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COMMITTEE ON AGING

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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October 18, 2021
Start: 11:03 a.m.
Recess: 1:38 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING - VIRTUAL ROOM 2

B E F O R E: Margaret S. Chin,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Diana Ayala
- Daniel Dromm
- Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
- Ruben Diaz, Sr.
- Eric Dinowitz
- Mathieu Eugene
- Mark Treyger
- Paul A. Vallone

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner of the Department for the Aging

Michael Bosnick
Deputy Commissioner from DFTA

Erin Drinkwater
Deputy Commissioner from the Department of Social
Services

Kevin Jones
Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New
York

Brianna Paden-Williams
Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn New
York

Jeremy Kaplan
Executive Director at Encore Community Services

Philip Chong
President & CEO at Quincy Asian Resources, QARI

Peter Kempner
Legal Director and Elderly Project Director at
Volunteers of Legal Service, VOLS

Gil Bloom
New York Pest Management Association

COMMITTEE ON AGING

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2 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: PC recording is started.

3 SERGEANT BIONDO: Recording to the cloud has
4 begun.

5 SERGEANT POLITE: Thank you. Sergeant Biondo,
6 you may begin with your opening statement.

7 SERGEANT BIONDO: Good morning everyone and
8 welcome to today's New York City Council Committee on
9 Aging. At this time, will all panelists please turn
10 on their video for verification purposes. To
11 minimize any disruptions, please place all electronic
12 devices to vibrate or silent mode.

13 If you would like to submit testimony, please do
14 so via testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
16 cooperation. Chair Chin, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good morning. I'm Council
18 Member Margaret Chin, Chair of the Committee on Aging
19 and I want to welcome you to this hearing of the City
20 Council's Committee on Aging. Today, the Committee
21 will conduct a hearing on the Community Care Plan, as
22 well as Intro. Number 1219, sponsored by Council
23 Member Danny Dromm to provide assistance to seniors
24 with bed bugs in their homes.

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2 Allowing older adults to remain at home in their
3 community as long as possible while having access to
4 critical services, resources and opportunities that
5 will support them with their daily living activity is
6 an essential responsibility of the city. In April
7 2021, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the city
8 will invest \$58 million in a five year community care
9 plan for older New Yorkers.

10 This plan would increase services in underserved
11 and historically excluded communities to help older
12 New Yorkers age in place across the five boroughs.
13 The plan also includes the release of an RFP to
14 create 25 new centers OAC or naturally occurring
15 retirement communities NORCs with investment towards
16 expanding outreach and increasing transportation
17 option, staffing and virtual programming.

18 In the Plan, DFTA states its aims to increase the
19 diversity of its portfolio of providers to address
20 historically funding in equities and include
21 multicultural programming to appeal to the interest
22 of varied groups including immigrants. DFTA's plan
23 to expand the continue of services including case
24 management, home delivered meals, home care, care
25 giver support, connectivity needs and transportation.

1
2 While all of these are noble goals that I share,
3 we must ensure that the plan includes concrete action
4 and measurable follow through. The Committee would
5 like to explore what metrics they will use to
6 progress of the Community Care Plan Initiative.
7 Specifically, the Committee will seek clarification
8 on how the RFP will increase provider diversity and
9 address historically funding and equity. How the
10 promise flexibility to reprogram funds to support
11 more popular senior programs work in practice. And
12 how DFTA will reach these older adults who are not
13 currently connected to services.

14 The Committee would like to investigate how
15 existing older adult centers are being impacted. I
16 have heard from providers that they have been giving
17 proposed budget much less than their RFP application
18 proposed. And they have only given seven days' time
19 period to negotiate these contracts. Asking
20 providers to do more with less will not help the city
21 reach the goals laid out in the Community Care Plan.
22 As the aging population continues to grow, we need to
23 ensure that the services they need expand as well.

24 In addition to this oversight topic, we will hear
25 a bill on providing assistance to older adults who

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2 are struggling with bed bugs. Seniors are often
3 unable to carry out the physical tasks necessary to
4 prepare for exterminators to rid their homes of the
5 infestation. This bill would enable seniors to
6 receive the help they need to ensure that the
7 exterminator can do their job properly, so that the
8 bed bugs are eradicated from the seniors home.

9 Thank you to the advocates and members of the
10 public who are joining us today. Thank you to
11 representative from the administration for joining us
12 and I look forward to hearing from you on these
13 critical issues. At this time, I would like to
14 acknowledge my colleagues who are here today.

15 We are joined by Council Members Powers, Louis,
16 Council Member Treyger and Council Member Vallone. I
17 would like to also thank my staff Kana Ervin and
18 Aging Committee Staff Crystal Pond, Aliyah Reynolds
19 and Daniel Kroop.

20 I will now turn it over to my colleague Council
21 Member Dromm, to discuss this Bill. Thank you.
22 Council Member Dromm.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much Chair
24 Chin. With the city's investment in the Community
25 Care Plan, a greater number of older New Yorkers will

1
2 be able to age in place. By creating a network of
3 support services, we can help our family, friends and
4 neighborhood keep their independence, self-reliance
5 and wellbeing all while remaining in their homes.
6 Such services run the gamut from delivering
7 nutritious meals to maintaining vital social
8 connections. It is important to be aware of all the
9 challenges that face older New Yorkers and then to
10 deploy city resources to address those challenges.

11 Intro. 1219, which is being heard today,
12 highlights one of the ever vexing problems that is
13 often compounded for older adults, bed bugs.
14 Thoroughness is key to successful eradication but
15 this often entails moving furniture and heavy
16 equipment. Without assistance, many seniors would
17 never be able to rid their homes of stubborn
18 infestations.

19 I have constituents who have described how
20 chemical treatments applied in their homes by
21 landlords and others, were effectively useless
22 because they could not take the other necessary
23 steps. My bill would require the city to institute a
24 program to help senior citizens eradicate bed bug
25

1
2 infestations, including the moving of furniture and
3 heavy equipment if necessary.

4 I want to thank the advocates for being here
5 today and I look forward to hearing your testimony.
6 I want to thank Chair Chin for hearing this
7 legislation as you did in 2017 and for your
8 leadership on the aging issues, all aging issues
9 throughout the years. And for the fantastic job that
10 you have done since we have been in the City Council.

11 Chair Chin, you're leaving a very big shoes to
12 fill and a fantastic legacy. Thank you very, very
13 much.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council Member
15 Dromm. I'm not sure about the big shoes. I have
16 very small feet.

17 I will now turn it over to our Moderator Senior
18 Policy Analyst Crystal Pond to go over some
19 procedural items.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you Chair. I am Crystal Pond,
21 Senior Policy Analyst to the Aging Committee of the
22 New York City Council. Before we begin today, I want
23 to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you
24 are called on to testify. At which point, you will
25 be unmuted.

1
2 Members of the Administration who are testifying,
3 will not be muted during the Q&A portion of Admin
4 testimony. I will be calling on public witnesses to
5 testify after the conclusion of Administrations
6 testimony and Council Member questions, so please
7 listen for your name to be called. I will be
8 announcing in advance who the next witnesses will be.

9 The first panelist to give testimony today will
10 be Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the
11 Department for the Aging, Deputy Commissioner Michael
12 Bosnick from DFTA and Deputy Commissioner Erin
13 Drinkwater from the Department of Social Services
14 will be available for questioning.

15 I will call on you shortly for the oath, then
16 again when it is time to begin your testimony.
17 During the hearing, if Council Members would like to
18 ask a question of the Administration or a specific
19 panelist, please use the Zoom raise hand function and
20 I will call on you in order. We will be limiting
21 Council Member questions to five minutes, which
22 includes time to answer questions.

23 Please note, for ease of this virtual hearing, we
24 will not be allowing a second round of questions for
25 each panelist outside of the Committee Chair. All

1 hearing participants should submit written testimony
2 to testimony@nyc.gov— sorry, testimony@council.nyc.gov
3 if you have not already done so. The deadline for
4 submitting written testimony for the record is 72
5 hours after the hearing.
6

7 Before we begin testimony, I will administer the
8 oath. To all members of the Administration who will
9 be offering testimony or will be available for
10 questions, please raise your right hand. I will read
11 the oath, then call on each of you individually for a
12 response.

13 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
14 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and
15 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?
16 Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez?

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, I do.

18 MODERATOR: Deputy Commissioner Bosnick?

19 MICHAEL BOSNICK: I do.

20 MODERATOR: Deputy Commissioner Drinkwater?

21 ERIN DRINKWATER: I do.

22 MODERATOR: Thank you. Commissioner, you may
23 begin your testimony.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you so much for
25 that Crystal Pond. Good morning, Chairperson Chin

1
2 and members of the Committee on Aging. As you know,
3 I am Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, I am the Commissioner
4 of the Department for the Aging and I am very happy
5 to have this opportunity to talk to you about the
6 five year Community Care Strategic Plan.

