



Testimony

of

**Priya Nair, Executive Director
NYC Commission on Gender Equity**

before the

**New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity**

on

Oversight – The State of Gender Equity in NYC

Friday, February 27, 2026

250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing Room 2



Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Farías and Members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

I am Priya Nair, the Executive Director for the New York City Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). I am honored to bring nearly a decade of experience advancing inclusive, mission-driven policy across New York State and City government. I am joined today by Commissioner Saloni Sethi from the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) and Executive Director Nathifa Forde from NYC Her Future.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the state of gender equity in New York City with the Council’s Committee on Women and Gender Equity and to update you on CGE’s achievements, current projects, and our plans for the future.

The Commission on Gender Equity

Established in 2015 and codified in the charter in 2016, CGE works to advance gender equity for both the city’s workforce and the communities we serve. CGE serves an advisory role in city government, uplifting key issues and making recommendations to the administration to reduce inequities facing women, girls, transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, and non-binary New Yorkers. Through policy and advocacy, data-driven reports and publications, interagency collaboration, and public education and engagement, CGE works to strengthen gender equity for New Yorkers across our three focus areas: Economic Justice, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety.

The Mayor’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice

CGE is a part of the NYC Mayor’s Office of Equity & Racial Justice (MOERJ) along with three other innovative offices and commissions. Launched in October 2023, MOERJ is the city's centralized equity office, and we take an intersectional approach to advancing change across our city. Under the new leadership of Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner Afua Atta-Mensah, I look forward to continuing our strong partnership to ensure that gender equity is not advanced in isolation, but is understood as interconnected to race, class, ability, age, and other identities.

Recent CGE Accomplishments

Since joining CGE in July, I have hit the ground running and worked closely with our committed team of 10 staff to strengthen CGE’s impact.

- We reinvigorated our Commission – which is a group of leading gender equity experts who advise CGE on its work. By appointing seven new members and bringing long-serving members to the table for dynamic and in-person meetings, CGE energized its key stakeholders who are trusted messengers in the field.



- As experienced conveners, we drove forward the work of the task forces and boards that we lead, including the Sexual Health Education Task Force, the Marshall Plan for Moms Task Force, and the Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board, which we co-chair with ENDGBV.
 - These task forces and boards are crucial opportunities to center New Yorkers' lived experiences and to ensure that communities can directly shape government decision-making.
 - We are particularly proud of the annual public meeting we held with ENDGBV in December as part of the Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board. The powerful panel with speakers from Caribbean Equality Project, New York Transgender Advocacy Group, and Planned Parenthood of Greater New York expanded the conversation about street harassment. It is not only a gender-based violence issue, but one that affects many different New Yorkers, particularly in this political landscape.
- As trusted policy experts, we used our voice to advocate for gender equity issues and stand up for vulnerable New Yorkers.
 - We published the 2025 Guide for Women and TGNBNCI Workers Considering Nontraditional Careers, which includes recommendations for city government and employers to better support women and transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex workers in fields historically dominated by men.
 - When the federal government continued its relentless campaign against trans communities, we came out with a public statement and supported the city's public comments condemning the harmful attacks on gender-affirming care.
- Meaningful community engagement continues to anchor our efforts. With costs rising and New Yorkers struggling, we hosted an impactful outdoor resource fair to meet New Yorkers' everyday needs. And we launched the first session of our Gender Equity Workshop Series, which is designed to engage New Yorkers in an interactive way about gender equity issues, tools, and action.
- Finally, we remained committed to advancing gender equity not only externally for the city's residents, but also internally for the city's workforce.
 - We launched the city's first-ever pay equity study with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to examine gender and racial wage gaps and occupational segregation across city job titles.
 - Just last month, CGE launched a mentorship pilot program, which aims to develop emerging leaders and gender equity champions within the city's workforce.
 - And, through trainings, workshops, webinars, and an annual conference, we continue to support city agencies in embedding gender equity in their policies, programs, and operations.

The Mamdani Administration

CGE is grateful to do this work with the support of the new administration and Mayor Mamdani. In the first 57 days, the Mamdani administration has taken swift action on economic justice, public infrastructure, child care, and housing, all issues that intersect with gender equity.



- For the first time ever, new providers have been invited to join 2-K programs, a step toward universal child care. New providers have also been invited to join 3-K for the first time in five years. At a moment when women with young children are exiting the workforce at a record pace, we know New Yorkers are ready for change: In a two-week period, more than 50,000 families applied for 3-K and Pre-K. Applications are open through today, Friday, February 27.¹
- To improve quality of life on our streets, the city issued a request for proposals (RFP) to bring modular public restrooms to NYC. In and of itself, increased bathroom access helps people of all genders navigate our city more comfortably. Specifically, this RFP asks applicants to address a number of gender equity priorities: Period product dispensers, corner mirrors for safety, and family-friendly features such as changing tables and space for strollers.
- Finally, the administration has prioritized housing and tenant protections from day one. Mayor Mamdani has revitalized the Office to Protect Tenants, held landlords accountable through vigorous enforcement, and will hold Rental Rip-Off hearings in each borough to hear directly from New York City renters. Stable, safe, well-maintained housing allows us all, including LGBTQ+ elders, parents with small children, and caretakers in multigenerational homes, to not only remain, but thrive, in this city.

Landscape of Gender Inequities

Pay Inequities and Occupational Segregation

Despite all this progress, stubborn gender inequities and unfairness persist, depriving women, girls, and transgender New Yorkers of the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest.

On pay equity, progress is so slow that the time to reach parity is now measurable in generations: If progress continues at the same pace it has in recent years, it will take until 2088 to reach pay equity between all working women and men.² For Latinas, it will be over 4 generations (until 2160) to reach parity with white men, for Black women, over 5 generations (until 2183), and for American Indian/Alaskan Native women, it will be over 11 generations (until 2393) to reach pay parity.

Women workers, especially women of color, are disproportionately concentrated in lower-paying occupations, which tend to offer fewer benefits, less flexibility, and limited access to paid leave. Largely due to occupational segregation, there are harmful gaps in what women are paid compared to men. In New York State in 2024, women workers' wages were approximately 78% of men's.³ New York's women of color face even larger pay disparities. When compared to what all working white men were paid on average in 2024, Asian women were paid 70%,⁴ Black women 63%,⁵ Latinas

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michelletravis/2026/01/29/women-exiting-workforce-at-record-pace-new-catalyst-data-reveals-why/>

² <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/The-Generational-Wage-Gap-Pay-Equity-Decades-Away-for-Women-Overall-Centuries-Away-for-Women-of-Color-QF-2025.pdf>

³ <https://nwlc.org/resource/wage-gap-state-by-state/>

⁴ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Wage-Gap-State-by-State-Asian-Women-2.12.2025.pdf>

⁵ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Wage-Gap-State-by-State-Black-Women-2.12.2025.pdf>



51%⁶, and Indigenous women 46%.⁷ These race and ethnicity gaps mirrored those nationally.⁸ Across the state, working mothers also face a “motherhood penalty,” with their wages being 65% of that of fathers, who experience a “fatherhood bonus.”

