, the future guest artists chosen by  
17 participants that explore different genders of music.  
18 Uhm, we're going to hold a winter celebration on  
19 January 31<sup>st</sup> that's going to bring these young people  
20 together. It's our first one since 2020 that we've  
21 done live. It's our first in person. We're super  
22 excited about it. We hope that you'll come at  
23 Carnegie Hall. Look, this work is really only  
24 possible because of consistent support for arts and  
25 culture by the City Council and by the city. You  
know this money is essential for healing, for

3 resilience, for workforce development, education and  
4 public safety. You know I join my colleagues in the  
5 Cultural Institutions Group, the CIG and the entire  
6 cultural sector in calling for restoration of funding  
7 to this sector. Money to cultural affairs makes work  
8 like this possible and we really urge you to push  
9 back against the administrations two next round of  
10 cuts. I know it's not the topic of this hearing but  
11 all these things fit together. This work is part of  
12 the essential, essential services that you know the  
13 colleagues – my colleague here and all of the folks  
14 have been speaking to you about the need for really  
15 effective resources for the young people that we're  
16 trying to serve. Thank you Madam Chair and I turn to  
17 my colleague Jamel.

18 JAMEL BURGESS: Thank you. Good evening to the  
19 Chair and the Committee. I don't have a full speech,  
20 I'll be brief. I just want to acknowledge the young  
21 people who spoke earlier and just echoing everything  
22 that they said. Thank you again for coming and  
23 sharing your voices here. It's so important.  
24 Something that I'll also add is that you know in the  
25 work that we're doing, we're bringing music to these  
spaces, secure and nonsecure detention spaces. It's

3 not only just to engage in like creative arts and  
4 have this programming that some of the students have  
5 mentioned but more importantly as tools for  
6 liberation for the advancement of young people. We  
7 are restoring hope and dignity for students, young  
8 people who are in these secure settings. Regardless  
9 of how much time they are doing, they are still human  
10 and to these programs, our teaching artists are  
11 implementing and bringing that practice and framework  
12 into these spaces.

13 And so, you know we stand in solidarity with our  
14 colleagues at the organization of the young people  
15 who share to advocate for the continued advancement  
16 and investment in these programs. So, thank you.

17 DAVID FREUDENTHAL: Can I just add one more thing  
18 if I might. My apologies. Just to highlight that  
19 applications for the B-side at Carnegie Hall are now  
20 open. The B-side is a program that introduces young  
21 people to different career opportunities in the music  
22 industry. After a successful pilot last year, the  
23 dynamic program is returning in 2024 with workshops  
24 at Carnegie Hall March through June. It's for  
25 aspiring artists and future music industry leaders.  
The B-side provides essential industry related skills

3 through connections with professional artists and  
4 executives, field trips, guest speaker panels and  
5 more. The applications are open until January 4.  
6 We'd love your help in getting the word out to young  
7 people about this opportunity.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, send it over to  
9 me and we will definitely start pumping it out and  
10 making sure people know about it. And I just want to  
11 say thank you guys for always showing up and the  
12 great work that all of your organizations are doing.  
13 And I know you just said that this wasn't related but  
14 it is related because talking about preventive  
15 services is important and part of that is making the  
16 investment right and so, we have to be able to invest  
17 in programs that are working and that are keeping our  
18 kids out of trouble and not just investing when  
19 they're in trouble. So, thank you and thank you for  
20 being here.

21 DAVID FREUDENTHAL: Thank you.

22 REVEREND WENDY CALDERON PAYNE: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to this panel. Our  
24 next panel will be Dr. Rivera, Michael gross, Star  
25 Fernandez and Monet Smith.

You can begin whenever you're ready.

3 DR. XELLEX RIVERA: Good afternoon everybody.

4 Thank you to Chair Stevens and Ayala for this  
5 opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name  
6 is Dr. Xellex Rivera. I am the Chief Program Officer  
7 at Housing Solutions of New York, formally known as  
8 Bronx Parent Housing Network.

9 I want everybody to know that it sounds like I'm  
10 the only homeless provider here today, however, there  
11 are a lot of homeless youth in New York City,  
12 particularly in the Bronx location. Currently as of  
13 two days ago, there was about 1,500 street homeless  
14 youth. I currently have 4,000 in my census giving a  
15 little over 2,500 youth that are homeless within my  
16 shelter system.

17 The reason for coming today is because we wanted  
18 to make sure that everybody is aware that as a  
19 homeless provider, we are very dedicated to youth  
20 preventive services. We do have two programs that we  
21 utilize to make sure that we can somehow break  
22 generational homelessness. Therefore, as well as  
23 systemic breakthroughs. One of those programs is the  
24 Works Plus Program, which does cater to those persons  
25 with programming or reentry services. We do a system  
with resume writing, job placement and we uhm, ensure

3 that they are going into getting some of level of  
4 employment.

5 The second program is the Connections to Cares  
6 program. This one is a very unique program because  
7 we want to focus on the youth mental health, right?  
8 A lot of times we want to get them education. We  
9 want to get them a job but we never ask them how  
10 they're doing and because they're an individual and  
11 they can actually speak for themselves, we want to  
12 make sure that while you are temporarily in shelter,  
13 that you are at least getting the services. So, we  
14 partnered with local communities such as Sun River,  
15 Morris Heights to try to make sure that our youth are  
16 getting those mental health services. In addition to  
17 that, we are excited to launch a single parent  
18 program in the top of 2024. We do want to be able to  
19 not only support the youth but also those single  
20 parents while in shelter.

21 I thank you for the opportunity to come and  
22 testify on behalf of the organization.

23 MONET SMITH: Thank you for that. Hi everyone.  
24 My name is Monet Smith. I'm a Criminologist and  
25 Founder of SJI, nonprofit in Brooklyn. So, currently  
in the City of New York, we have over 500 – we spent

3 over \$500,000 per person in the city for prison and  
4 jails. We spend over \$5.8 billion for policing in  
5 our definition of public safety and revolving NYPD.  
6 Yet, we must acknowledge that these two spending  
7 deficits do not correlate to preventative public  
8 safety.