7 I am joined by Michael Bosnick, the Department
8 for the Aging's Deputy Commissioner for Planning,
9 Research, Evaluation and Training who will be
10 available with me for questions and answers following
11 my testimony. Additionally, I am joined by Erin
12 Drinkwater, who is the Deputy Commissioner of
13 Intergovernmental Affairs and Legislative Actions at
14 the New York City Department of Social Service who
15 can answer questions regarding Intro 1219.

16 As Chairwoman Chin just stated so aptly, that in
17 April 2021, the Mayor released the Community Care
18 Plan for an Age-Inclusive New York City. The
19 groundbreaking five year plan to guide the expansion
20 of aging services to meet the needs of a growing and
21 diversifying New York City older adult population.
22 Through this plan, the City outlines our vision to
23 support older adults to age in place. And according
24 to AARP, we know that roughly 90 percent of Americans
25 expressed a desire to remain living at home.

2 But to do so, many need additional supports.

3 Community care has been shown to keep people healthy
4 longer and to help them avoid institutional care. I
5 know that personally as a caregiver of my 92-year-old
6 mother. When people remain at home, they are more
7 likely to physically thrive for a longer period than
8 if they are in institutional care. Their mental
9 health also remains stronger when receiving services
10 and supports in the community rather than in
11 institutions. The community benefits also by having
12 older adults aging in place. Remaining at home
13 allows older adults to continue to be socially
14 connected and to bolster their communities through
15 their high levels of faith-based and civic
16 engagement.

17 Moreover, there is a financial benefit to
18 community care. While living in the communities they
19 helped build, older adults spend their money locally.
20 They have investing in these communities all their
21 lives and they will continue to do so. They will
22 remain in their communities and the communities
23 should reinvest in them. Supporting an older person
24 at home also helps decrease avoidable
25 rehospitalization, emergency visits, unnecessary

1 nursing home stays. Overall, the investment of
2 community care, including in-home services, and
3 transportation, as well as recreation services is
4 about \$32,000 per older adult per year. While
5 institutional care is about \$154,000 annually. So,
6 not only does it make social but it also makes
7 economic sense.
8

9 DFTA seeks to build on the community care
10 elements already in place in order to promote
11 independence, self-reliance, and well-being for the
12 aging population. This plan supports the growing
13 number of older New Yorkers, most who wish to stay at
14 home. But mostly, we build it on this 30 year
15 experiment we call Social Service Aging Network that
16 has been there consistently providing supports and
17 encouragement to older adults in their community.

18 As outlined, the Community Care Plan endeavors to
19 phase in essential care components, including the
20 expansion of case management, home delivered meals,
21 home care, and caregiver support. This is
22 particularly important with the anticipated growth in
23 the older adult population. More people are living
24 longer and the planned increase in marketing and
25 outreach as a result of the Community Care Investment

1 Plan. People need to know that they can stay in the
2 communities and that there is a network there to
3 support them. That is why the future plans of the
4 year call for increased homecare average weekly hours
5 per client, which is one of the biggest demands that
6 we have seen. As well as additional caregiver
7 supports, which I value greatly. And funding to
8 assist them as they support older adults aging in
9 place. We appreciate the advocacy of the Council.
10 You have provided in the past and even today, support
11 for the expansion of services in this Administration.
12 Thank you for that. When we started this Department
13 for the Aging, had cut, had lost \$110 million.
14 Through the support of Chairwoman Chin, the Council
15 and others, that \$110 million has been restored and
16 much more that I will talk about in a few seconds.

18 So, I really want to thank you for your support
19 and I'm not saying that gratuitously, that comes from
20 a longstanding community advocate. It is important
21 to establish linkages with neighborhood resources to
22 build service synergies across the network of
23 programs serving older people in a community. Some
24 of these connections were encouraged in the recent
25 Older Adult Center and Naturally Occurring Retirement

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2 Communities RFP. And we are optimistic that soon
3 there will be an increased intentionality in
4 developing relationships across community services
5 and providers. Access to services across the
6 community as I've said over and over and as you have
7 said Chairwoman Chin, are essential.

8 For in-person services, the Community Care Plan
9 outlines better use of transportation to reach older
10 people isolated in service deserts or transportation
11 deserts. Yes, in New York City with the best
12 transportation system in the world, it is – there are
13 still transportation deserts. These include areas
14 where it is difficult to connect with essential
15 services due to lack of easy and affordable access to
16 public transport.

17 One thing we did learn from the pandemic, virtual
18 programing can also serve individuals living in hard-
19 to-reach deserts, as well as to be more attractive to
20 those individuals who prefer this option over in-
21 person services.

22 One thing that we've known is that we've seen the
23 benefits of virtual services during this pandemic.
24 It helped reduce social isolation and it also
25 increased services, including medical appointments.

1
2 But one thing that we can – we have also seen, is
3 that we can provide state-of-the-art quality services
4 virtually to older adults at their – meeting their
5 scheduled needs. Increased programming also requires
6 that older adults have access to critical services.
7 Currently, we are in the process of distributing
8 10,000 tablets through older adult centers to New
9 Yorkers who live alone. This program includes a data
10 plan as well as technology support and education. We
11 are building on the model that we had with the NYCHA,
12 with the public housing tablet program last year.

13 Finally, it is imperative that services reach
14 across all five boroughs, expansion to underserved
15 areas, including TRIE neighborhoods, which is a
16 priority. TRIE neighborhoods are those neighborhoods
17 that were most impacted by the pandemic, which were
18 usually the racial communities where there was racial
19 and economic inequity, historic racial and economic
20 inequity. Within the provider network, expanding to
21 the local, independent providers that are rooted in
22 the community is also important to ensure the highest
23 quality of services for that community.

24 Additionally, more multi-cultural and more multi-
25 language programs, including immigrant services is

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2 important. I remember in one of my first hearings
3 both you, Chairwoman Chin, and Chairman Dromm, had
4 asked that we make an investment in those providers,
5 those multiethnic providers, that you provided
6 discretionary funds to. We did for the last two
7 years; we've been providing supports and some
8 technical assistance and we will see the results very
9 shortly.

10 As you know, the first year of this plan was a
11 \$48 million invested in this new RFP, and it was to
12 increase services. That is one of the main goals,
13 was to make sure that we could increase and expand
14 services. The submission deadline was in June and we
15 are thrilled by the enthusiastic, high quality
16 responses we received from providers, new and
17 current. I am pleased to report that the conclusion
18 of the RFP is imminent. At this time, all proposers
19 have been notified if their submissions have been
20 determined eligible or not.

21 Those who have been deemed eligible are in the
22 process of contract negotiations, as you stated
23 Chairwoman Chin. One of the goals of this RFP was to
24 adjust services to reflect the changing demographics
25 of this city, as well as encouraging further

1 innovation and collaboration. And when I say
2 changing demographics, I want to impress the
3 magnitude. The African American community increased
4 by 75 percent. The Latino community doubled by 108
5 percent. The Asian American community tripled. It
6 went from 60,000 to 180,000. That is the diversity,
7 the magnitude that we are speaking about. And that
8 trend will continue into 2030.

10 We think the providers deemed eligible will be
11 allowed to realize and to support these changing
12 demographics and we're really pleased by that. Once
13 the public notice of awards is complete, we can share
14 an official list of awardees publicly. In the
15 meantime, I can offer some highlights of what we
16 expect following contract negotiations. Overall, as
17 you well said earlier, we expect to increase the
18 number of older services providers significantly. In
19 the Community Care Plan, we committed to 25 new
20 centers or NORCs and we are on track to exceed that.
21 The Committee will be particularly pleased to also
22 hear that we anticipate that many current
23 discretionary-funded sites will be baselined, as well
24 as adding new providers to the DFTA network.

1
2 Many of these sites are in underserved
3 communities and are served by the smaller ethnic
4 based organizations. Those that you and Chairperson
5 Dromm were citing early on. I hope that the Council
6 will continue to use that base of discretionary funds
7 towards services for older adults. We need
8 additional services, such as creative aging arts
9 programs. We have found this program to be extremely
10 a successful evidence-based success and we would love
11 to expand that. We could do that with your support.

12 Overall, with these investments, we expect the
13 capacity of our centers and NORCs to grow. The RFP
14 embodies the goal of the community care plan, all are
15 centered on keeping the older New Yorker in good
16 physical and mental health, and in a strong state of
17 well-being, in order to live safely in their
18 communities and homes.

19 Several key goals are innovative programming with
20 an emphasis on collaboration with other neighborhood
21 and community resources. Increased marketing and
22 outreach to connect people. The one thing we learned
23 during this pandemic and Chairwoman Chin; you've
24 cited it. Was that many older New Yorkers who were
25 not affiliated with any program, raised their hand

1 and said, I am in need of services. And that is why
2 we've built outreach efforts into this RFP. And it
3 was also to reach outreach and do outreach in
4 different languages. And the languages of those
5 communities that I just told you were increasing.
6 Virtual programming also is able to be increased and
7 to reach those who are reluctant to travel to
8 physical sites.