Pay gaps are worse for women with disabilities, who nationally are paid just 56 cents for every dollar paid to men who do not have a disability.⁹ For transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex people data remains limited. A report from New York State indicates that employment discrimination remains a common experience for these workers, including termination.¹⁰ However, the lack of comprehensive data obscures the full scope of inequities that workers face.

Health Care and Street Safety

While New York offers significant health care protections to patients and providers, we reside in one of only four countries in the world to have rolled back reproductive rights since 1994.¹¹ We know that the ongoing attacks on gender-affirming health care follow the same harmful playbook as attacks on abortion access, making it an especially alarming time for anyone, particularly young people, who needs this care. At the same time, for both patients and providers, gender and racial discrimination worsen experiences and outcomes in health care settings; one of the clearest examples is the city’s ongoing maternal mortality crisis, where discrimination is a contributing factor in half of pregnancy-associated deaths.¹²

Meanwhile, as federal actions exacerbate rising health care costs, even insured New Yorkers increasingly delay or forgo care due to cost and fears around medical debt; this leads to worse health outcomes.¹³ While health care affordability and access impacts people in every community, LGBTQ+ people report being significantly more worried about paying for medical bills than non-LGBTQ+ people, and women, especially Latinas and Black women, report higher levels of concern than men.¹⁴

Feeling safe on city streets and public transportation also remains a challenge. The Street Harassment Prevention Advisory Board’s survey, which more than 3,700 New Yorkers participated in, found that 7 out of 10 respondents reported experiencing street harassment in New York City. Concerningly, more than half of respondents reported that it began when they were a minor. And, after a street harassment incident, half of respondents changed their regular route or commute, and almost 30% considered moving out of New York City entirely.¹⁵

⁶ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Wage-Gap-State-by-State-Latina-Women-2.12.2025.pdf>

⁷ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Wage-Gap-State-by-State-Indigenous-Women-2.12.2025.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://nwlc.org/resource/wage-gap-disabled-women/#:~:text=Over%203.9%20million%20disabled%20women,dollar%20paid%20to%20disabled%20men.>

¹⁰ <https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/tgncnb-report-pdf-version-1.pdf>

¹¹ <https://reproductiverights.org/news/us-a-global-outlier-on-abortion-rights/>

¹² <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/csi/gender-racial-equity-advisory-board-report-2025.pdf>

¹³ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/paying-more-getting-less-rising-health-care-costs-poor-outcomes-and-harmful-federal-policy-decisions-are-putting-new-yorkers-at-risk/>

¹⁴ <https://19thnews.org/2025/10/medical-bills-health-care-cost-polling/>

¹⁵ <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/genderequity/downloads/pdf/2024-Street-Harassment-Survey-Report.pdf>



Given the significant rollbacks of human rights protections that disproportionately impact the communities CGE serves, and the ongoing effort to cut off federal dollars from a range of initiatives that support equity, our work is as urgent as ever. Even this high-level overview on just a few issues in CGE's focus areas demonstrate how far we still have to go.

The Future of CGE

As we look ahead to our future, CGE will continue building on our progress, learn from the past, and promote a more gender equitable city in every borough, for every New Yorker.

- **Appoint Chair of Commission:** One of my priorities this year is naming the CGE Chair. The Chair serves as an important liaison between me and the commission members, engaging with members about their priorities and advising us on gender equity issues and commission governance. I look forward to this appointment, which will help advance gender equity and continue to energize commission members about our work ahead.
- **Develop CGE's New Strategic Plan:** In order to ensure that, over its next decade, CGE is both steadfast in our vision for New York City and adaptable to new circumstances, we have begun the process of developing a strategic plan. CGE has not created a strategic plan since 2018. Given both the opportunities and challenges of this moment, this is the right time to chart our course. In late 2025, CGE began this process, tapping into our community, commission members, and other city partners. We are committed to ensuring the process of developing the strategic plan reflects the values and lived experiences of our city, and we look forward to including the City Council, including the three council members who serve as commission members, in that work this year.
- **Celebrate CGE's 10-Year Anniversary:** Throughout the year, we will celebrate the first decade of CGE, including by co-hosting 10 bystander intervention trainings to directly engage communities across New York City. In addition to helping train New Yorkers to respond to harassment, we will expand our workshop series where students learn about gender equity topics in an interactive and engaging way. We will also organize our third community resource fair, building on the success of the one in Corona, Queens last year, where we brought together more than 40 city agencies and organizations to connect New Yorkers directly to needed services. Further, we will continue to be a presence at dozens of events throughout the city, meeting people where they are and empowering New Yorkers to advocate for gender equity in their own lives.
- **Publish the Marshall Plan for Moms Report:** As chair of the Marshall Plan for Moms Task Force, CGE will publish the Marshall Plan for Moms report later this year. After publication, CGE will continue convening the task force to support its recommendations to improve the lives of working mothers and caregivers.
- **Co-host a Period Drive with NYC Her Future:** In May, in celebration of Period Action Day, CGE and NYC Her Future will host a period product drive in Staten Island with a local partner to advance menstrual equity and public health across New York City. The event will distribute free period products, wellness supplies, and health education to hundreds of New Yorkers, centering communities most impacted by period poverty and health inequities.



- **Publish final report of the Sexual Health Education Task Force:** As chair of this task force, CGE has guided the three co-chairs – New York City Public Schools, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Children’s Aid – and the interdisciplinary membership through the first year of work. This year, CGE will continue to convene the group as we move toward publishing our final report and recommendations.
- **Continue pay equity study of the city government workforce:** As part of fulfilling the requirements of Local Law 27 of 2023,¹⁶ CGE and DCAS are working with an M/WBE vendor to execute a pay-equity analysis of select city government job titles. This June, this job title evaluation will enter the second year of its four-year project to identify occupational segregation, and gender and race pay disparities within the city government workforce.
- **Provide strategic support and technical assistance to city agencies to strengthen their capacity for gender equity by:**
 - Continuing to lead the Gender Equity Interagency Partnership Mentorship Pilot Program to develop emerging leaders and equity champions across the municipal workforce while addressing gaps in access to mentorship and professional development.
 - Convene the 3rd Annual Gender Equity Interagency Partnership Conference, an interagency gathering of city workers. The 2026 theme is *Learning from the Past: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Times of Adversity* and the conference will focus on institutional learning and sustaining equity efforts in a challenging landscape.
 - Offering ongoing trainings, tools, and learning opportunities that support agencies in integrating gender equity into their policies and practices.
- **Support Pay Equity Data Collection and Implementation Study for Private Employers:** CGE commends the council on its tireless work last year to enact two important pay equity bills: Local Laws 173 and 174. These laws were high priorities for CGE and our commission members because they will strengthen pay transparency in New York by requiring large private-sector employers to report pay data by gender, race, and ethnicity. CGE looks forward to assisting the administration with designing the data collection and then analyzing this vital data to ultimately address long-standing disparities in pay equity.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about gender equity and CGE’s work. We look forward to any questions Council may have.