9 In fact, according to a research at NYU Law  
10 published in 2021, non- each nonprofit leads to a 1.2  
11 percent drop-in homicide rate as well as reduction in  
12 violence and crime rates. As well as the overall 60  
13 percent drop in those violence rates. We therefore  
14 must acknowledge that the issue lies in our  
15 definition of public safety. We too often make  
16 public safety and preventative services an extra-  
17 curricular activity or a side dish when it is and  
18 should be the main course. And then we complain  
19 about you know the functionality and the recidivism  
20 that we're seeing in the youth. And then the  
21 struggles that these organizations provide when we do  
22 not prioritize them in our meeting of public safety,  
23 especially in regards to the fact that they had as we  
24 heard testify from several young people today. So,  
25 we therefore must one, acknowledge that we do not put

3 preventative services as a priority as a city or as a  
4 nation.

5 We must two, realize the fault in not  
6 prioritizing preventative work as a public safety  
7 measure. We therefore must focus and expand the work  
8 of prevention through this nonprofit work. Uhm, we  
9 can do this by one, implementing the school working  
10 with DOE, I believe that was said earlier in the  
11 Council in terms of it should not just be okay, well,  
12 maybe a young person wants to do this. This should  
13 be an organized system within all of our public  
14 schools in terms of one, placed preventatively that  
15 we have young people in. So, whenever a kid is  
16 struggling in school, a teacher would automatically  
17 send them to a community service, such as these  
18 nonprofits. I myself have a nonprofit SJI Society  
19 Justice Innovation Interventions and we do this youth  
20 development work in criminal justice and  
21 incarceration reduction and crime reduction through  
22 this preventative lens. Basically with youth  
23 development, we help young people in the city  
24 discover their passion and we translate that passion  
25 to a career giving other mentors and different  
careers in the street such as myself.



3 We therefore see that as a way of closing the  
4 gaps in economic and social mobility with those  
5 communities. Yet, our organization struggles to be  
6 in spaces to do this work and have access to the  
7 youth. So, there's a direct gap in terms of the work  
8 that is being done and access to the youth and not  
9 only providing access but making it a system in what  
10 is normalized for kids to be able to access. We must  
11 realize that capital spent on these programs is  
12 capital added to our youth and this is a better  
13 return on investment than spending these dollars in  
14 prison and punitive services. So, thank you for your  
15 time. If you have any questions, contact me and I  
16 would love to work further with this. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Come through Monet with the  
18 numbers. I really appreciate that because I think  
19 sometimes you got to like have data which is why I'm  
20 always stressing in here around evaluation. So, I do  
21 appreciate that and even the conversation about  
22 access. I've been talking to a number of providers  
23 who have been saying that they have been having  
24 trouble accessing the young people and you know I  
25 think sometimes what happens is we have a lot of  
great programs and you want to hold your kids because

3 we get a lot of programs are funded because of  
4 attendance and things like that. And so, we  
5 definitely need to get to a place where we're looking  
6 at a different set of matrix to ensure that  
7 collaboration is fostered and not hindered and get  
8 out of this very scarcity mindset. So, thank you  
9 guys so much for testifying and I appreciate you  
10 both.

11 MONET SMITH: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our last in  
13 person panel will be Khamel Terry. I apologize if  
14 I'm saying your name wrong. Towaki Komatsu, Aaliyah  
15 Guillory-Nickens, Batman Who-Laughs and Psycho Wilson.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who's Batman Who-Laughs?

17 UNIDENTIFIED: She's not here right now, she  
18 stepped out.

19 KHAMEL TERRY: Hi, good afternoon. My name is  
20 Khamel Terry. I'm currently a Youth Advocate with  
21 Youth Represent and uhm, I'm currently an alumni at  
22 Exalt Youth. So, uhm, I think first things first.  
23 It's only right that you know I give you all just a  
24 personal testament of me, my background, where I've  
25 been, where I've come from and where I am today.

3 So, uhm, I grew up in Brooklyn, Bed Stuey right  
4 and uhm, just to make it very simplified, I had a lot  
5 of complications at home, which led to complications  
6 in school where I had a lot of internal family  
7 problems, right and uh because of that, you know I  
8 ended up seeking a lifestyle to fill up holes that I  
9 felt that I had in my life. Right uhm, there were so  
10 many parts in my life that I felt like was just very  
11 damaged and I looked to these different sources to  
12 begin to recover.

13 For instance, I'm going to be a little  
14 transparent here with you all. I felt like uh, I'm  
15 adopted right so with that being said, uhm I never  
16 really felt like I had a true connect with family and  
17 there was a lot of issues. So, by that, I used to go  
18 out and just you know uhm participate in gang culture  
19 because I was feeling like this was family. So, I  
20 seeked out all these different stuff, drugs, fast  
21 money because I wanted to look good because you know  
22 people would say mean things about me, right and this  
23 led to me getting arrested on multiple accounts. And  
24 this also led to me just being uhm, deemed as you  
25 know a failure, right. This is my proposed and my  
appointed future. So, with that being said, uhm, one

1 day I'm in my probation officer and my probation  
2 officer referred me to a program like Exalt  
3 Youth. So, when I came in there, I was still  
4 smoking. I was still drinking. I was still making  
5 fast and illegal money. Uhm, I was still hanging  
6 around a crowd of evil doers. So, uhm, with that  
7 being said, Excel, they offered me a core curriculum  
8 program that prioritize and emphasize on social and  
9 professional development training for young youth for  
10 six weeks. So, it was paid. So, now I had income.  
11 Now if I wanted some clothes, I could go buy some  
12 clothes. Now, when mom ain't got no food in the  
13 house, I go buy some food, right? And uhm, they also  
14 even offered opportunities for me to learn how to  
15 begin to take care of myself and start adulting as  
16 well, right?

17 So, as I sat throughout the six-week program, I  
18 began to see a whole new world that I never knew  
19 existed and uh that world showed me that living as a  
20 young professional in a place like New York City, it  
21 was possible, right?