9
10 Additionally, in the first year of the Community
11 Care Plan saw the fulfillment of the model budget,
12 which was a previously made through the commitment of
13 city funds much with the advocacy of the Council to
14 begin to right-size center contracts and eliminate
15 inequities across the system. The final \$10 million
16 infusion of funds, which was strongly advocated by
17 our Chairwoman, was infused into this model budget
18 and was included in the FY 2022 budget.

19 But I also want to say, to build out the first
20 year of the communities of Care Plan, we also were
21 very mindful as I said before, it was the mental
22 health and the state of wellbeing of older adults,
23 that we have also increased mental health services.
24 When we started, there were 25 mental health
25 services. In the last two years, it has grown to 44

1
2 and now, because of some additional funding from both
3 the city as well as the state, we are able to
4 increase that to 88 centers. Using the hub with the
5 goal that every older adult will have access to
6 mental health services.

7 And then finally, the Introduction to 1219 which
8 is also being heard today, which will require the
9 Department for Social Services to work in
10 coordination with the Department of Health and Mental
11 Hygiene to establish a program to assist low-income
12 older adults with preparations necessary to eradicate
13 bed bug infestations in their dwellings.

14 DSS would also be required to work with the
15 Department for the Aging to encourage outreach to
16 eligible older adults regarding the availability of
17 the program. Relevant agencies look forward to
18 further discussions with the sponsor.

19 In conclusion, I would say that many components
20 of the community care vision that are required for it
21 to be successful long term are being built in the
22 first year. We've accomplished a foundation, a
23 strong foundation in the first year and this would
24 not have been possible without the Council's
25 advocacy, support, and dear commitment to older New

1
2 Yorkers. Strategic investments must be made going
3 forward to continue to support this targeted
4 expansion of services. And thank you for the
5 opportunity to speak to you about a Community Care
6 Plan. The Community Care Plan and all its
7 components. Older adult centers, expansion of
8 services, dealing with the transportation services,
9 outreach. Together we are transforming the older
10 adult service network because our goal is to ensure
11 that everyone who want to be in their home, can age
12 in place with dignity and the proper support. Thank
13 you very much.

14 MODERATOR: Thank you Commissioner.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You're welcome.

16 MODERATOR: I will now turn it over to questions
17 from Chair Chin. Panelists from the Administration,
18 please stay unmuted if possible during this question
19 and answer period. Thank you. Chair Chin please
20 begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Thank you
22 Commissioner and thank you for your partnership
23 throughout all these years. We have made big
24 progress with our friendship and I'm really proud of
25 that. We have also been joined by Council Member

1
2 Ayala and Council Member Diaz. I would like to turn
3 over to Council Member Dromm to ask some questions
4 about Intro. 1219. Council Member Dromm, do you want
5 to do that first? If not, I guess I will - when
6 Council Member Dromm comes back, I will turn it back
7 to him.

8 I'm going to start with some questions on the -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I am here.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh yeah, yeah, okay. We want

11 -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I'm just having trouble
13 getting - I just had some trouble getting with the
14 video.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much and
17 Commissioner, I didn't hear a clear idea of what it
18 is - are you supporting the legislation or I'm sorry,
19 I wasn't really sure what your position was on the
20 legislation?

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, what I can tell
22 you is that we have an education program as part of
23 our education program for older adults. We include
24 information including bed bug protocols and uh, and
25 uhm care services through our senior centers, as well

1
2 as in our care. So, one of the things that we know
3 that education is a big part of this and that we are
4 already doing that with the respective agencies
5 through our network of agencies.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Commissioner, I appreciate
7 the education component of it. I think that is an
8 important part of it as well, particularly because
9 these bed bug infestation can be very long lasting
10 and you know they can jump from window to window
11 actually in apartment buildings. And so, it doesn't
12 only just affect the seniors, it effects everybody
13 who happens to live in the building. But what I've
14 come across now on a number of occasions are older
15 seniors who cannot move the furniture to get behind
16 you know the furniture. A dresser let's say or they
17 can't lift a mattress or they can't get the you know
18 the couch out the door. And there's no program to
19 assist them with that.

20 So, that's why this legislation is something that
21 I'm really trying to push for because there needs to
22 be a way that we can help these seniors with those
23 tasks. And often times Supers uhm, you know are not
24 willing or required actually to move furniture when
25 you have an exterminator come in. So, I think it

1
2 goes beyond uhm just education and that's why I
3 continue to press for this.

4 Uhm, is there any existing program right now that
5 would help seniors with the moving of furniture and
6 discarding of items from the apartment that uhm, you
7 know may be infested?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, there's no program
9 specifically for that Chairman. What we do have is,
10 we have two programs that probably provide some
11 limited support but with that said, I want to say
12 that it's not been a problem that we've heard of you
13 know extensively or widely. But what I will say is
14 we have the Minor Repairs program that can help with
15 some of that mitigation and we also have the program
16 that we provide for individuals with mental health
17 and other issues or what we call the heavy duty
18 cleaning for people who have hoarding issues in their
19 life and need their apartments cleaned and vacated.

20 So, those are two possible limited, very limited
21 resources that could be provided towards this to
22 mitigate this situation.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And I've been told -
24 Commissioner, I'm sorry. I've been told that in the
25 past uhm that even with those programs, they've been

1
2 turned down, specifically because it is bed bug
3 infestation. And it's not specific to those
4 programs.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I can look into that
6 further Chairman and get you some clarity on that.
7 But it is not a program - it is not a need that has
8 risen uhm to the level you know that would deem some
9 kind of a response. So, I will look into what the
10 limitations are in those existing programs and get
11 back to you on that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay, let me just say it
13 is an issue that has risen to a very large issue in
14 my district.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Particularly because I
17 think we have a lot of low income seniors who have
18 come to the office and who have brought this issue to
19 my attention.

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So, I would really like to
22 have the opportunity to further discuss this with you
23 and to try to figure out you know if there is some
24 way that we could include this in an existing
25 program. You know, it is just, I have tried, I have

1 researched and tried to really get these seniors
2 help, short of me going to their apartment. And
3 actually, when a friend has brought this issue to my
4 attention, that's exactly what we did do. Myself and
5 my legal counsel actually was to go there and to try
6 to help move the furniture for this person but we've
7 had a number of cases with this. And we've had a
8 large issue, we've had a number of issues just with
9 bed bug infestation.
10

11 So, I would really like -

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, I totally respect
13 that and Deputy Commissioner Erin Drinkwater is here
14 to answer any other questions on the actual bill and
15 its implementation or the movement. Uhm, but I give
16 you my word that we will look into those two
17 mitigation programs that we have and see how and if
18 they can be extended alright.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Yes, thank you and
20 Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner Drinkwater, first
21 of all congratulations. I didn't realize that you
22 are Deputy Commissioner now but our friendship goes
23 back many years and as my friendship with
24 Commissioner Vazquez as well.
25

1
2 But has your agency taken any position on the
3 legislation as well?

4 ERIN DRINKWATER: I think - Council Member, nice
5 to see you. I hope all is well. In regards to the
6 legislation, we have taken a look at it, similar to
7 what the Commissioner has indicated. I think we look
8 forward to learning a bit more from what your
9 experience is with the constituents that you've been
10 working with on this issue.

11 In respect to just building off of what the
12 Commissioner said in terms of not hearing this as an
13 issue, this is not something that our agency is
14 hearing. We do have uhm, limited information for
15 slightly different client population, so the HRA
16 Adult Protective Services client population provides
17 services for adult New Yorkers with physical or
18 mental impairments.

19 This state mandated program has a variety of
20 services for those individuals who are eligible and
21 one of the things can be extermination for bed bugs.
22 So, again, this is a slightly different universe but
23 in 2019, there is 177 bed bug exterminations among
24 that client population. So, we are certainly
25 interested in understanding a bit more about those

1
2 constituents that you're hearing that this is a
3 problem for and then working you know with DFTA to
4 build off of their programs around education and that
5 sort of thing to be able to work to come to a
6 solution to address the problem.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay, thank you and you
8 know just uhm, even with the repair program, the home
9 repair program, I've been told that it's not eligible
10 for that. So, uhm, you know - and also, yes, they
11 are eligible for the extermination but the problem is
12 that when the exterminator comes, the exterminator
13 can't get to certain sites. Because when you do bed
14 bug extermination, you have to do everything or they
15 will survive. I mean, one bite from a bed bug lasts
16 a bed bug a year. You know, they don't have to eat
17 anymore for a whole year. So, that's why I'm really
18 pushing on this but uhm, I look forward to having
19 further discussions with you.

20 ERIN DRINKWATER: Thanks so much.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Chair Dromm. Uhm,
23 Commissioner, does DFTA have any estimate of how many
24 senior cases of bed bugs infestation? Does DFTA come
25 with that data?

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: We don't have that
3 data. We will be dependent on our sister agencies
4 for that data but I can get back to you and see if
5 that data is disaggregated by age. If it is, we can
6 give you that data following this hearing.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Also, do you collect data from
8 the older adult centers and other programs?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Regarding?