¹⁶ <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5698190&GUID=24DDF301-1350-4B11-85EB-2DBDDCD3E649&Options=ID|Text|&Search=27>

REMARKS OF

COMMISSIONER SALONI SETHI
MAYOR'S OFFICE TO END DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

on

THE STATE OF GENDER EQUITY IN NEW YORK CITY

February 27, 2026

Good morning, Chair Farias and Members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. I am Saloni Sethi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV). I am joined by Edward Hill, Deputy Commissioner for Research, Evaluation and Training. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the state of gender equity in New York City.

ENDGBV supports survivors of domestic and gender-based violence by developing and delivering accessible and inclusive services to survivors, their families, and communities through collaboration with government agencies, community partners, survivors, and philanthropy. We strive to ensure that the City's services and resources reduce barriers, address gaps in service, and create new pathways to safety through program development, legislative and policy advocacy, research, and capacity building for service providers, city agency staff and community members to identify and respond to domestic and gender-based violence (DV/GBV). ENDGBV directly oversees a portfolio of prevention and intervention programming that includes services for survivors of DV/GBV and victims of other crime, and we operate the City's five borough-based Family Justice Centers.

Our office was established in the City Charter in 2001, and its responsibilities, originally focused on intimate partner violence and elder abuse, were expanded by Executive Order 36 in 2018 to include other forms of gender-based violence such as sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. In 2024, the office expanded further by taking on a portfolio of programs from the Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS), including the Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP), the City's 24-hour Hope hotline, family and criminal-court based programs and community programs for victims of all crime. The City's Hope hotline provides crisis intervention and support to all crime victims, with specialized support for survivors of DV/GBV, including placement seeking in emergency shelter. Our family court program provides information and support to all respondents in family court, as well as dedicated services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, including a supervised visitation program that operates in two boroughs. The criminal court program helps survivors of gendered violence engaged in criminal legal proceedings connect to resources and includes services tailored to meet the needs of criminalized survivors, who may be drawn into the criminal legal system in ways that are directly connected to their experiences of abuse. Our borough-based community programs provide trauma-informed counseling, advocacy, and support to DV/GBV survivors and all

crime victims in community-based settings. ENDGBV's expansion to include programs for victims of all crime in addition to programs specifically tailored for survivors of DV/GBV not only recognizes the connections between gendered violence and other forms of violence, like gun violence, but also ensures our services reflect the lived realities of the individuals we serve, many of whom are dealing with intersecting layers of trauma from multiple experiences of violence.

ENDGBV also oversees a range of preventive programs, including the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), Home+ and our abusive partner intervention programs. RAPP places trained counselors and community educators in middle and high schools throughout the city to educate students, staff, and caregivers about teen dating violence and promote healthy relationship skills. RAPP also provides direct support to young people who may be experiencing abuse in their own relationships or witnessing violence at home, furthering the program's goal of fostering safe, informed school communities. Home+ focuses on preventing homelessness that is purely due to safety concerns by providing survivors with security devices, free lock changes and repair services for doors and windows, and flexible funding to help survivors remain safely and stably housed. Our two programs for people who cause harm, Respect and Responsibility for adults and Respect First for young people, focus on trauma-

informed accountability to help change abusive behavior and prevent future abuse.

Programmatic Accomplishments

In addition to successfully managing ENDGBV's expansion, ENDGBV was also able to increase funding to culturally specific providers by 300% in fiscal years 2024 and 2025 through competitive procurement processes, including re-procurement for our core service contracts at the family justice centers. This has significantly expanded our capacity to provide culturally responsive, linguistically appropriate, and survivor-centered services through partnership with community-based organizations.

In July 2024, ENDGBV launched the Flexible Funding component of Home+ under Local Law 112 of 2022, adding a new option for survivors to remain in their homes safely and avoid shelter entry. Flexible Funding provides low-barrier financial assistance to survivors with incomes under 300% of the federal poverty level, without requiring documentation such as orders of protection or police reports, and without regard to credit history, criminal history, or immigration status.

Flexible Funding can be used to support housing stability and safety by covering a range of essential needs, including rent arrears, utility costs, moving costs, food, phone bills, and other critical expenses. In Fiscal Year 25, the program supported 426 survivors, disbursing more than \$875,000 in assistance, with an average grant of approximately \$2,050.

The program helps survivors remain safely housed or transition to stable housing while connecting them to case management and ongoing support. Its flexible design promotes survivor self-determination and fills critical gaps for individuals who may not qualify for other housing resources. Survivors consistently report that these services play a vital role in preventing homelessness, strengthening their emotional well-being, and helping them navigate housing-related barriers. The program underscores how important addressing survivors' economic needs, reducing financial stress, and advancing long-term housing stability are to mitigating the impacts of abuse and promoting survivor-centered healing.

In January 2025, ENDGBV launched Respect First, a citywide prevention and intervention program focused on fostering healthy relationships among young people ages 13 to 21. Respect First serves youth who have caused harm or

engaged in abusive behaviors in dating or family relationships, using a trauma-informed model centered on accountability, healing, and behavioral change. The program includes a 16-week group intervention, individualized case management, and connections to supportive services to address the root causes of harmful behavior. Young people also receive a stipend for attending group sessions. Respect First initially launched in the Bronx and Brooklyn, expanding to Staten Island in the fall of 2025. ENDGBV anticipates the program will begin operating citywide this year, increasing access to early intervention and prevention services for young people across the City.

In 2025, the City's five Family Justice Centers served 15,362 clients and facilitated more than 61,000 client visits, connecting survivors to critical services including safety planning, case management, counseling, legal assistance, and economic support. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Hope hotline received 93,942 calls and CVAP responded to 46,435 victims of crime.