22 So, I than began to over the course of my  
23 graduation, I began to have mentors. I began to have  
24 alumni. I began to have uhm all these different  
25

1 things that happen in my life that built me up right?  
2 Uhm, and I stopped smoking and drinking alcohol. I  
3 stopped hanging around the wrong crowd. I had ended  
4 up becoming a youth advocate. I had ended up going  
5 to a good professional background. I even worked as  
6 a youth development professional. Uhm, I'm now  
7 applying to college, right? And so much more things,  
8 so I can really testify throughout the course of my  
9 three years being at this program. I'm now a changed  
10 person with better morals, a better identity. I have  
11 never had any kind of contact or run-in's with the  
12 juvenile system for the past three years and my  
13 relationship with my family is better than ever. I  
14 even found faith, right?  
15

16 So, I would say my life is on a good trajectory.  
17 I have aspirations as well to also just working with  
18 City Council one day and I would say thank you.  
19 Overall, I'm on a good path, so I really appreciate  
20 you all just for giving me this opportunity just to  
21 share a little bit about myself and where I'm at  
22 today. So, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to say thank  
24 you for your vulnerability because you didn't have to  
25

1  
2 share what you just shared and so, we really  
3 appreciate that. Thank you.

4 AALIYAH GUILLORY-NICKENS: Good afternoon. My  
5 name is Aaliyah. I'm the current Campaign Organizer  
6 at Youth Represent, which is a nonprofit organization  
7 that provides free legal services for young people up  
8 to the age of 25 years old. I'm here today as a  
9 young person that has been blessed enough to benefit  
10 from the same programs that Adams Administration is  
11 cutting funds from. I just left their rally earlier  
12 today in front of City Hall right outside and Tuesday  
13 in front of Horizon's Detention Center with other  
14 coalition members and a bunch of young people like me  
15 calling for investments in young people rather than  
16 arresting them.

17 On one of the signs we were holding up at both of  
18 the rallies, it said, when leaders act like children,  
19 the children become leaders. We unfortunately have a  
20 leader right now that believes increasing youth  
21 detention rates is making our city safer. His  
22 current policies has led to the highest detention  
23 numbers in years, which is now leading young people  
24 in Horizons and Crossroads to be overcrowded, which  
25 is leading them to sleep on the floor.

3 That's shameful. We deserve way better and we're  
4 worth more than getting the short end of the stick.  
5 The city definitely needs to do better and get our  
6 children home. The OCFS also has a waiver that  
7 allows for issues like this to happen. We need to  
8 work as a collective to end that waiver.

9 Now, in terms of detention centers, there should  
10 be - I wish ACS was still here to hear this but in  
11 terms of detention centers, there should some type of  
12 weekly wellness checks, if this doesn't happen  
13 already. And CO's who are abusing their power and  
14 mistreating the young people there need to be fired  
15 fast and charged if anything. I now have a list of  
16 opportunities and resources young people like myself  
17 and those who are system impacted can thrive from.  
18 Again, I wish ACS was here to hear all of this.

19 First is investments and more money into programs  
20 like Exalt, Youth Justice Network, Avenues for  
21 Justice, Cases and others all organizations I know  
22 and have seen with my own eyes changed the lives of  
23 young people that walked in their door, leaving them  
24 as entrepreneurs, artists, leaders in their  
25 communities and more.

3 Then I would say getting rid of programs are seen  
4 like an extension of the DA's Office and ensuring  
5 programs provided are nurturing safe places that  
6 provide stipends, job readiness training, anger  
7 management, conflict resolution, passion/long-term  
8 goal workshops which SJI, the program that they run,  
9 they are doing that. So, you guys should tap in.  
10 Finding true literacy help, help for young parents,  
11 housing assistance and hiring staff that actually  
12 know how to work with youth. In those programs,  
13 including the ones I mentioned earlier, there should  
14 be mental health services that they can receive for  
15 free. So, a professional therapist or counselor that  
16 can sit down with the youth that are part of the  
17 program and be able to provide them with what they  
18 need.

19 The last thing about programs is that judges  
20 should be more knowledgeable on which ones that are  
21 out there, so they can actually put youth in them  
22 instead of straight sentencing them or setting bail.

23 Now, moving on to resources outside of programs,  
24 there needs to be more opportunities to make money  
25 outside of SYEP. Life doesn't stop when summer is  
over, like you still got to pay for stuff once summer



1  
2 ends. Like, there needs to be jobs and paid  
3 internships available and accessible all year around.  
4 Also, the list of things I named earlier that should  
5 be in programs should also be in public schools. I  
6 don't think that we should have to go through the  
7 system in order to get the support we need. It  
8 should be met before we even reach the system. So,  
9 that's what preventative service looks like. Thank  
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And I'm going  
12 to make sure that ACS gets - we're going to set up a  
13 meeting to meet with you because I heard you say it  
14 several times. So, we're going to create space for  
15 you. My staff is over there, make sure you give them  
16 your number and we'll set up a meeting so that they  
17 can hear your recommendations. Thank you.

18 AALIYAH GUILLORY-NICKENS: Thank you.

19 PSYCO WILSON: Mic check, oh okay, peace  
20 everybody. I might have to turn this down a bit. My  
21 name is PsycO. I'm the Youth Development Coordinator  
22 of Youth Represent. It's an acronym. It stands for  
23 Passionate. It stands for strong. It stands for  
24 young. It stands for creative and it stands for  
25

1  
2 observant. These are the ways I am and this is how I  
3 define myself.

4 When I was younger and even up until a few years  
5 ago, I've been blessed enough to be in a few  
6 different programs that have like ultimately affected  
7 the way I grow as a person. When I was younger I was  
8 in a program called the Rights of Passage which was a  
9 young men's group, a young Black men's group, a Pan-  
10 African Black man's group that taught us the  
11 importance of challenging [03:24:03], homophobia,  
12 taking pride in like our presence as Black men and  
13 being more than the systemic norms that are pressed  
14 upon us.

15 I attended a program called EXO(SP?) in which we  
16 learned how to ready ourselves for the careers and  
17 goals we want to achieve. We learned about code  
18 switching and operating in professional areas even  
19 when we weren't so professional ourselves. And we  
20 learned the importance of networking.