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Like bed bugs. I mean like,
11 we hear it you know from our constituents.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, yeah, no we have
13 not. What we do have is we have you know we have
14 contracts through a run education program through our
15 networks regarding bed bugs, hoarding, dispelling
16 myths. You know, it's that kind of programming that
17 we do but no, we're not collecting data on people
18 impacted by bed bugs or it's not one of the things
19 that we've done.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, that's something that
21 maybe through your education program you should
22 really get some more statistics. Because
23 constituents that we hear from, some of them are in
24 senior buildings, which they're in a better situation
25 because there are more services provided. But if

1
2 they are an individual, it's really a big hassle for
3 the seniors and a lot of them just cannot handle it.

4 So, we just want to make that there are programs
5 and it's good that you look at all the programs that
6 we have funded to see if there could be some
7 expansion of services.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, as Deputy
9 Commissioner Drinkwater and I both are aligned in
10 looking into this more closely and uhm, getting back
11 to you as soon as we can about it. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Uh, so
13 Commissioner?

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, we're very excited
16 about you know the RFP but providers are reporting
17 that they are given a seven day turn around time to
18 negotiate a contract for the older adult center and
19 the RFP. Can this timeline be extended?

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You know, every time we
21 talk about - I have to chuckle because of my great
22 love and admiration for you but it's like, all we
23 ever talk about is extensions. You know, we've been
24 talking about this RFP since last June you know, last
25 June, not this past June last June. And uhm, we uhm

1
2 of course we will you know, our plan as you well know
3 is to get this done in November. We have to. It's
4 for a variety of reasons. You know, we can't wait
5 any longer to have this kind of you know historic
6 expansion.

7 And so the goal is to get this done in November.
8 I've heard some of the same issues that you've heard.
9 You know, it's like, you know I don't have time. You
10 are asking me to reevaluate my model budget and all
11 of those things and of course we're taking that into
12 account. But our goal is to get this done in
13 November sometime and definitely before the end of
14 this calendar year.

15 So, but we have been talking about extensions and
16 expansions and you know -

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But it was supposed to start
18 October 1st and October 1st has passed.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And people wanted more
20 time you know of course. You know, it's always, you
21 know we had to read. We were impacted by the benefit
22 and the gift of a lot of proposers you know and we
23 had to read that. You know, remember every body was
24 concerned. Was anybody going to apply? Well, many,
25 many people applied and many rich proposals.

1
2 So, yes, it was supposed to start October 1st and
3 had we not had so many delays and extensions it may
4 have. And we're well on our way and we're close to
5 the end of this and yes, we're also obviously being
6 mindful of those who need legitimate extensions and
7 additional time.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, also they have the
9 providers saying that they are asked to negotiate
10 contracts with a network older adult centers and
11 NORCs but they haven't even gotten the budget for the
12 older adult, the standalone older adult center.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That - with all do
14 respect, that might be old information because they
15 have received their older adult - all contractors
16 have received their budgets and are in contact
17 negotiations now, alright? And I think that happened
18 late last week.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay because alright.

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I'll get back to you because
22 we met with the provider I think in the middle, in
23 the middle of last week.

24 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think right after we met
3 then you gave them the contract.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, we were on
5 schedule. We needed to get some of the more you
6 know, I'm going to -- we needed to get you know the
7 NORCs out. You know, the number was smaller, the
8 networks the number was smaller. We wanted to finish
9 those so that we could spend the bulk of our
10 concentration and effort and dedication to those
11 standalone senior centers.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I guess the issue was
13 that some of the providers, they have all of them.
14 You know, they have the standalone and they have the
15 network. So, without the standalone --

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, no, let's be
17 clear. Some people responded as standalone and some
18 people responded as a network and some did both. So,
19 if you did both, you know we let you know which one --
20 I mean, we selected the network let's say and then
21 that's the one you provide. We don't do it
22 individually.

23 If you provided a network proposal, then we
24 evaluate you as a network. I just want to clarify

1 that. You don't get looked at twice you know.

2 You're not negotiating twice.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, if you have, oh, so if you
5 have a network then you cannot have a standalone?

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, because in your
7 network more than likely, I've not thought of one
8 network that did not submit everybody that was a
9 standalone for them. But they did it as a network so
10 that they could have more synergy and collaboration
11 across their programs and more funding ability. More
12 collaboration across funding.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, yeah that was not clear
14 to me because uh -

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, I'm sorry about
16 that. I'm sorry about that. For example, I'm going
17 to give you JASA. JASA chose to provide it all as
18 individuals but PSS Presbyterian Senior Services.
19 The submitted as a network and they also submitted
20 individually. They were funded as a network rather
21 than funded as individual but in their funding, all
22 of their individual programs are being addressed,
23 alright.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so you're letting me
3 know that all the providers has gotten all their
4 budgets negotiated.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Unless something
6 miraculous happened between Thursday or Wednesday
7 night and today, uhm, yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, how many new standalone
9 older adult centers is created and could you just
10 give me the breakdown in terms of how many
11 standalone, how many networks and how many NORCs?

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, uhm, in the older
13 adult centers, we went from 249 to 272 and Michael
14 Bosnick, correct me if I'm wrong. Of that 272, 12
15 are networks, right? Are in networks and we went
16 from 28 NORCs to 36 NORCs. Michael, please make me
17 honest and correct my numbers if I'm wrong.

18 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, just as you said from 28
19 to 36 NORCs and then the standalones. And I'm just
20 checking the networks now but what you said is either
21 correct or very close to the number. I'll get that.

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I think it's 12. It's
23 12 or 11.

24 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Okay.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, there are like, okay,
3 about 12 networks?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And within the 12 networks,
6 there are standalone -

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: They are composed of
8 senior centers that you and I are very familiar with
9 in their communities, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, what would be included in
11 a network?

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, a network might
13 have included another site or a social club that they
14 didn't have before. A network might have been the
15 exact programs that they had. I'm just giving you
16 some you know -

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Hmm, hmm.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: A network might have
19 been you know like PSS included. All of its programs
20 right. What they did was then they used the
21 opportunity to collapse all those budgets and have
22 greater flexibility and what we call fungibility
23 between budget items and budget lines across
24 programs.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, do you also have – how
3 many existing programs that would renew as a result
4 of the RFP?

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I, you know, we're
6 still in the middle of contract negotiations and as I
7 said in the testimony, I can't uhm, do a listing of
8 who uhm, of individuals. But I can say is that with
9 minor exceptions, I'm talking about minimal
10 exceptions, everyone whose existing program will
11 continue providing services. Alright, I can't until
12 the public notice comes out, until the public
13 hearing, uhm I'm restricted from sharing that kind of
14 detailed information.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, can you also share with
16 us how many programs that the Council funded through
17 discretionary got into the RFP or got awarded?

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Oh yeah, you know I do
19 have that number and I believe it's about seven and
20 what I'm pleased about with that Chairwoman Chin and
21 Michael, again make me an honest woman and tell what
22 the number is. But I believe that what the great
23 news about that is that – I can give you the details
24 but I can never give you the exact numbers. What I
25 can say is that many of those that were ethnic groups

1
2 and some of those groups that you asked me to – both
3 you and Chairman Dromm asked me to consider, many of
4 those have now been uh are fully engaged and have
5 baselined funding and that's very gratifying.

6 And the same thing happened with NORCs. Not so
7 much that it was some of the ethnic ones but they
8 were also some of the NORCs that were discretionary
9 funding are now baselined. Which is why I asked in
10 the testimony for you not to take away those dollars
11 that have been dedicated to older adults and to keep
12 them in the older adult network, so that we don't
13 make an advance and then lose. You know go backwards
14 because you have worked so hard for this budget to
15 increase that if we lose the discretionary dollars to
16 the network, it would be a major loss. Am I supposed
17 to say that at a hearing?

18 But anyway, uhm, I'm just asking –

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, the money is here in this
20 years budget.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I mean, this year's budget, I
23 think it was increased.

24

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And I'm asking for your
3 support and influence to make sure that in perpetuity
4 it continues.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well Commissioner, you know
6 I'm term limited. So, hopefully we're fighting to
7 get a good Chair for the Committee on Aging.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So am I.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So that they can continue to
10 build on this budget. Oh yeah definitely, every
11 dollar that we allocated in the discretionary
12 funding, we're not giving back. We're going to
13 increase that.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That to me is so
15 important. It's to all of us. It's to the network
16 it important that we maintain a level of support and
17 continuity.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, in the \$229.8 million in
19 annual funding between all these types of programs,
20 do you have a breakdown in terms of how much is for
21 the older adult center? How much is for the network
22 and how much for the NORC?

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, I don't think we
24 broke it down that way. I don't think we have that.
25 Jose Mercado is not with us today and I will get you

1
2 that breakdown immediately after this hearing
3 alright.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, okay that will be good.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Michael, unless
6 Michael, unless you have it.

7 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Well, I just wanted to mention
8 Commissioner as you said a moment ago, with all of
9 the different breakdowns that the Chairwoman is
10 asking about, we're currently negotiating and
11 kneeling them down so that we're going to provide all
12 that information soon, once we finish these
13 negotiations.