In 2025, ENDGBV conducted 91 trainings, reaching more than 5,600 City staff, nonprofit providers, and community members to improve identification of and response to domestic and gender-based violence and conducted 180

outreach events citywide, raising awareness, connecting communities to resources, and strengthening the City's overall response to violence.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead into 2026 and beyond, ENDGBV remains committed to further expanding supports for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence through innovative programming for those who have experienced harm, an increased focus on prevention, and continued coordination across systems. We expect to launch a Family Violence Services demonstration project in the summer of 2026. This is a first of its kind program to address abuse that occurs between members of a family or household who are not involved in a romantic relationship, including individuals related by marriage, foster care, adoption, or any other type of familial relationship. Within New York City, family violence is a widespread issue that makes up a significant portion of total domestic violence crime, yet there are gaps in services for individuals and families experiencing this type of abuse. Through this initiative, ENDGBV will partner with community-based providers in high-need communities across all five boroughs to deliver tailored, trauma-informed services, including case management, mental health counseling, mediation, and legal support. This project will not only provide critical

resources to families impacted by violence, it will also include a concurrent evaluation to help build the City's understanding of family violence, test new community-based intervention models, and inform future program expansion.

In addition, ENDGBV is focused on strengthening and expanding prevention efforts to address gendered violence citywide. This includes increasing the number of schools participating in RAPP, expanding public awareness and community education, and investing in programs that address harmful behaviors and support individuals in making positive changes. Together, these efforts help prevent violence before it occurs and promote safer, healthier communities for all New Yorkers.

And of course, the work to end gendered violence cannot be done by ENDGBV alone – survivors and victims of crime engage with multiple systems including child welfare, criminal legal, housing and healthcare. ENDGBV is committed to working with City agency partners, electeds, and community-based organizations, to strengthen how survivors are identified and supported across these systems to improve coordination, reduce barriers to access, and ensure survivors receive timely, trauma-informed, and survivor-centered support across all points of contact. Key collaborative efforts in 2026 include our strangulation

roundtable, which aims to strengthen the response to strangulation across our health care, law enforcement and social service systems and our work to implement local law 160 of 2025, focused on enhancing systemic response to traumatic brain injury in partnership with healthcare experts and community-based providers.

Bill Positions

ENDGBV appreciates the opportunity to provide its positions on the legislation under consideration today.

We support the intent of Int. 0296 (Increasing access to data around gender-based violence); however, we also have concerns related to feasibility, privacy, and capacity. The Department of Social Services would also like to note that nearly all of their screenings for gender violence are pursuant to New York State directives, and that those screenings are balancing between obtaining information and not chilling a DV survivor from pursuing services. We intend to connect with the Council post hearing to discuss further.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Council, our sister City agencies, and community-based partners to strengthen services, close gaps, and ensure all survivors have access to the support they need. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions you may have.

NYC Her Future

Testimony
of
Nathifa Forde, Founding Executive Director
NYC Her Future

before the
New York City Council
Committee on Women and Gender Equity

On
Oversight – The State of Gender Equity in NYC
Friday, February 27, 2026
250 Broadway, 8th Floor, Hearing Room 2

NYC Her Future

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Farías and Council Members Aldebol, Schulman, Gutiérrez, and Santosuosso, members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity, esteemed City Council members, and community advocates.

My name is Nathifa Forde, and I am the Founding Executive Director of NYC Her Future, the City's first office dedicated to advancing the well-being, leadership, and long-term economic mobility of young women and girls, with a specific focus on girls of color, and all those that identify as such. Thank you for the opportunity to join you today to discuss the accomplishments of this newly created office under the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice.

NYC Her Future: Mission

NYC Her Future's mission is clear and urgent: to ensure every girl, young woman and all those who identify as such in New York City possesses the intellectual capital, essential skills, and supportive social network required to realize their future potential and long-term well-being.

Vision

NYC Her Future is dedicated to cultivating leaders and social innovators by expanding access to ensure academic success and meaningful mentorship, and by establishing robust pathways to sustainable socioeconomic mobility. NYC Her Future employs a culturally responsive, data-informed programmatic framework designed to dismantle systemic barriers that negatively affect the social determinants of health, including access to education, economic stability, and career opportunities. The work is rooted in a commitment to community empowerment and equity; by validating the diverse cultural assets and lived experiences - of every young woman, girl, and those who identify as such in our city.

Why NYC Her Future Was Created

NYC Her Future acknowledges a truth we can no longer ignore: the disparities facing girls and young women and all those who identify as such, especially those of color, are real, measurable, and too often dismissed in policy conversations.

NYC Her Future

Nearly 24% of adolescent girls who have had relationships have experienced physical or sexual partner violence.¹ Women’s literacy rates are lagging men’s by 7%, and the gap is even wider for women of color, with Black and Hispanic women falling 17% below the national average.² Although girls continue to outperform boys academically, four in five report lower satisfaction and higher stress in school environments, with Black girls often reporting the lowest levels of satisfaction across multiple measures of school climate.³ These disparities persist into adulthood: Hispanic women earn just only 37 cents and Black women earn only 42 cents for every dollar earned by White men; a gap that can amount to nearly \$2 million in lost earnings over a lifetime for Hispanic women alone⁴.

The data is clear. Young women experience higher rates of gender-based violence, disproportionate economic insecurity, and persistent gaps in mental health access and workforce development opportunities.

NYC Her Future was built on the belief that equity must be operationalized; *“equity in action means redesigning systems so that every young person has what they need, not just what’s left over.”*

At its launch, NYC Her Future was created with the intention to work in tandem with other gender focused city entities, such as our sibling office the Young Men’s Initiative (YMI), within the Mayor’s Office of Equity and Racial Justice to form a collective commitment to our youth. Together, these offices are ensuring that thoughtful, targeted, and nuanced programming is not only created but accessible, culturally responsive, and rooted in the lived experiences of all young people.

NYC Her Future is rooted in data, driven by equity, and committed to dismantling the structural barriers shaping the lives of girls and young women and all those who identify as such.

¹ Farge, E. (2024, July 29). Nearly a quarter of adolescent girls suffer partner violence, WHO study finds. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/nearly-quarter-adolescent-girls-suffer-partner-violence-who-study-finds-2024-07-29/>

² World Economic Forum. (2025). *TIAA Institute–GFLEC Personal Finance Index*. Global Future Council on Financial Education case study. <https://initiatives.weforum.org/global-future-council-on-financial-education/case-study-details/2025%E2%80%AFtiaa-institute-gflec-personal-finance-index/aJYTG000000vSv4A/>

³ Elsen-Rooney, M., Greenberg, L., & Petrin, K. (2024, August 12). *Girls outperform boys academically but are unhappier with school, surveys show*. Chalkbeat New York. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2024/08/12/girls-outperform-boys-academically-but-unhappier-with-school-surveys-show/>

Robin Hood. (2025, January). *Spotlight on the racial wealth gap in New York City*. https://robinhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PT_Racial_Wealth-Gap_1.21_rev_FINAL.pdf

NYC Her Future

How NYC Her Future Works

NYC Her Future is an innovation and investment hub within city government. The office serves as both a thought partner and funding catalyst to agencies across New York City. Together, we design, pilot, and evaluate initiatives that serve as a proof of concept for sustained baseline investment and scalable models that advance gender equity citywide.