21 When I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I was on the high  
22 school wrestling team. I mean I was allowed to  
23 practice with the high schoolers as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader on  
24 the wrestling team and I learned what comradery was.  
25 I learned the importance of holding yourself

3 accountable, especially when you have something to  
4 represent that you don't want to lose. One of my  
5 favorite places growing up was a library. And of  
6 course it was for the books but there was never  
7 enough. See, I'm from Brownsville and as you all can  
8 assume the libraries there aren't funded well enough  
9 to have all the books that one would search or really  
10 that one would need. But what really drew me towards  
11 the library were the fact that the people there who  
12 weren't getting paid enough to even be there were  
13 taking money out of their own checks to hold  
14 programs, to create spaces for young people to come  
15 and engage.

16 They were then also opening up the pathways for  
17 these young people to then start internships and work  
18 there themselves.

19 De-investing in communities and programs means  
20 taking away places like these where youths can grow  
21 into being whoever they want. There's no shortage of  
22 smoke shops around the hoods. There's no smoke shops  
23 of police presence anywhere you go. It seems like  
24 there's no end to the budget when it comes to talking  
25 about safety and arming literal abusers in the  
streets. Yet, when it comes to providing safe

3 havens, funding programs for our youth, finding  
4 holistic ways to resolve conflicts, it seems like the  
5 city has no money. Why are schools, programs, safe  
6 places and libraries being defunded when prisons and  
7 jails continuously have like an unlimited budget? It  
8 makes no sense. You all here have good jobs that you  
9 don't want to lose. That right there alone, stops  
10 you from committing certain acts. That right there  
11 stops you from giving things - that right there -  
12 Your job is so important to you that you would then  
13 not do things that other people would have to do,  
14 would be forced to have to do simply to survive.  
15 That is the opportunity that you have because of your  
16 position. Many people where I'm from don't have  
17 those same opportunities and de-investing in their  
18 communities has further taken away those  
19 opportunities. That's all I have to say now.

20 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi, I'm Towaki Komatsu. I have  
21 testified to you many times in this room to no avail.  
22 Around this room I see empty seats. Mr. Restler, he  
23 decided to boycott our first amendment rights maybe  
24 an hour ago. Ms. Lee, same thing. People at this  
25 table, they had a bunch of great things to say.

3 With regards to one of the bills that's on the  
4 agenda for today, it's about establishing a system to  
5 obtain employment and the income, information from  
6 third parties for determinations to be made about  
7 benefits and services eligibility. That can be  
8 construed in a variety of ways, meaning if you're a  
9 politician, if you've got a job and you're an empty  
10 seat, meaning if people come to your public hearings,  
11 testify to you repeatedly about valid issues and  
12 people like Ms. Ayala choose to sit in your chair and  
13 not do a darn thing, while people like me and others  
14 suffer. Uhm, that pertains to the issue of  
15 determinations about whether they should be able to  
16 keep their jobs as a benefit and services, meaning  
17 whether voters should actually vote for them or vote  
18 them out.

19 One of these bills, uhm, there's a company called  
20 Entity Data, the second circuit issued a decision  
21 against it on Friday last week. It apparently has a  
22 track record of discriminating against people, Black  
23 people with criminal backgrounds. I filed; I got  
24 litigation against the same company about wage theft.  
25 So, about this issue about employment and income,  
it's been stealing my case since 2012. I've talked

3 to people like you repeatedly in City Hall across the  
4 street to no avail. There were public meetings like  
5 town halls, resource fairs. Rachel Artisan(SP?)  
6 worked for Mr. Adams; she illegally took me out of a  
7 public resource fair on May 23, 2017 in the Bronx  
8 Supreme Court. Uhm, Jessica Ramos, I've got the  
9 emails. She's a New York State Senator now, she also  
10 was involved in that. Howard Rebney(SP?) was the  
11 prior head of security for Bill De Blasio, he  
12 spearheaded that at the request of Steven Banks. He  
13 is now testifying about the right to shelter.

14 So, with regards to uhm yeah, employment and  
15 income information, another way to construe that is,  
16 the city is giving contracts, publicly funded  
17 contracts to companies like Urban Pathways that  
18 subjected me to a bait and switch that I testified to  
19 you about previously. So, bottom line is I've got  
20 litigation, you know about it. The reason why you  
21 know about it is because I've a pride to you about  
22 very clearly in the past.

23 On January 2<sup>nd</sup> of next year, I have two petitions  
24 for [03:29:54] to follow with the U.S. Supreme Court.  
25 Every single person in this room, if they want to,  
they can write an amicus brief to basically add their

3 two cents to be like, hey you know what? When  
4 somebody kicks the butts of a racist federal court  
5 security officer in federal court, maybe he shouldn't  
6 be in federal court after defending the guy who  
7 killed Eric Garner. I think maybe that's not really  
8 relevant here but bottom line is when you write a  
9 bill and it's vaguely described, people have a right  
10 to testify in a rational manner about you know where  
11 you're getting your information. Are you going to be  
12 getting your information from a third party like  
13 Entity Data, a business partner of the City of New  
14 York that still subjected me to wage theft while I'm  
15 sitting in this chair and while you're sitting over  
16 there. Who at the end of the day will do nothing  
17 about it.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

19 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Yup.

20 BATMAN WHO-LAUGHS: Howdy, you guys can hear me?

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes.

22 BATMAN WHO-LAUGHS: Hi, my name is Batman and I  
23 go by Batman because I don't represent Bruce Swayne.  
24 If you anything about Batman. If you don't, I'll  
25 tell you a little bit. I'm a little nervous, sorry.

3 Uhm, I consider myself the Batman Who-Laughs and  
4 not the not the original Bruce Swayne, the White man.  
5 I consider myself Afro Latina fighting for liberation  
6 of Black and Brown people by any means necessary and  
7 I call myself the Batman Who-Laughs because he still  
8 fights for justice and he was tainted by a society of  
9 evils. And even though he was still tainted, he is  
10 still is who he is and that also represents who I am  
11 and what I believe in and what I do.