14 But the numbers that you gave are definitely in
15 the ballpark of the correct numbers that we're aiming
16 for and things like discretionary becoming fully -

17 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Baselined.

18 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Could becoming baselined and
19 the number of networks is actually a bit higher than
20 you had said etc. But once again, we've been asked
21 not to share specific numbers until we finish the
22 negotiation process.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so when will you be able
24 to share the official number, November 1st, October
25 31st?

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Somewhere around there.
3 I'm not, I'm not, I'm not in no disrespect meant at
4 all but we are in the middle of negotiating and
5 trying to get as - uh, to get you the information
6 that you want as soon as we can go public with it.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. Uh, now how does the
8 Community Care Plan interact with a privately run
9 network of social adult daycare that has grown
10 substantially in the past decade?

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: It's interesting that
12 you ask that question because one of the things that
13 we did encourage and we saw some of it, was to help
14 to make sure that there was no prohibition or
15 barriers if a center wanted to include more social
16 adult daycare services in the proposal and uh in
17 their current proposals. And to the extent that we
18 can provide quality community care plan is to the
19 extent you know that we either lower the number of
20 social adult daycare centers or you know this is
21 vision you know looking in the future to see how we
22 can tap into some of those dollars to support more
23 community care and that's what I can say. Michael,
24 is there anything you want to add to that?

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2 MICHAEL BOSNICK: No, I actually think that
3 covers it well and uh it will be interesting when we
4 have all the results in from the negotiations because
5 we'll be able to see how all these different pieces
6 have fit together precisely and be able to have a
7 profile we can share with the Council and publicly.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah and Councilwoman
9 Chin. I'm sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I think part of that is
11 that it would be interesting to hear like how many of
12 the providers that submitted network RFP included a
13 social adult care component.

14 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Hmm, hmm.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, yeah, that would
16 be and then the other thing is, I know I'm only
17 supposed to answer questions that you asked but on a
18 related topic to, social adult daycare centers, the
19 Ombudsman program has been very, very active even
20 during the pandemic. And so, we're looking forward
21 to giving you that data.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good, yeah, we wanted to
23 really hear how many of them were open and what they
24 did during the pandemic because we know a lot of them
25 shutdown and abandoned all the seniors and that's why

1
2 you know DFTA providers have to pick them up or help
3 them – connect them to the Get Food programs and
4 connect them to services. And we don't even know how
5 many of them has reopened or are they following the
6 you know the city's guideline in terms of COVID and
7 uhm, so it will be good to hear the report back.

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Uhm, now DFTA provides an
10 example in the Community Care Plan of offering joint
11 programming between a nearby older adult center and
12 NORC, so that the older adult members and NORC
13 resident can both benefit. How will this pulling of
14 resources between programs work in practice? And
15 what's the budget impact on the providers?

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, it's interesting
17 because that – without giving you details of who and
18 where, we did see some closer collaboration in a
19 community between a NORC and an older adult center.
20 To the point that we thought let's create a funding
21 synergy between them. You know particularly if it
22 was a single sponsor. And so, we saw more and more
23 of that.

24 And as I said, there was more fungibility being
25 built in so that if the services that a NORC

1
2 provided, we encourage you know the health services
3 and the nursing review that NORCs provide to be built
4 into senior centers. Because we encourage them to
5 have collaborations with local health providers. And
6 so, it's going to be fascinating to start assembling
7 all of that data and seeing where that was realized.

8 And one of the things you mentioned in terms of
9 your opening statement was metrics. Uhm, one of the
10 things that we're looking at, we're coming up with a
11 very, very first year baseline review of the
12 comparison between what we had hoped in the proposal.
13 What we saw in some of the proposals and start
14 documenting that, so that we can evidence based
15 information. You know, two years down the road to
16 show the impact of community care and its prevention
17 of institutionalization.

18 And so, it's one of the areas and Michael, you
19 may want to speak a little more to that. You know
20 with whatever we can share at this point but its been
21 a goal that we are aligned with Chairwoman. Which is
22 let's look at this. This is an expansion. This is
23 an opportunity. This had a goal of community care.
24 Is it realizing that down the road and if so, how?

1
2 So, Michael, if there's anything you want to add
3 to that, it would be helpful.

4 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, thank you Commissioner.
5 Just a couple of things very briefly. One is that,
6 as you said upfront and what I alluded to a moment
7 ago is while we do want to profile what has come out
8 of this RFP. How are these collaborations set up and
9 innovations? Who is coming together in different
10 ways.

11 So, as you just said, an upfront profile of that
12 and then we're also building into our annual program
13 assessments, how have the sites done related to
14 collab when you ask about metrics Chairwoman? How
15 have they done with collaborations, with innovations,
16 with marketing and outreach, virtual programming and
17 reaching people in transportation and service
18 deserts?

19 We're especially focused on those areas. We have
20 our developing metrics in those areas tied to the
21 annual program assessment system. So, they become
22 just a natural part of the way we look at those
23 centers and measure how they're doing. So, that will
24 come over the next year. So, an upfront profile of
25

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2 what's come in and then to see how that plays out
3 over the first year in calendar '22.

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Michael and what's the
5 timing of that upfront profile?

6 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, we want with the upfront
7 profile as soon as the negotiations are done and the
8 contracting takes place to do the profile. So, we
9 want to do that by the end of this calendar year.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, it would be
11 something that we can share with you Chairman Chin as
12 your still in your role as Chairperson.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good, yeah, it's be great to
14 uh, I guess we still have hearings in November and
15 December, so we can get that information.

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes, I'm going to work until
18 the very last day. I'm going to give an opportunity
19 for my colleagues to ask some questions. Uh, so, if
20 any other Council Members that want to ask questions,
21 please use the raise hand function and I see that we
22 have Council Member Brooks-Powers who has a question.
23 Council Member.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so much
3 Chair Chin for the opportunity. Thank you also the
4 agency representatives for testimony and being on
5 today's oversight hearing. I just had a few
6 questions.

7 One, in Queens Community Board 13, the demand for
8 DFTA funded older adult centers is projected to
9 surpass current capacity by over 75 percent by 2030.
10 Queens Community Board 14 is expected to experience
11 more moderate growth. How is DFTA prioritizing areas
12 of the city where older populations are expected to
13 grow significantly in the Community Care Plan? Has
14 DFTA begun identifying sites for new senior centers
15 or naturally occurring retirement communities?

16 Also, interested in knowing uhm, the senior
17 centers and providers in my district have reported
18 concerns about the OAC NORC RFP earlier this year,
19 which in past oversight hearings as mentioned also.
20 And I recall sending a letter to you as well
21 Commissioner about requesting to extend the deadline.
22 Has DFTA received a sufficient number of application?
23 Does DFTA feel confident that the providers will have
24 - excuse me, that providers have enough time to
25 initiate the contracts and deliver uhm services?

1
2 Particularly interested in the response to those
3 questions. I do have a follow up on another program
4 with DFTA but I want to take a moment to answer those
5 few questions.

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, first of all thank
7 you and welcome Council Member. Welcome to the
8 Committee. It's important to know that when we set
9 out the Community Care Plan, we did precisely what
10 you are asking for. We looked at each community
11 district. We looked at its growth and we looked at
12 what we considered service deserts and we started
13 identifying which are the best ways to do that. And
14 it was either establishing looking at where services
15 were now and how could we expand those services and
16 how could you mitigate some of those gaps you know
17 with transportation or other services.

18 So, we did exactly that, we started planning
19 based on growth. Current but based on projected
20 growth as to where those service gaps were. And that
21 how we identified where new programs should go. With
22 a particular attention to what we called were
23 historically underfunded communities and looking at
24 those precisely to make sure that the ethnic and
25 cultural diversities were being addressed.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: So, just wanting
3 to still understand a bit more. Particularly the
4 Community Board that I mentioned and the concerns
5 that have been raised, my understanding is that the
6 concerns that were lifted in the letter I sent you
7 were not necessarily addressed. You know we were in
8 the midst of a pandemic and the affiliates were
9 expected to respond to this RFP.

10 So, that's why I wanted to know if there were
11 sufficient applications submitted because I also want
12 to make sure that we are truly given opportunity to
13 the providers that are serving our communities to be
14 able to take part in this. And that we are given an
15 opportunity for submissions to be provided in a real
16 intentionally way, not just responding to respond.

17 So, I would like to know if you have the
18 information now we're able to share uhm, how DFTA has
19 moved to address these concerns in an intentional
20 way, so that the facilities in my community feel
21 comfortable.

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, thank you so
23 much. The intentional way we did that was we
24 provided I believe five extensions to this RFP. That
25 was very intentional and that was based on

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2 conversations with individuals in the City Council,
3 as well as advocates and others. So, we extended
4 this RFP several times throughout the process.

5 In addition to that, and did we get an adequate
6 number of respondents who were very deliberate about
7 their responses and taking into account some of the
8 innovations. We've got well over 355 respondents.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Alright, I'm sorry,
11 what were you saying? Oh, we had gotten over 355
12 respondents to the RFP. So, we had more than enough
13 respondents, an overage of respondents to address not
14 only current state but also to help address the
15 expansion.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you
17 Commissioner and Chair, if I could just ask one last
18 question?