NYC Her Future recognizes that advancing gender equity is collective work. We stand on the shoulders of longstanding advocates, organizations, and community leaders who have led this fight for generations, including our city partners here with us today, the Commission of Gender Equity and the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Base Violence. The work is interconnected and should not operate in silos.

The Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice

NYC Her Future is housed within the Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice (MOERJ), which encompasses four offices (YMI, the Commission on Gender Equity, NYC Her Future, and The Unity Project) working collectively to advance racial, gender, and economic justice. Under Chief Equity Officer and Commissioner Afua Atta-Mensah's leadership, MOERJ ensures gender equity is understood as deeply interconnected with race, class, immigration status, disability, and age; not siloed.

Budget

Since launching in 2024, NYC Her Future has received a programmatic budget of nearly \$2.5 million in Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026. NYC Her Future has strategically invested in a portfolio of programs that serves all young people, prioritizing young women and girls of color, and those who identify as such. These programs are not theoretical; they are producing measurable results.

During our inaugural year, NYC Her Future planted the seeds. Since then, the office grew and shown what is possible when purpose meets partnership. NYC Her Future invested in seven programs that reached over 28,000 young people across New York City.

Programmatic Investments

NYC Her Future funds a coordinated portfolio of programs designed to dismantle systemic barriers that negatively affect the social determinants of health, including access to education, economic stability, and career opportunities. NYC Her Future uses evidence and community-informed insights to design programs that address existing disparities and reduce the likelihood of those disparities continuing in the future.

NYC Her Future

Whether the office is developing intervention-based programs or preventive initiatives, the goal is always to respond to real needs with strategies that create long-term impact.

As of Fiscal Year 2025, NYC Her Future's investment in the Citywide Nursing Residency Program in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Talent and Workforce Development continues to strengthen the pipeline of newly licensed nurses from underrepresented communities. Through hands-on clinical training, mentorship, and evidence-based practice, the program served 1,440 participants and achieved a 94.5% retention rate. This initiative not only stabilizes the nursing workforce but builds a more diverse, community-rooted healthcare system that expands equitable access to maternal health and allied health professions.

Through Health Career Connect, a partnership with the City University of New York, the office further reduced financial barriers to high-need healthcare careers by providing vouchers, academic guidance, and access to 18 credentialing tracks. The program served 356 students, achieving a 91% completion rate.

Beyond healthcare, NYC Her Future is deeply invested in youth workforce pathways in partnership with the Administration of Children Services. Future Force has provided 57 young people involved in the child welfare system with individualized career coaching, vocational training, and full financial support for certifications and materials, in addition to a \$3,360 completion stipend. This initiative directly addresses low postsecondary enrollment, limited professional networks, and high unemployment among foster youth.

NYC Her Future also recognized that leadership pipelines must include civic and justice pathways. The Law Project, a program in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development, expands early exposure to legal careers through 22 legal literacy lessons, mentorship from justice-sector professionals, and a multi-round mock trial competition. Serving 32 participants, this initiative counters the persistent underrepresentation of women of color in law and public leadership.

NYC Her Future's school-based initiatives continue to reach young women at scale. My Sister's Keeper is a citywide initiative in partnership with NYC Public Schools, serving over 25,000 girls, that coordinates professional development, events, and showcases across multiple programs dedicated to empowering girls and young women. The initiative includes the Ambassadors Program, a two-year fellowship for high school girls centered on mentorship, social justice projects, financial literacy, leadership development, and college readiness; GEM Chapters that foster mentoring, sisterhood, leadership, and identity exploration; and R.O.S.E., a mentorship and empowerment

NYC Her Future

program focused on self-esteem, leadership, community service, and violence prevention. Together, these programs create a comprehensive ecosystem of support that nurtures confidence, leadership, and lifelong success.

Also implemented in partnership with New York City Public Schools, the Young Women's Empowerment Program, provides mentoring, social-emotional support, and college and career exploration across 16 school sites and 10 school districts. The program has served 320 middle and high school students, improving confidence, academic persistence, and postsecondary readiness.

Looking Forward

NYC Her Future will deepen its work to address persistent disparities by strengthening partnerships with city entities and collaborating with agencies to design innovative, equity-centered programs that respond to the unique challenges faced by young women and girls of color. This next phase is encouraging and intentional, we are working on the following items:

Beginning in Spring 2026, NYC Her Future will launch a suite of initiatives that reflect the office's mission and vision. The Motherhood Initiative, developed with the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Department of Correction, will provide trauma-informed, family-centered mental health support for incarcerated mothers at Rikers Island, promoting family reunification and long-term stability. Design Her City, created with the Department of City Planning, will expand youth access to civic leadership and urban planning pathways, ensuring meaningful participation in shaping the built environment. Finally, the STEAM/AI Fair, in collaboration with NYC Public Schools, will offer students hands-on opportunities to develop STEAM projects with a focus on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies for a competition. This program supports young people across NYC becoming creators and not just user of emerging technology.

Conclusion

As a newly established office within a newly formed agency, NYC Her Future has navigated predictable start-up challenges, including a modest budget allocation, contracting limitations and limited human capital. Despite the challenges, NYC Her Future was able to launch new programming, strategically partner with city agencies to develop and enhance existing programs and organize campaigns. The office has delivered high-impact, data-driven initiatives with measurable results across education, workforce development, public safety, maternal health, and civic leadership. Our early outcomes demonstrate both the urgency of this work and the capacity of this office to

NYC Her Future

execute with precision, accountability, and equity at the center. The need is clear, our strategy is strong, and the impact is already visible.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about NYC Her Future's work. We look forward to any questions Council may have.



30 3RD AVENUE #800B,
BROOKLYN, NY, 11217

**Testimony: New York City Council Committee on Women and Gender Equity on
2/27/2026. [x]**

Good afternoon, my name is Gabriela Mejia. I'm the Movement Building and Communications Manager at Right To Be, (formerly Hollaback)!. I originally planned to deliver this testimony remotely via zoom, but due to the rescheduling from the snowstorm I'm submitting only the written version. Regardless, I'm thankful we can provide testimony in support of Int 0296-2026 and Res 0069-2026. These legislative actions address important issues affecting our communities, as New Yorkers and as an organization supporting folks who experience identity based harm. Founded in Brooklyn in 2005, Right To Be's work addresses all forms of hate and harassment including harm that targets youth, women, trans, and gender expansive people.