12 I'm also a representative of Youth Justice, Youth  
13 Represent, my bad. Youth Represent uhm, youth  
14 justice as well as trying to get a bill passed. Uhm,  
15 and what I do is I do face painting and blue animals  
16 for children. I'm a mobile child entertainer and I  
17 got into doing this when I was in high school and  
18 middle school and because I realized that art and  
19 expressing myself was a way to connect with other  
20 people and express myself.

21 I wanted other people and other kids my age to  
22 fill the same, what I felt like could have been  
23 something that could have encouraged me to stay off  
24 bad energy that was clearly evident around my  
25 neighborhood, that wanted me to be around. People  
that wanted me to smoke and do bad things but I had



3 certain programs that I was able to get into and make  
4 sure that I was making a positive impact on myself,  
5 my family and my community.

6 I was also part of another organization called,  
7 Black Voices Matter and we helped promote little kids  
8 from around the neighborhood find a place where they  
9 can come and be themselves, as well as other families  
10 and other abolitionists could come and talk about  
11 community and what we could do to improve the  
12 community as well as help these kids.

13 I would also like to point different activities  
14 we had. Everything is free. Our face painting for  
15 the kids, we would go out, we would knock on some  
16 doors. We would help find you know whatever  
17 resources these families may have needed and bring  
18 them together. We had talent shows for the kids. We  
19 had self-defense courses for the kids and we had  
20 reading and poetry and many other programs and the  
21 kids kept coming and they loved it and it gave them  
22 something to look forward to.

23 And I know this made an impact on these kids  
24 because I would go in the neighborhoods on a day we  
25 didn't have a program and they would recognize me.  
They would say, "Hey Batman, are you doing face

3 painting today? Where are you?" And that brought so  
4 much joy to my heart because I know this work that we  
5 do matters so much and these kids look up to you and  
6 they're the future and if we are not there for them  
7 then the future is gone.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I really, really appreciate  
9 you guys. One, for not only being at the rally but  
10 staying and giving your testimony and I'd like to say  
11 young people aren't the future, they're the now,  
12 right? Like every moment that has ever been done in  
13 the United States has been led by young people. And  
14 so, we have to continue to make space for you guys to  
15 lead that fight and give you the support and guidance  
16 and I think so often we forget that. And so, thank  
17 you guys for the work that you guys. Ms. Monet,  
18 these are your children? These are all your young  
19 people from your program?

20 Oh, okay, because I know they said - okay, well  
21 you guys are doing great work and I really, really  
22 appreciate you all and please make sure you give your  
23 contact information to my staff.

24 MONET SMITH: I just want to add one more thing.  
25 There's other young people back there. They were too  
shy to testify but they're all looking for jobs if

3 you all are hiring or internship positions.

4 Everybody in here is looking for jobs by the way.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All the young people across  
6 the city is looking for a job because we're at 21  
7 percent and so I am working on figuring out how do we  
8 reimagine unemployment for young people between the  
9 ages of 16 and 21 we're at the highest number that  
10 we've ever been and it's unacceptable. So, that's  
11 definitely something as you've shared that I'm really  
12 working and trying to push and raise the alarms.

13 So, like I said, please give your information to  
14 my staff and we'll definitely continue to have the  
15 conversation about how do we continue to push the  
16 fight.

17 MONET SMITH: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And young people, you don't  
19 have to testify. Your presence being here speaks  
20 volumes. So, thank you for showing up for those who  
21 did not testify.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes our in-person  
23 testimony. If we missed anyone who would like to  
24 testify in person, please visit the Sergeants table  
25 and complete a witness slip now.

3 We're going to be moving to remote testimony.

4 For our virtual panelists, once your name is called,  
5 a member of our staff will unmute you and the  
6 Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give you the  
7 go ahead to begin.

8 Our first remote panel is going to be Bishop  
9 Mitchell Taylor, Darren Mack, Sharon Harpaz (SP?),  
10 Anthony Robinsen and Judith Harris. Bishop Mitchell  
11 Taylor, you may begin when the Sergeant starts your  
12 clock.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 BISHOP MITCHELL TAYLOR: Thank you to Council  
15 Member Diana Ayala and Council Member Althea Stevens,  
16 the Chairs and to all of the Council Members that  
17 have participated, to all of the panels that spoke  
18 before me. Very inspiring and very important topics  
19 that we are covering on today, so I applaud the  
20 Chairs of this Committee for creating this space.

21 My name is Bishop Mitchell Taylor and I am  
22 attending today's hearing to outline a comprehensive  
23 outreach and service model that has the capacity to  
24 prevent youth in our city's most disadvantaged  
25 neighborhoods from becoming trapped in cycles of

3 violence and the justice system, which there is not  
4 much justice in.

5 The core tenants of this model are as follows:  
6 viable and supportive pathways to success, credible  
7 messengers, and community support for success.

8 Growing up in the Queensbridge Houses, the nation's  
9 largest public housing development in the country and  
10 in my 36 years as a pastor for residents of Western  
11 Queens and beyond, I have seen the effects of  
12 violence and justice system involved on lower income  
13 Black and Brown communities.

14 20 years ago, I co-founded an organization called  
15 the East River Development Alliance, now known as  
16 Urban Upbound, to scale-up and operationalize  
17 successful strategies and support systems that  
18 despite the odds exist organically in public housing  
19 communities will break those cycles. The first  
20 pillar of this model, viable and supportive pathways  
21 to success, involves offering youth in our  
22 communities a comprehensive suite of services, giving  
23 them the tools they need to overcome any and all of  
24 the pre-determinants to involvement in violence and  
25 the justice system.

3 At Urban Upbound, our services include workforce  
4 development, career development, one-on-one financial  
5 counseling, youth and academic development, college  
6 access, worker cooperative development, small  
7 business support, tax preparation, benefits access,  
8 mental health counseling, and banking inclusion,  
9 that's all anchored by the Urban Upbound Federal  
10 Credit Union. We cannot expect our most at-risk  
11 youth to pursue higher education or vocational  
12 careers, to think about credit scores and savings  
13 plans, all while ignoring the violence around them,  
14 unless we outline and guide them step by step to a  
15 vision of career, financial success, and personal  
16 development that they can believe in. None of these  
17 things are novel when they stand individually but  
18 when you can comprehensively integrate them on  
19 campuses, like Urban Upbound, it becomes magical.