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, sure.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Uhm,
21 also, I know DFTA recently accepted applications for
22 the DFTA My Ride, the pilot program serving as an
23 alternative to the MTA's Access A Ride and my office
24 has been getting inundated with complaints about
25

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2 Access A Ride and much of my district is a
3 transportation desert.

4 So, these on demand car service options are a key
5 part of filling the transportation gap that we have
6 for our older adult. And so, uhm, just wanting to
7 understand how DFTA plans to administer the program
8 in terms of meeting the demand for the rides and
9 providing the services.

10 I know in the oversight hearing; you spoke about
11 it but I just wanted to use this opportunity to speak
12 to the need. Emphasize the need rather but also to
13 see how DFTA plans to administer the program because
14 we really need to build a gap. I get calls about
15 Access A Ride. Even before I was a Council Member,
16 when I worked in government, I got called almost 20
17 years ago about the gap.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, it is a concern
19 and as I would always say to Assemblyman Comrie, that
20 uhm, it's amazing that with the best service system
21 in the world, the best public transportation system
22 you know, we have such big transportation gaps. But
23 we know that our system was designed 100 years ago
24 and communities have changed since then and we need
25 to be more responsive. Which is why these pilots are

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2 so important, so we share that. That's a common
3 cause we have.

4 As you know, this is a pilot. It's for three
5 years. Older adults are selected randomly through a
6 lottery system you know for them to apply to this
7 pilot. It's the way it was designed. You know it's
8 done in partnership with Department of Transportation
9 and federal government.

10 And we had 14 targeted communities. Of those 14,
11 five of them are in Queens. That goes to show you
12 that we understand where the transportation deserts
13 are.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: What part of
15 Queens?

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Queen six, seven, ten,
17 twelve and fourteen. In the Bronx it's four, five,
18 eight and ten. So, that there are four in the Bronx
19 and there are six in Brooklyn. One, two, three,
20 four, five. Five in Brooklyn, excuse me. There are
21 five in Brooklyn, so this is really targeted to the
22 outer boroughs. Precisely to address transportation
23 deserts and they were devised. These communities
24 were targeted based on demographics including
25 accessibility. And hopefully we can expand this in

1
2 the future. It's a three year pilot. Selected older
3 adults receive a monthly allowance for eight months,
4 so that they can have on demand rides and
5 transportation to wherever need to go. It's not
6 limited to medical appointments. We wanted to make
7 sure because recreation and shopping are just as
8 important to breaking your social isolation as
9 medical appointments are.

10 So, uhm, that's what we're trying to do and each
11 year, we hope to bring a new cohort of older adults
12 into the program.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: You're welcome.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council Member.

16 Uhm, I also wanted to just to follow up on that in
17 terms of transportation, uhm, before COVID, DFTA's \$5
18 million transportation program has eight providers
19 and it provided about 300,000 trips, one way trips
20 annually. And then 82 senior centers provided an
21 additional 400,000 trips. Is DFTA going to improve
22 transportation service to reach older people in
23 isolated server desert or transportation desert, who
24 are unable to use the center service?

25 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, we hope that -

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Besides this pilot program,
3 are there any plans to expand other transportation?

4 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right now, what we've
5 done is, we are looking at the target areas of the
6 transportation programs and uhm, it is something that
7 we're constantly you know trying to mitigate.

8 Because we know particularly in the outer boroughs,
9 that is a great concern. So, My Ride is looking at
10 those communities but it's also looking at new
11 individuals within those communities every year, so
12 that we can do a better assessment as to - we know
13 exactly where the transportation desert exists.
14 That's not our issue. Our issue is how is it that we
15 could match them to the services? And one of the
16 ways we're looking at that is some of the target
17 areas of the transportation programs.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Do you know the cost per ride?
19 And how does that compare to the Access A Ride?

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, I don't have that
21 information but I will definitely get that. That's
22 an excellent question. I would venture to say that
23 we are less expensive than Access A Ride because it's
24 a centralized system and ours are more locally based.

1
2 But that is - Michael, do we have a cost per ride
3 for transportation?

4 MICHAEL BOSNICK: I don't have it here with me
5 but it's less than Access A Ride and for the reason
6 that you just mentioned.

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, okay. Chairwoman
8 Chin, we'll get you that exact data. I don't have
9 that.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean that will be
11 great because I mean, unfortunately the pilot program
12 as you said earlier Commissioner is by lottery. So,
13 I mean, there are a lot of seniors who are in need
14 who did not win the lottery and they get left out of
15 the program and we want to make sure that every
16 senior who needs this service gets it. And if it's
17 better than, cheaper than Access A Ride, than we
18 should get the resources from Access A Ride to expand
19 this program, I think yeah.

20 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Oh, I'm sorry Chairwoman. I
21 just wanted to mention one part of our evaluation of
22 DFTA. My Ride is cost effective. We are
23 hypothesizing that it's going to be less expensive to
24 have this door to door ride for several reasons and
25 we're doing an evaluation and hope to - we'll see

1
2 what the results are but we're expecting that it will
3 show it to be more cost effective. Which will be
4 very important for advocating for -

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, yeah.

6 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, that would be great.

8 So, we're looking forward to that. Uhm, now
9 Commissioner, in your testimony you did talk about
10 the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity or the
11 TRIE.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And identified a range of
14 neighborhoods that needs additional support in light
15 of the COVID-19 pandemic. So, how many of these TRIE
16 neighborhoods will benefit from this new senior
17 Community Care Plan? And what will be the percent
18 increase in services across these neighborhoods?

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uh, first of all, thank
20 you for the question because we targeted this RFP,
21 especially those service gaps to those 33
22 neighborhoods that were identified as TRIE
23 neighborhoods and uhm, we can comfortably say that
24 we've addressed the service gaps in many of those
25 communities. Michael, is there any data that we

1
2 could have on the TRIE communities and the increase
3 in services there? Or the proposed increase in
4 services given the first lush of contract responses.

5 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, from the responses
6 again, we can't give specific data during negotiation
7 but along the lines of what you're saying
8 Commissioner, there is a substantial increase in the
9 number of CD's with TRIE neighborhoods that are
10 getting additional capacity and additional sites.
11 And of course, it's because we really targeted those
12 areas as you were describing.

13 And then also, overall the percentage of total
14 sites, if our negotiations hold out as expected,
15 we'll have a majority of our services in CD's with
16 TRIE neighborhoods through this RFP and we'll be
17 providing that data as part of our profile once the
18 negotiations are done.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, that, I mean those
20 were all some of the basic goals that we were going
21 for and fortunately given the response we were able
22 to realize a lot of those.

23 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Hmm, hmm.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: In the Community Care Plan,
25 you also included \$2 million in funding for expanding

1
2 market and outreach by senior programs, both citywide
3 and in catchment neighborhoods. And this is a key to
4 restoring the utilization of our senior centers after
5 the pandemic. So, what's happening now to expand
6 marketing and outreach? And what should we expect to
7 see moving forward?

8 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, I think there's a
9 two-pronged answer to that. First, is as you have
10 well reminded all of us, uhm that many older adults
11 showed up during this pandemic, who were you know not
12 affiliated at all with - and you've always told us in
13 the last 14 hearings, that we need to make sure that
14 they are not excluded or banded right?

15 And so, that is precisely why we built in an
16 outreach program. Uhm, and an outreach opportunity
17 in uhm, in the network. Because one, it's - the goal
18 is to bring in those individuals who did raise their
19 hand and say, I need services and to see if they
20 continue to need those services. But it's also
21 because of what we just said earlier. These are -
22 we've made an effort in TRIE neighborhoods that may
23 have not been uhm, certain populations in those TRIE
24 neighborhoods might not have been aware of what
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2 services existed. And so, the goal is to also reach
3 out to those individuals in that community.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, I guess one of the
5 questions that we talked about in the last hearing
6 about food insecurity and the need for home delivered
7 meals. So, are providers going to be getting more
8 money for a home delivered meal Commissioner? Are we
9 successful in getting more funding on that front?

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: What I will tell you is
11 uhm, how do I say this? The commitment to home
12 delivered meals clients has been incredible by
13 everyone in the network. Case management agencies
14 and home delivered meals. And as you know that one
15 of the things that we did was uhm, provide additional
16 increase in home delivered meals during the pandemic.
17 Because we knew that there was a great demand and we
18 did that during the RFP process of home delivered
19 meals and what we've also done is make sure that home
20 delivered meals programs have absorbed many of the
21 clients that were not receiving home delivered meals
22 that were receiving Get Food. And the network has
23 been extremely responsive, responsible in making sure
24 that we have case management assessment as well as
25 absorbing those individuals.

1
2 But that being said, uhm, home delivered meals is
3 going to be the area with the greatest growth and
4 that needs attention, given post pandemic but also
5 given this commitment to aging in place. You know
6 people will need two services and you said that quite
7 aptly in your introduction, which was additional
8 homecare hours, additional homecare meals. People
9 can then live more independently. And so, we're very
10 mindful of that. And so, the first three years of
11 the plan recognizes that and addresses some of that
12 but the growth is something that we all as public
13 servants and as public servants committed to
14 community, uh, to aging in place have to keep an eye
15 towards that.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, we have to – we have to
17 continue to advocate for more funding.