Today I'd like to offer support for the proposed legislative actions as my team and I believe they support communities that are being abandoned and targeted by the federal government programs. As one of the leading organizations in the US tracking hate, we know that data collection around instances of violence and hate *drive forward* the work that stops this violence. Introduction 0296 by Council Member Farah N. Louis is a welcomed change of pace in how our city government prioritizes the care that victims of gender based violence experience from our city. Along with the compiling of the data listed in the summary, we encourage the review and a revisit to the [NYC Street Harassment Survey Report of 2024](#). I also want to share our support for Resolution 0069 from Council Member Caban, as we believe the NYDOE is an essential actor in protecting and counteracting the increasing harm directed at young trans New Yorkers. Recent federal pressure has already led to NYC institutions, like NYC Langone, to give in and abandon the health and care of trans youth in our city. Our city government must be vigilant and the forefront of the protection of marginalized communities, like trans youth and immigrant youth, who are facing targeting in all aspects of society. Targeting based on identity like this, leads to serious psychological, financial, and social impact for those targeted and their communities.

Last year, we submitted testimony in support of New York City's Transgender, Gender Non-confirming and NonBinary community, outlining the demands from the Trans and Queer Political Advocacy Coalition. We sounded the alarm on how our Mayor and our City Council must allocate funds that prioritize trans-led organizations and trans equity. We

continue to monitor resolutions that in any way prioritize the support towards trans and queer youth, their care providers, and victims of gender-based violence.

We know that to support trans youth we need all individuals in our communities to show up every day, and we are currently providing free and [virtual Bystander Intervention for Youth: How to Show Up for Others](#) training on March 3rd. I encourage every person in this call and in this room to take that or any other of our free virtual 1-hour trainings, as each person trained can create a domino effect of accountability and culture change.

We must not let a culture of cruelty and dehumanization infiltrate our city's institutions, our health services, our community spaces, and even our classrooms.

We cannot grow complacent on our methods of addressing harm towards people based on gender bias. That is why we call on the city council members proposing these initiatives to revisit the recommendations and demands New Yorkers already identified as needed in the [2024 Street Harassment Survey](#): "Most individuals who experienced street harassment would like someone to intervene or help if they witnessed someone being street harassed: 54% (1,151 of 2,116) of respondents wanted someone nearby to intervene or help if they witnessed them being harassed. Thirty-eight percent (38% or 797 of 2,116) wanted police intervention..." "Public awareness campaigns and bystander trainings were identified as the most useful community interventions. Respondents wanted community-based interventions that raise awareness of the prevalence of street harassment and provide the community with tools to intervene when street harassment occurs. 54% (1,091 of 2,004) of respondents would like to see public awareness campaigns or events. Similarly, 46% (916 of 2,004) of respondents want information about street harassment prevention and response distributed at busy locations."

We have 20 years of experience connecting with individuals across NYC and the world who experience identity based hate and harm, and we are ready to support the efforts brought forward by the city's council members today. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your commitment to making New York City a great safe city for all New Yorkers.

Background On Right To Be And Our Work:

At Right To Be, our work focuses on turning the care we have for each other into simple, creative, effective action. Every day, we train hundreds of people to respond to, intervene in, and heal from hate & harassment. We hold space for people experiencing hate & harassment to share their stories for affirmation and support. And we prepare new leaders to create workplaces, schools and communities around our city and around the world that are filled with humanity.

 hello@righttobe.org

 +1 347 889 5510

 www.righttobe.org

Our support for marginalized communities starts in New York, but also extends country-wide, and with partners like Advocates for Trans Equality (formerly NCTE), and the Pride Center San Antonio, we've adapted our training and approach to address the specific experiences of Trans and LGBTQIA+ people. Our training works to empower anyone and everyone to take safe and effective action; 98% of people who take our training say that there is at least one thing they think they could do and 6 months later 78% say they have used the training in their day to day.

 hello@righttobe.org

 +1 347 889 5510

 www.righttobe.org





Violence Intervention Program

P.O. Box 1161 Triborough Station, New York NY 10035 | Tel. 212.410.9080 | Fax 646.975.4554 | www.vipmujeres.org

New York City Council Public Hearing Committee on Women and Gender Equity

**Testimony Submitted by: Adio Motayne, Data Manager, Violence Intervention Program
Friday, February 27, 2026, 12:30 PM**

Good afternoon, Chair Farías and Council Members and thank you for organizing today's hearing.

My name is Adio Motayne and I am the Data Manager at the Violence Intervention Program (VIP). VIP is New York City's only nonprofit led by and for Latine survivors of domestic and sexual violence. For 41 years, we have served primarily Spanish speaking and immigrant survivors with housing and social services programs. In recent years, we have innovated new programming tailored to the unique needs of our communities, including culturally responsive mental health care to address trauma in adults and children, a non-carceral restorative justice practice for survivors who do not feel safe going to police, and microgrants and support to survivor-entrepreneurs who want to start or grow their small businesses. Every year, we field over 5,000 calls to our helpline, provide intensive services to about 1,700 survivors, and engage over 1,200 youth and community members in preventive education workshops to stop violence before it starts.

VIP is also a member of The Collective, a group of culturally specific organizations working with immigrants and survivors of color in NYC. The Collective is proud to have collaborated with Council Member Farah Louis on the drafting of **Intro 0296**, a bill focused on data collection by city agencies, in particular DOHMH, DSS and ACS.

As the Data Manager at an anti-violence organization, this bill is personally important to me because I see every day how data can be a tool for safety, accountability, and equity—not

just a compliance requirement. In my role, I work to make sure our systems capture what survivors actually experience and what services they actually receive, so that programs can respond in real time and leadership can make decisions based on evidence, not assumptions. When data is missing or inconsistent, survivors can become invisible in the very systems designed to support them—and resources follow that invisibility.

I also believe deeply that data must be collected and used responsibly. In our work, we have to be clear about why we collect sensitive demographic information, limit access to it, and protect confidentiality—because survivors should never have to trade their privacy for help. When data practices are trauma-informed and culturally responsive, they allow us to understand disparities without putting people at additional risk.

At VIP, data helps us measure our impact, identify trends, and improve how we deliver services across programs. It supports practical, day-to-day operations—like making sure staff can document services accurately, that reporting reflects what teams are doing on the ground, and that we can fix system issues that block visibility (for example, when key fields don't display correctly in reporting tools). In short, data is how we turn individual stories into patterns nonprofits can act on—while still respecting the dignity and confidentiality of each survivor.