20 The second pillar of this model involves credible  
21 messengers, hinges on community outreach and  
22 engagement conducted by credible messengers.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 BISHOP MITCHELL TAYLOR: Outreach staff are  
25 credible when they come from the same or similar  
communities that they are conducting outreach to.

3 This model necessitates that outreach staff, often  
4 youth themselves, be given time and space to  
5 participate in the same programs that they are  
6 pitching to their fellow community members. This  
7 model does not work unless outreach staff believe in  
8 the programs they are promoting. At Urban Upbound,  
9 we encourage our outreach staff, each of whom are  
10 credible messengers, to pursue greater career heights  
11 everywhere opportunity lands. The stories of their  
12 successes are worth more than hundreds of hours of  
13 flyering, tabling, talking to residents, finding the  
14 problems, and offering solutions.

15 Furthermore, when community organizers, Resident  
16 Associations, nonprofit organizations, faith leaders  
17 come together to promote a growing number of success  
18 stories, both big and small, and collectively support  
19 our youth in their career, financial, and personal  
20 development journeys, that is called community  
21 support for success. This neighborhood buy-in is key  
22 in disadvantaged neighborhoods where many of our  
23 young people are desperately depending on them to  
24 show up.

25 I want to take this time to thank Urban Upbound's  
partners in government who have supported the opening

3 of Urban Upbound offices and pop-up spaces in the  
4 districts they represent. I welcome any and all of  
5 you to join me at Urban Upbound's multi-building  
6 campuses in and around the Queensbridge Houses and  
7 around the City of New York and for discussion about  
8 Urban Upbound's model of serving and supporting at-  
9 risk youth.

10 Thank you Speaker Adams, Deputy Speaker, General  
11 Welfare Chair Ayala, Youth Services Chair Althea  
12 Stevens, and participating Council Members for  
13 holding today's important hearing and for allowing me  
14 to give this very important testimony. Thank you so  
15 much.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
17 Darren Mack, you may begin when the Sergeant starts  
18 your clock.

19 DARREN MACK: Hi. Good evening and thank you  
20 Chair Stevens and Committee Members for allowing me  
21 to testify today and thank you to all the youth who  
22 organize and mobilized today outside of City Hall to  
23 call on our city leaders to invest don't arrest our  
24 way out to community safety.

25 My name is Darren Mack and I am a Codirector at  
Freedom Agenda, which is a member led organization



3 dedicated to organizing people and communities  
4 directly impacted by incarceration to achieve  
5 decarceration and system transformation. First I want  
6 to say you know since January 2022, under this  
7 mayoral administration, there has been a rise of  
8 incarceration of our youth. Actually according to  
9 the Gothamist, they wrote that youth detention  
10 numbers citywide have soared in the past two years  
11 from 987 admissions in 2021 to 1,775 in 2022 and this  
12 is according to city data.

13 Earlier during this hearing, it was mentioned by  
14 agency staff members, they mentioned the Mayor's  
15 blueprint to gun violence and there are some good  
16 things in that blueprint but there are also some bad  
17 things. And one example of a negative thing is that  
18 it calls for the rollbacks to Raise the Age and to  
19 actually recharge 16- to 17-year-olds as adults  
20 specifically for gun charges if they don't tell who  
21 they received the gun from. And this is something  
22 that we know that you know this mayor has you know  
23 advocated for or lobbied for and that's not a good  
24 thing because New York and North Carolina were the  
25 only two states in this country that was charged with  
16- and 17-year-olds as adult. And that's a shame

3 you know especially for New York calling itself a  
4 progressive city.

5 But you know I believe like in the Next Steps  
6 program, mentoring program that offers mentoring and  
7 community support services to youth ages 16 to 24, in  
8 15 different New York City housing authority  
9 developments through our city. And unfortunately  
10 this mayoral administration made cuts to that. These  
11 are the same NYCHA developments that you know that  
12 the Mayor's blueprint to gun violence are doing the  
13 work to try to end gun violence. So, I don't  
14 understand why a program like Next Steps will be cut.

15 Also, the Intensive Mentoring Parents and  
16 Children Together program impact, you know that was  
17 cut. And uhm and that's a shame and I believe that  
18 these two programs funding should be restored. So,  
19 how one of the ways it could be restored, you know  
20 the City Council could save \$200 million just from  
21 eliminating the funding to DOC vacancies that are not  
22 being filled for several reasons and one of them is  
23 because no one wants to work on Rikers Island.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time has  
25 expired.

3 DARREN MACK: But \$200 million can be saved for  
4 eliminating these DOC vacancies and we could restore  
5 all the programs and services you know in our  
6 communities which is most needed and you know these  
7 services and programs not only need to be restored  
8 but actually more funded, so it could have the impact  
9 that we need to offramp people from incarceration and  
10 to close the pipeline that feed Rikers. Thank you so  
11 much for having this hearing today and thank you so  
12 much for letting me testify.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
14 Sharron, you may begin when the Sergeant starts your  
15 clock.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 SHARON HARPAZ: Hi, sorry, I wasn't unmuted.  
18 Good afternoon Chair Stevens, Chair Ayala, and the  
19 members of the Committees. Thank you for allowing me  
20 to testify on behalf of JCCA and the youth and  
21 families we serve. My name is Sharon Harpaz and I am  
22 the Director of Second Chance over at JCAA. I have  
23 worked at the agency approximately ten years starting  
24 as a preventive worker for high-risk families and I  
25 now supervise and provide children with individual  
therapy and family advocacy. JCCA works about 17,000

3 children and families each year, providing mental and  
4 behavioral health services, foster care, provide  
5 educational assistance.

6 Second Chances is JCCA's name for our Court  
7 Involved Youth Mental Health initiative, a program  
8 that is funded by the City Council. Thank you.