18 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Home delivered meal and
20 homecare services and we know that there is
21 definitely going to be an increase and hopefully that
22 will carry you know that message to the next
23 administration. That that is something that is
24 really, really needed.

25

1
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, Chairwoman Chin
3 and this was a line and I was interviewed and someone
4 was asking like, how many NORCs do we anticipate in
5 New York City in the future? And what I said to them
6 was, given the population growth and that this will
7 be one in five New Yorkers will be over the age of
8 60, there will not be one neighborhood that doesn't
9 qualify to be a NORC.

10 So, there will many, many NORC neighborhoods
11 throughout the City of New York and we need to be
12 mindful of that moving forward.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah and I hope that you know
14 my colleagues who are on the committee, who will be
15 here in the next term will continue to advocate for
16 that and as you said earlier, we want to make sure
17 that the discretionary funding stay in place and
18 increase. Because we have shown by example that the
19 you know the center for Immigrant Population and the
20 NORC that we have created in the Council, some of
21 them has been baselined. They were successful in the
22 RFP. But we can continue to build more new centers
23 and new NORCs with discretionary funding, just to get
24 them started and then get them into the DFTA
25 portfolio.

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2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And just remember,
3 every neighborhood will be a NORC neighborhood in the
4 future.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, every Council Member will
6 be advocating for their district. Uhm, so on the
7 budget question, now, the RFP was for 25 new older
8 adult centers or NORC but more programs seem to be
9 receiving awards. So, has DFTA increased total
10 contract funding since more NORC and older adult
11 centers now appear to be included?

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: The - yes, we increased
13 the contract level by 48 million. And so, we made a
14 commitment to 25 new. We think we were well on the
15 way of exceeding that number. We're very pleased by
16 that. By the response and the support of the
17 network, so uhm, that money is being used for that
18 expansion. The goal here was expansion and making
19 sure that we could realize the model budget, so that
20 more programs, you know especially those that were
21 historically underfunded were able to meet the needs
22 you know as you well designed and together well
23 designed that model budget.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But you're exceeding that
25 number right? From your testimony, so.

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LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, yup, yup, yup.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, you're exceeding that number, it seems like more money is needed or otherwise some programs might get shortchanged. So, we just want to be mindful of that.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, there is no program that's being shortchanged. I want to be clear about that. Uhm, there is no program being shortchanged. Uhm, and you know that is a real clear statement that I feel I stand behind. This was not to increase peoples budget; this was you know that wasn't the goal. The goal here was to expand the network and make sure that we have sufficient funding for all of those innovations that we were all working towards.

CHAIREPRSON CHIN: Okay, I know that Council Member Vallone has a question. Welcome Council Member Vallone.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Hi, how are you? I don't hear you.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: There.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Hi.

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COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: There we go.

Commissioner, how are you my dear?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I am fine. I am fine.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: So, I see our two amazing Chair's doing wonderful today, so I just wanted to follow-up on what Margaret said on with the next Council, we hope they follow because Margaret and I will always be watching.

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And you will be watching from a bench, which gives even more authority.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Yes, hopefully God willing after November 2nd, I can come back as a judge and gavel my hammer and say I request a hearing on our amazing Aging Committee.

Thank you for all your hard work and I know this has been a labor of love for everyone on this panel and that is what we are always doing, advocating for our amazing seniors. You know that I've always said Northeast Queens is the true definition of a transportation desert. We have no transportation, so please don't forget Northeast Queens after I leave this area. And we really need — we have that one gigantic NORC that we've always been fighting and

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2 working with the Clearview Gardens and that really is
3 an example of a wonderful residential NORC that is
4 the last bastion for seniors. You know if that
5 wasn't there, there isn't another affordable housing
6 option. Especially out here, so those are wonderful
7 examples of how it works and why we need to define
8 and expand those NORCs. So, it's just a couple of
9 really good points on things that both of you have
10 been saying today and me advocating and always
11 working with Mighty Margaret. I've been happy to be
12 here in all these years and I wouldn't want to be
13 anybody else's right hand but Margaret's. But thank
14 you Commissioner for all your help.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Thank you and we
16 couldn't have a better right hand man than you
17 Council Member Vallone.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I got to tell my brother
19 that.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, thank you Council Member
21 Vallone.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you too.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: You're a great partner in
24 advocating for our seniors.

25

1
2 So, along with the budget question, now how will
3 the recent enhancement in the model budget,
4 budgeting, you know the extra \$10 million and then
5 money for kitchen staff and congregate meal further
6 support the Community Care Plan investment of \$179.2
7 million over four years. Is DFTA following the same
8 criteria across the board for example, funding,
9 recreation, education units in a standardized way?
10 And also, staff salary in the RFP looked kind of low.
11 Was this meant to address the \$20 million model
12 budget? Are there minimum salaries for the older
13 adult center and NORCs staff title? Like Directors,
14 Program Management, Program Manager, Case Manager?
15 Can you share those with us?

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: There are some staff
17 salaries that we have uh, carefully monitored to make
18 sure. They don't fall in the administrative
19 categories that you're talking about but in some of
20 the other service areas, we've been carefully
21 monitoring that to make sure. And in terms of - I
22 want to just respond to that. The model budget was
23 the bases by which we used to analyze what was
24 submitted between what should be required. And the
25 one thing that I can say comfortably without you

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2 know, until we get the public notice, we really
3 narrowed the gap. There were some programs that had
4 been historically over – not over funded. No one is
5 ever over funded. But historically funded at a very
6 rich level or a richer level. Uhm, than others and
7 what we've done is really worked hard to narrow that
8 gap and lift some of those that were historically
9 underfunded to levels of, of, of uh, that really
10 reflected the model budget.

11 And so, uhm, when we look at the profile before
12 the end of December, we will be able to show you
13 exactly what that trajectory was. Where we narrowed
14 that gap and where people have moved up in terms of
15 their funding level and you will – uh, we will all be
16 really proud of the work that was done in that area.

17 But you know, we've had a funding gap
18 historically for the last 30 years in this agency.
19 And so, we've been working hard to bring some equity
20 funding into this network.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I will follow-up with
22 these questions but I saw that Council Member
23 Dinowitz has a question, so I'm going to call Council
24 Member Dinowitz.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good afternoon. First,
3 thank you for all the work you do for our older
4 adults. I just want to quickly ask about the
5 transportation services. You said that those are
6 being expanded to include more. I just, I just was
7 wondering what factors went into the decision of by
8 how much they would be expanded and to where they
9 would be expanded. Can you talk a little more about
10 that?

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Well, I'll talk to you
12 in broad terms about one of the things that we did
13 was when we did DFTA My Ride, we looked at Bronx
14 eight and ten and four and five because we knew that
15 those were service deserts. You know transportation
16 deserts uhm and so, you know we particularly targeted
17 those. In terms of what we're talking about
18 expanding them was to might expand the community area
19 that a particular transportation program was serving.

20 Michael, is there anything you want to add to
21 some of the dimensions of the transportation program
22 that were included in the RFP and in our
23 considerations.

24 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, uh with the allocation
25 that came from the Community Care Plan, one of the

1
2 elements was in fact transportation and we're going
3 to be dealing with that in a couple of ways. The RFP
4 itself was the key way in which we dealt with it and
5 which we asked proposers to take the service desert
6 data and the transportation desert data that we
7 presented to them. So that it would help them along
8 in their analysis and say, look at this data and you
9 use as well your own knowledge of your community as
10 to where these deserts are and then when you're
11 proposing for the older adult center and for the
12 older center, uhm, build in money to reach people in
13 those deserts. And of course, we don't have
14 unlimited funds but the Community Care Plan did allow
15 for the \$48 million investment.

16 Plus as the Chairwoman said, we added in the
17 additional \$10 million from the senior center model
18 budget. So, there was a you know a large amount of
19 money and some of that has been meant for
20 transportation and we do know from getting the
21 proposals in that many proposers did exactly what we
22 asked them to do. To really zero in on where the
23 deserts are. How to reach people in those deserts.
24 How transportation supports can fit into that and
25 budget for it.

1
2 So, during negotiations, we'll be nailing that
3 down and then profiling that by the end of this year
4 as part of our profile of how everything is played
5 out including on transportation through the RFP.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: That's very appreciated
7 and important that Community District eight was
8 included, especially as mentioned it is a I guess a
9 desert and a lot of the centers are actually on very
10 steep hills where you have to walk over very steep
11 hills. Which as we know for older adults can prove a
12 challenge.

13 So, you know I appreciate that expansion and
14 looking forward to more transportation being
15 available. I would add that in District 12 in my
16 Council District, there is another senior center that
17 is also on a hill, which is you know makes it's also
18 on a hill which makes it quite challenging.