The same is true for city agencies. That they are not screened and counted does not mean that survivors did not go to city agencies for help. And if they are not counted, then how can the City possibly reduce, much less eliminate violence? It is necessary to hold agencies accountable for data collection and analysis – without it, the City's strategies will be riddled with blind spots and tragically ineffective.

How many survivors reported DV to their child's pediatrician, or their OB/GYN? How many founded complaints did ACS receive connected to violence in the home? How effective

are HRA's DV screening methods for families in shelter or applying for benefits? These are blind spots that not only leave survivors without referrals to necessary services, they also decrease the likelihood that community based services would exist at all. At this time, NYPD data is the sole basis for allocating DoVE discretionary funding – the biggest resource provided by City Council to address DV in their districts. This negatively impacts immigrants, people of color, LGBTQIA+ survivors, youth, and anyone who doesn't want to go to the police. This Council has the power to do something to change that. To make sure that all experiences of violence are counted and count in the formation of policy and resource allocation.

At VIP, we use data to see our impact, identify trends and learn about issues impacting our communities on large scales. The same should be true for city agencies; there is no reason the City should be held to a lower standard than that of community based organizations when we share a common goal to end domestic and sexual violence for all New Yorkers.

I commend the Councilmembers who have sponsored bills to gather and disseminate data that will shine a light on trends and patterns for survivors who seek assistance through city programs. VIP stands ready to assist in getting this bill across the finish line.



February 27, 2026

New York City Council

Committee on Women & Gender Equity
Hon. Amanda Fariás, Chair

Testimony of Liz Roberts, CEO, Safe Horizon

On The State of Gender Equity

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the state of gender equity in New York City. My name is Liz Roberts, and I am the CEO of Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit victim assistance organization. We offer a survivor-centered, trauma informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year impacted by violence, abuse and exploitation. We staff more than 100 locations across the five boroughs. We offer unwavering support and advocate for systemic change. We envision a world where safety is a universal human right and we all share a collective responsibility to protect and uphold it.

I am here today to talk about how gender-based violence – including domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse and human trafficking – is preventing us from achieving gender equity in New York City. Numerous studies have documented the harmful impact of gender-based violence on survivor's financial circumstances. And while these forms of violence affect New Yorkers of all genders, the impact on girls, women and transgender or non-binary people is disproportionate and severe.

To address this pressing issue, we urge the City Council to continue to invest in a diverse array of services and programs for survivors. City Council discretionary funding can quickly connect survivors and their families to programs in their communities and can be an effective tool in addressing gender equity issues across the five boroughs. In addition, we are calling on the City Council and the Mayor to develop and invest in a comprehensive citywide plan to prevent gender-based violence.

Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence is a constant and widespread threat to equity for women and girls. 1 in 4 U.S. women will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime. In 2024, the NYPD documented 250,000 domestic incidents and 33 intimate partner homicides. In the aftermath of intimate partner violence, survivors experience damage to their physical health, mental health, and financial security. Often the damage is both serious and long-lasting.

Too often, the economic impact of intimate partner violence is overlooked. In our work, we find that most survivors have experienced financial abuse, leaving them with bad debts, damaged



credit, and few options. Frequently, abusers' controlling and harassing behavior interferes with girls' and women's access to education and job training, or spills into the workplace, costing a survivor her job or interfering with her advancement at work.

Domestic violence survivors often experience harassment and intimidation from their abusers at their workplaces and may have to take significant time away from work to find safety and seek assistance from the police or through the courts. In a study by the Maine Department of Labor, 60% of intimate partner violence survivors reported that they lost a job because of the abuse. Of women who are killed in the workplace, intimate partner violence is the leading cause.

At a time when the cost of medical care is prohibitive for many Americans, one study found that female survivors of abuse incurred health care costs 42% higher than other women. Even five years after the abuse, survivors' medical costs remained elevated, 19% higher than their counterparts who had not been abused.

A 2018 National Institute of Health (NIH) study found that "the estimated intimate partner violence lifetime cost was \$103,767 per female victim." These costs include property damage, medical care, legal costs, lost productivity in the workplace, and more.

Sexual Assault

We see similar patterns for survivors of sexual assault, whose health, mental health and financial security are profoundly impacted. A 2017 study by the Centers for Disease Control found that the "estimated lifetime cost of rape was \$122,461 per victim." Like the costs associated with intimate partner violence, these expenses included medical care, interactions with the criminal justice system, lost wages, and more. One 2000 study estimated the lifetime income losses for adolescent victims of sexual assault at \$36,000 – or \$67,000 when adjusted for inflation.

Child Sexual Abuse

1 in 5 girls experiences sexual abuse during childhood. As the famous ACES study documented, traumatic experiences in childhood have serious long-term consequences, including increased risk of chronic diseases, mental health disorders such as PTSD and depression, and a higher prevalence of risky and self-harming behaviors from smoking to suicide attempts. These challenges faced by many adult survivors can translate into diminished educational achievement and job opportunities, and therefore greater financial insecurity. A 2015 study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health estimated the total cost of child sexual abuse to be over \$9 billion.

Human Trafficking

Victims of human trafficking face many of the economic challenges described above, but with the added element of exploitation and entrapment. At Safe Horizon, we work with survivors of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking, and have found that the journey to financial stability and



independence can be a long and difficult one. In addition to the traumatic impact of their trafficking situation, survivors have often experienced severe isolation and coercive control, preventing them from accessing medical care, education or job training opportunities. Further, in many cases immigration status is a barrier to stability, especially in light of the Trump administration's aggressive anti-immigrant.

Recommendations

While these facts are sobering, we also know what works: timely, trauma-informed interventions and responses that meet the needs of survivors in every community. The City Council's long-standing commitment to funding the Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative, the Safe Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative, the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, the Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative, among other investments, help to direct needed resources to innovative programs in every community. We urge the Council to maintain and indeed enhance funding through these initiatives in the FY27 adopted budget. Particularly given the uncertainty around continued federal funding for our programs, local support is more important than ever.

We also believe that a true public safety strategy for the city must include these elements:

- 1. Key systems must place survivors at the center.**

Survivors of violence and abuse are experts in keeping themselves and their families safe. Safety, healing, and justice look different for every journey, and often, a survivor's path to safety crosses public systems, family members, neighbors, and more. A victim of a hate crime or robbery, a mother who has experienced domestic violence and is navigating the court system, and families who have lost someone to homicide or community violence - these are all examples of people who are navigating systems that too often let them down. To get survivors what they need, New York's systems must be functional, responsive, and built with survivor needs at the core.