9 Second Chances identifies youth between the ages of  
10 12 and 17 with mental health and behavioral needs who  
11 are court involved or have behavioral indicators for  
12 court involvement. They try to make these  
13 identifications as early as possible. The program  
14 consists of free mental health counseling,  
15 educational support, substance abuse referrals,  
16 family support services, work readiness support and  
17 advocacy.

18 Not only are services offered to youth who have  
19 already entered the system, but JCCA considers  
20 referrals for youth who are at risk for involvement,  
21 thereby intervening with young people at the crucial  
22 early stages. When avoiding detention, and even  
23 avoiding juvenile justice system entirely is still  
24 possible.

25 Second Chances also provides a stipend-based work  
readiness program called Make it Work, which

3 successfully prepares youth to enter the workforce.

4 Due to building a positive reputation and countless

5 outreach connections, Make it Work is extremely

6 successful. Often having 60 or more applicants for

7 only 15 open spots per cycle. They provide three

8 cycles at Make it Work each year. We get referrals

9 from a variety of sources, such as probation, ACS,

10 schools, hospitals, other nonprofit agencies. We

11 have been exceeding both of our targets of 68 intakes

12 every year and 80 outreach attempts.

13 One important aspect of Second Chance is that we

14 do not require insurance. Allowing us to work with

15 undocumented and migrant youth who comprise

16 approximately 10 to 15 percent of the youth we serve.

17 Additionally, we work with families who need help

18 navigating the system to enroll in Medicaid. Setting

19 them up for additional services beyond Second

20 Chances.

21 90 percent of the youth that had been previously

22 involved with the juvenile justice system do not have

23 any new participating in Second Chances. Many youth

24 go on to finding a part-time employment -

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time is expired.

SHARON HARPAZ: What? Time? Did you say time?

3 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, that was time.

4 SHARON HARPAZ: Okay, I'll just wrap this up. We  
5 greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify at this  
6 hearing and look forward to collaborating to help New  
7 York City's at-risk youth to receive needed services  
8 to move beyond the juvenile justice involvement with  
9 the skill set and support to achieve their goals.  
10 Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
12 Anthony, you may begin when the Sergeant starts your  
13 clock.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 ANTHONY ROBINSON: Thank you Chair. Good  
16 afternoon Chair Stevens, Chair Ayala and members of  
17 the Committee of Youth Services. My name is Anthony  
18 Robinson and I am a perfect example of how these  
19 services that we're advocating for today are crucial  
20 and important. Myself, being a former foster youth,  
21 now turn Artist Program Coordinator here at JCCA. I  
22 understand the need in more so the work that we do  
23 with our children providing working experience,  
24 educational goals, mentoring and coaching to build up  
25 our community. JCCA works with about 17,000 New York  
City children and families each year providing

3 residential preventative services of behavioral and  
4 mental health. Our Arches program, which is funded  
5 by the Department of Probation, serves justice  
6 involved youth in the South Bronx. Our program is  
7 fairly new but we're already making strides in these  
8 young peoples lives. With 20 applicants, we already  
9 have secured four with employment, two with housing  
10 resources, and the remaining 12 with other supports  
11 that they need and identified in areas.

12 My main profession is to work with children and  
13 adolescents. I found that all efforts in juvenile  
14 justice involvement are stemmed due to their past  
15 actions. Young people should not be judged solely on  
16 their biggest mistakes in their lives. My colleagues  
17 and I look at these factors that led them - led our  
18 clients into contact with the justice system and many  
19 of these young people in our Arches program live in a  
20 low-income, under resourced communities with a lack  
21 of positive opportunities can lead to the development  
22 of negative behaviors. Many of the adolescents that  
23 we work with are young parents, unemployed and face  
24 housing instability and substance misuse.

25 These situations naturally create stress and  
anxiety in our participants. I found that connecting

3 with young people through community resources that  
4 address their needs often resolve these issues and  
5 lead them to become less justice involved.

6 Our mentors serve as credible messengers to our  
7 youth and offer guidance that deal with legal issues  
8 in their complex situations. Because they were  
9 formerly justice involved their self, our mentors  
10 with experience is directly relevant to the situation  
11 that many of our participants face and helps us build  
12 trust.

13 [03:52:12] these challenges cannot be taught in a  
14 classroom and our credible messengers came out and  
15 choose to move forward with guidance and support.  
16 While at Arches, I have seen how impactful these  
17 services can be for justice involved people and to -  
18 I'm sorry, and to - I'm sorry.

19 And not alone -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

21 ANTHONY ROBINSON: Sorry. Thank you for your  
22 time Council Members. I appreciate it.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
24 Judith, you may begin when the Sergeant starts your  
25 clock.

26 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.



3 JUDITH HARRIS: Uhm -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We can hear you.

5 JUDITH HARRIS: Okay, I just am getting my video,  
6 I'm sorry. Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is  
7 Judith Harris and I am an Attorney with the Legal Aid  
8 Society, Juvenile Rights practice, including 15 years  
9 representing youth in juvenile delinquency  
10 proceedings in the Bronx Family Court.

11 I want to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and Chair  
12 Stevens for holding this important hearing, as well  
13 as the meaningful and moving testimony from the young  
14 people. I refer you to our written testimony but I  
15 will discuss some of the highlights.

16 New York City has the know-how to reduce the  
17 number of youth who become involved in the juvenile  
18 and criminal legal systems. The majority of Black  
19 and Brown teens who come from under resourced  
20 communities in schools. What we need is the  
21 political will to adequately fund comprehensive  
22 preventative services as well as increased  
23 alternatives to detention and incarceration programs.

24 First, we must target services to at-risk youth  
25 through data showing which communities and schools  
have the highest arrest rates. Then, we must provide

3 needed services early to youth in these areas  
4 starting with young adolescents when risk taking  
5 behaviors take off. These services would include  
6 expanded access to mentors, mental health services,  
7 educational supports and jobs, jobs, jobs. Studies  
8 have shown that anywhere between 40 to 80 percent of  
9 incarcerated youth have a mental health diagnosis.  
10 Yet too few teens have sufficient access to mental  
11 health services.

12 Studies show that students are 21 times more  
13 likely to seek support for mental health issues at  
14 school rather than at a community-based clinic and  
15 that school based mental health services reduce  
16 racial disparities and access to mental healthcare.  
17 Funding should be continued for programs like the  
18 mental health continuum, which works in 50 high needs  
19 schools in Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx.

20 With regard to employment, one idea is to expand  
21 the Summer Youth Employment Program, SYEP to a year-  
22 round program, increase the payment rate to youth and  
23 add more jobs for younger teens. This expansion  
24 would be a preventative measure. Further studies  
25 shows that preventative services and alternatives to  
detention and incarceration programs work. They work

3 to increase public safety and reduce recidivism. We  
4 must educate judges and prosecutors and the public  
5 about the success of these programs and ensure that  
6 there's adequate funding. This is especially  
7 essential when there are children having to sleep in  
8 classrooms and who are deprived of true living areas  
9 in secure detention.

10 Where there is a will, there is a way to provide  
11 increased preventative services and alternative  
12 programs. Thank you for your time.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.  
14 Our next panel will be Victor Herrera. Victor, you  
15 may begin when the Sergeant starts your clock.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 VICTOR HERRERA: Hello?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We hear you.

19 VICTOR HERRERA: I'm sorry, my name is Victor  
20 Herrera. You call can hear me? Can you all hear me?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yeah, go ahead.

22 VICTOR HERRERA: Okay, my name is Victor Herrera.  
23 I'm actually providing testimony on behalf of my  
24 sister, her name is Peggy Herrera and which I support  
25 in regards similar circumstances, my nephew. Just  
give me a second, I'm trying to pull it up.

3 I wasn't sure whether you had called me already.

4 Okay, here it goes. Thank you, Chair Stevens and  
5 Chair Ayala for holding a hearing on preventative  
6 services for at-risk and justice involved youth.

7 My name is Peggy Herrera, and I'm a member of  
8 Freedom Agenda. This is an issue of great importance  
9 to me. I have decades of experience working as a  
10 counselor with court-involved youth, in limited  
11 secure placements and group homes. I am also the  
12 mother of a young man who struggled with mental  
13 health and trauma after the death of his father, and  
14 who was targeted by and caught up in the criminal  
15 punishment system before his life was tragically  
16 ended by gun violence last year.

17 Over the years, I have worked with many young  
18 people, including my own son, who have previously  
19 been in Crossroads, Horizon, or even Rikers. I can  
20 say without a doubt that they are not getting any of  
21 the attention, resources, or support they need in  
22 those settings. How can our city put young people in  
23 conditions that further traumatize them, and then  
24 expect them to come out and do better? When they  
25 come to us from the juvenile detention centers, we  
have to undo so much harm. I remember a young man

1 coming to us saying "I'm a criminal, I should be on  
2 Rikers." The only thing he learned in those settings  
3 was how to make a weapon. But in his time with us,  
4 he's learned real life skills. I've watched him be  
5 able to navigate through frustrating situations where  
6 he wanted to respond with violence but told me  
7 instead "I'm using my skills." When he leaves our  
8 group home, he wants to do music, and he's excited  
9 about this future.  
10

11 Even when they have done wrong, these kids are  
12 worth investing in. We can do that when they are in  
13 smaller programs where they can truly build  
14 relationships. But there is much more we could be  
15 doing and should be doing to get them the resources  
16 they need, to keep them safe and well in their  
17 communities before they ever interact with police or  
18 courts. What they need is not that complicated.  
19 They need quality mental health curriculum and  
20 counselors in their schools. They need safe places  
21 to be at. They need access to good jobs, including  
22 the option to learn a trade.

23 We also need to support families and parents. So  
24 often I see that kids who get into trouble are the  
25 kids who are living in poverty. They might start

3 skipping school because they don't have what others  
4 have, and they're struggling with not being accepted,  
5 and maybe being afraid of being bullied. If they  
6 find someone who can offer them food, money, or  
7 protection, they get caught up. Instead of arresting  
8 them and funneling them into this juvenile detention  
9 to prison pipeline, can our city just finally commit  
10 to make sure all of our kids have the resources and  
11 opportunities they deserve?

12 In a city as wealthy as ours, where money seems  
13 to fall out of the sky whenever police or jail guards  
14 ask for it, we have the resources to do it, we just  
15 have to act like the lives of all kids matter. We  
16 need money to magically show up to meet their needs  
17 too.

18 The Mayor seems set on undoing so much of the  
19 progress we made to keep kids out of -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is  
21 expired.

22 VICTOR HERRERA: Juvenile detention, and we need  
23 the strong support of the City Council to fight for  
24 the resources they need and deserve. Thank you.  
25 Peggy Herrera and Victor Herrera. Thank you City  
Council.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. That concludes  
4 our remote testimony. If we missed anyone who would  
5 like to testify virtually, please use the raise hand  
6 function in Zoom and we'll call on you in the order  
7 of hands raised.

8 Seeing no one else, I would like to note that  
9 written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by  
10 Committee Staff may be submitted to the record up to  
11 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing  
12 it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). And I'll turn it  
13 back to the Chairs for closing statements.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I just want to say  
15 again, I was elated at how many young people showed  
16 up today to testify to talk about the quality of  
17 programming. It has been literally one of the dreams  
18 that I've had to make young people feel included and  
19 heard in this process. And so, once again, I just  
20 wanted to echo that I am elated that so many young  
21 people, not only was outside at the rally but stayed  
22 for the entire hearing and testified and had  
23 recommendations of what they would like to see. So,  
24 that is a trend in the right direction and as we  
25 continue to think about how do we prevent young  
people from entering into the juvenile justice

1 system, which is just as important because once they  
2 get there, we have already done – have not done our  
3 job. So, I want us to continue to keep that focus  
4 and making sure that we're investing in our kids on  
5 the front end so we don't have to invest in them on  
6 the backend. And with that, this hearing is  
7 adjourned. [Gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date JANUARY 11, 2024