- 2. Survivor voices must lead the city's community safety strategy.**

We are encouraged by the creation of the Department of Community Safety, which would represent a major step toward coordinating the kinds of supports that research and experience show actually keep people safe: preventing violence before it happens, helping survivors heal, ensuring access to care, and mobilizing community supports. In addition, we recommend the establishment of a cabinet-level Community Safety Task Force made up of survivors, advocates, faith leaders, family members, health workers, law enforcement, violence interrupters, and other stakeholders. This Task Force can advise on cross-system reforms and generate new ideas for public safety that uplift



lived experience. Investments in youth advocacy, leadership development, and culturally specific healing networks ensure that survivors have a seat at every table.

3. All survivors deserve a safe place to stay and a pathway to permanent housing.

Stable, secure shelter and housing are the foundations for safety and healing. All New Yorkers deserve access to deeply affordable housing, emergency shelter that has flexible options to meet their needs, and pathways out of homelessness. By expanding housing programs, piloting new models, streamlining communication between shelter systems, and funding supportive services, we can ensure survivors, youth, and families have the security they need to heal. Safe shelter and housing aren't just basic needs - they are essential for a safer city.

4. All New Yorkers deserve to be safe.

Safety takes all of us. The work of safety happens in every borough, every courthouse or precinct, every nonprofit space. Immigrant communities and survivors of trauma need services that are accessible, culturally responsive, and free from fear. By strengthening language options, safe community spaces, accessible legal support, and providing culturally affirming trauma-informed care, as well as investing in community programs that center trust, we can create a city where every New Yorker has the resources to stay safe, recover, and grow.

5. Economic stability is safety.

Survivors cannot heal while struggling to meet basic needs: economic stability is essential to recovery and safety. Financial abuse and poverty often trap survivors in cycles of harm, making direct cash assistance a powerful tool for stability and dignity. Flexible financial support allows survivors to decide what they need most, from rent to childcare, fostering autonomy and resilience. Investing in such programs is both compassionate and cost-effective, reducing strain on public systems while saving lives. By embedding direct cash aid into the city's continuum of care, New York can ensure survivors are able to achieve long-term security and healing.

Working together, the City Council and New York City's network of community-based victim assistance and advocacy organizations can take important, needed steps to address gender inequities and create a safer New York for all who live and work here.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

NYC Council Committee on Women and Gender Equity Hearing

~~Monday, February 23, 2026 at 10am~~ ^{FRI} ²⁷ ^{1pm}

**Testimony of Melissa Norden, Executive Director, Bottomless Closet, in support of
Legislation Strengthening Gender-Based Violence Data Collection & Reporting**

Good afternoon Chair Farias and members of the Council,

My name is Melissa Norden, and I am the Executive Director of Bottomless Closet, a New York City-based nonprofit organization that has supported nearly 50,000 women entering and re-entering the workforce for over 25 years. We provide professional attire, career readiness training, and ongoing support to low-income women in the City seeking economic independence.

We are facing another “she-cession”, where U.S. women, particularly mothers, are leaving the workforce at high rates due to unaffordable childcare, lack of workplace flexibility (especially with return-to-office mandates), increased caregiving burdens, and persistent wage gaps, leading to significant drops in female labor force participation, with approximately half a million women exiting the U.S. workforce in 2025. The New York City unemployment rate is over 5.5% for the first time since the pandemic. It is close to 10% for women of color who make up most of our client base.

The National Institute of Health reports that 1 in 2 survivors of Gender Based Violence in the U.S. report losing a job due to abuse. Survivors lose a total of 8 million days of paid work each year, which is equivalent to roughly 32,000 full-time jobs.

I am here representing Bottomless Closet in strong support of this legislation requiring the Mayor’s Office to End Gender-Based Violence to strengthen coordination, transparency, and reporting around gender-based violence data citywide.

Gender-based violence is not a marginal issue in New York City; it is pervasive and systemic.

- According to the NYPD, there are more than 200,000 domestic incident reports filed annually in New York City.
- Nationally, the CDC reports that 1 in 4 women experience severe intimate partner violence in their lifetime — and New York City mirrors these national trends.
- In New York City shelters, a substantial percentage of families with children entering the system cite domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness.

These numbers represent not just incidents — but disruptions to housing stability, physical health, employment, and long-term economic mobility.

At Bottomless Closet, we see the economic impact of Gender Based Violence every day:

- Survivors forced to leave jobs due to safety concerns
- Missed work because of court dates, medical appointments, or relocation
- Financial abuse resulting in damaged credit and barriers to housing
- Workplace instability linked to trauma-related health challenges

Yet our systems often operate in silos. Law enforcement collects one set of data. Healthcare providers collect another. Social services, child welfare, housing agencies, and workforce programs collect additional pieces. Without coordinated integration, we lack a full picture of how Gender Based Violence correlates with unemployment and public benefits usage.

This legislation moves the City toward a comprehensive, evidence-based response.

A centralized Gender Based Violence data dashboard would:

- Increase transparency and public accountability
- Enable cross-agency coordination
- Support evidence-based policymaking
- Help community-based organizations like ours identify service gaps

For organizations like Bottomless Closet, better data means better programming. If we understand patterns between domestic violence, employment disruption, and housing instability, we can align workforce services with survivor needs more effectively. Transparency is not punitive — it is preventative.

We respectfully encourage the Council to:

1. Center survivor privacy protections in all data-sharing systems.
2. Provide adequate funding for trauma-informed training and data infrastructure improvements.
3. Include community-based organizations in ongoing advisory roles as the dashboard and outreach programs are developed.

Gender-based violence is a safety crisis AND an economic crisis in New York City. Survivors deserve coordinated systems that recognize the FULL impact of violence on their lives. This legislation represents a thoughtful, data-driven step toward accountability and prevention. Bottomless Closet strongly supports its passage and implementation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nathifa Forde

Address: 59 Maiden Lane

I represent: Mayor's Office of Equity & Racial Justice

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Priya Nair

Address: _____

I represent: Commission on Gender Equity

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LIZ ROBERTS

Address: 2 LAFAYETTE ST 3rd FLOOR

I represent: SAFE HORIZON

Address: 2 LAFAYETTE ST. 3rd FLOOR

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 296 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adio Motayne

Address: _____

I represent: Violence Intervention Program

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adio Motayne

Address: _____

I represent: The Violence Intervention Program

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa Norden

Address: _____

I represent: Bottomless Closet

Address: 1 W. 34th St. 5th Fl. New York, NY
10001

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ed Hill

Address: _____

I represent: END GBV

Address: _____

◆ *Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms* ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Saloni Sethi

Address: _____

I represent: END GBV

Address: _____

◆ *Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms* ◆