19 So, I appreciate you looking at all of the
20 different aspects of a community district in
21 proximity to public transportation but also,
22 topography and things of that nature as barriers for
23 older adult accessing our centers.

24 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, and certainly when we did
25 the desert analysis that I mentioned, we actually did

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2 it as sort of a – well not sort of, as actually a
3 spatial analysis. And as part of the spatial
4 analysis considering things like topography as well
5 and highways cutting through neighborhoods, that sort
6 of thing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I appreciate that
8 holistic approach. It's not one that I think
9 everyone takes every time, so I do appreciate you
10 taking that approach and understanding that there's
11 more than just you know a birds eye view distance
12 from a bus stop. So, thank you for including that.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, thank you for
14 that acknowledgement because from an older adult
15 perspective, topography is just as important as
16 distance.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes, yes, it's uh, to
18 me it resembles a crack in the sidewalk right? A
19 hill.

20 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yup.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But that's important.
22 So, it's good to know that people who you know
23 understand and value those differences in the
24 different community districts uh are in charge of
25 making these decisions, so thank you.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council Member.

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COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Commissioner, uhm, following on the budget question, uh, you know senior center receives the model budgeting but the NORCs did not.

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So, is DFTA working to make sure that you know

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because now NORCs and older adult centers are in the

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same contract universe. So, is DFTA going to address

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the salary disparity between senior center staff and

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NORCs staff? Are they standardized now?

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LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, particular

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salaries are standardized now. It is the

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professional salaries are not standardized. As you

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may remember, one of the things that I first started

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advocating for was more of a professionalization and

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an equity of the salaries of the aging network

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because it becomes a barrier for a social worker to

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come to a senior center versus a hospital or a health

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center.

22

So, one of the things that we have been trying to

23

do is to figure out ways how we can have more

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alignment in some of those professional uh, salary

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rates and that we can do by making sure that the

1
2 aging network is seen as a uhm, a profession of
3 choice and working with social work schools to get
4 and encourage them that aging is a good place. That
5 as long as they could – it's hard, your heart might
6 be there but the salary disparities are so great that
7 it's a disincentive.

8 So, it's one of those longer, broader
9 conversations that we need to have which influences
10 recruitment. Which influences you know all of those
11 issues. But I do believe that an elevation and I
12 think – and this is conjecture on my part as an
13 advocate and also as an older person, and also as
14 your ally that to the extent that we professionalize
15 this and give more credibility to this aging network
16 and the profession and resource it and have a
17 stronger budget to the extent that people would
18 gravitate towards it more and more.

19 Uhm, but yeah, that's a concern that we all share
20 you know it's that competition in that particular
21 service network between the salaries of an aging
22 network, an aging service network versus others. The
23 same thing happens by the way in youth communities.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah. And in terms of the
25 budget I mean, we heard from one provider, a provider

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2 in the Bronx that is slated to receive \$1 million
3 less than their current contracts. But they're doing
4 more work. Why are providers seeing across the board
5 cut instead of despite of all this increase in
6 funding?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: So, I can't answer a
8 particular question but we were surprised also by
9 some of the budget submissions we saw Councilwoman.
10 We saw programs doubling the budget with the same
11 number of service units on average daily attendance
12 and we couldn't see a marginal difference in the
13 service profile that would warrant that kind of a
14 massive increase in the budget.

15 So, we've seen it on all sides. I can't address
16 - no one has been shortchanged. I can say that
17 comfortably and I can say that with full
18 transparency. Uhm, what we have done is narrow the
19 funding gap. What we have done is elevated some
20 programs who are historically underfunded and
21 programs who were fully funded at higher levels have
22 not been damaged or impacted negatively, not damaged,
23 alright?

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I mean, we look forward
25 to seeing the actual funding and the groups that were

1
2 funded. Uhm, we've learned last week that inflation
3 rose 5.4 percent from a year ago. So, are there any
4 costs escalator in the RFP that account for the
5 rising prices as the City Council have called for?

6 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I Believe we had some
7 in there. Michael, can you address that for me or do
8 we wait for Jose and get back to the Councilwoman? I
9 believe that we had some cost escalators in there but
10 Michael.

11 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Yes, you're right Commissioner.
12 Along the lines you were describing a moment ago,
13 with the principles guiding our budgeting, we did use
14 model budget principles and that included with
15 salaries to begin with, so that we asked proposers to
16 actually look at market conditions. What are MSW's
17 getting in New York City and so on. So, that we
18 wanted them to build in enough money to actually pay
19 market, competitive market rate. So, that was kind
20 of the foundational principle as you were suggesting.

21 And then in addition to that, we did a model
22 budget for small, medium, large size NORCs building
23 in that same principle of look at market forces and
24 make sure you're not shortchanging your staff. The
25 result is that, again, we can't give specific data

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2 but we can really say two things. One, the majority,
3 the actual majority of older adult centers actually
4 would be receiving increasing greater than ten
5 percent in their budget.

6 So, we do see that shift as you were saying
7 Commissioner towards more funding for more centers.
8 And then secondly as you also just said, we did build
9 in a cost escalator coming into the RFP period of
10 three years. We don't build individual annual
11 increases but we do show and did take into account
12 when you look at our baseline budget that we used of
13 FY21, what we expect inflation to be and let's take
14 that into account when we're factoring salaries.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So Commissioner, in your
16 testimony you were citing a figure of \$32,000 per
17 older adult per year in terms of overall services for
18 each adult in the Community Care Plan. Did DFTA
19 consider using a per head payment to programs for
20 each senior served since you cited that number?

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, we did that in
22 comparison to the cost of institutionalization versus
23 - no but we have not done that. What we did was we
24 took the number of dollars that we spent in each one
25 of the particular service areas that build the

1
2 Community Service Plan and then looked at the number
3 of adults that that budget serves and that's how we
4 came up with our cost estimate of an annual cost for
5 keeping - And of course, we built in some cost
6 escalators and population growth in there. And
7 that's who we came with the cost per adult.

8 But no, we did not use it as a funding formula,
9 we used that as a comparison for the difference
10 between keeping someone at home versus
11 institutionalized.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, with DFTA - you said for
13 the senior center and NORC I mean, as their budget,
14 would that make any difference?

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That's an interesting
16 question. We could probably do that calculation and
17 see how does that materially differ but I think
18 that's more of a - if I'm understanding you
19 correctly. I think that's a great analysis for
20 moving forward in terms of really building and
21 supporting a Community Care Plan. I think you're
22 giving us a pathway there to look at this differently
23 and to build on what we've looked at already.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean similar to DYCD
25 for youth program right?

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LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Right, right.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: They have uh, a certain amount of money per youth and that's how -

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, and the Board of Education does that and what we've done traditionally, I'm intrigued by this. I'll put it forth in the transition plan. But what I'm intrigued by this is that uh, we have always used cost center analysis rather than individual person analysis and you know we looked at cost per meal. Cost per transportation unit. We've looked at that rather than - So that's a cost analysis rather than total cost of keeping this person in this particular service. So, I'm intrigued by that.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, going forward I think it would be good to take a look but that's what you know other for youth services they do that. You know DFTA has the RFP in the pipeline for elder justice and transportation. You know, given with all the delay and issues with the recent RFP, is DFTA still planning to push through those two RFP?

LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, and they will not be completed in this administration. They will be going - first of all, I want to bring some discussion

1
2 about scale. Which is we're talking about five elder
3 abuse programs alright throughout the entire city.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Very small.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Really small. Same
6 thing for transportation, it's eight and given the
7 conversation that we've had around transportation and
8 making sure that there is an expansion of those
9 transportation deserts and looking the topography
10 issues that we were just discussing with Councilman
11 Dinowitz. Those are the things that we need to kind
12 of like build in. So, yeah, but they're very small
13 in scale. You know, we're talking about eight to ten
14 providers, five to six providers, you know.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, you're saying that you're
16 still going to be able to take care of that in the
17 next two months or just leave it to the next
18 administration?

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: No, we will draft the
20 RFP and issue them because it is based on the
21 thinking of the Community Care Plan. And so, we want
22 to make sure that that's integrated into that and it
23 will be realized in I believe they will become
24 effective next June, okay?

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. I guess just a couple
3 of follow-up questions on the technology. You talked
4 about the addition 10,000 new tablet for the seniors.
5 So, when will they expect to receive that? The
6 10,000 seniors?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uh, from your lips to
8 their hands. They are - right now we've just, I
9 think Michael, correct me if I'm wrong. We've
10 notified the senior centers of what their individual
11 allocations are and we've also given them a profile
12 of who would qualify for that because someone has to
13 live alone, not have access. Uhm, and uhm, and then
14 where are we in that process Michael?

15 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Right, it's uhm, the centers
16 right now are actually contacting the list of people
17 that we gave to them, so that they can compile the
18 list of people who indeed are proven to be eligible
19 because they live on their own. They don't have a
20 device and that information is due to us this week,
21 actually Wednesday. So, after that we can then
22 compile the results and start to give the devices
23 out.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, that's good. So, yeah,
25 so please provide us with an update on that. And

1
2 also during the preliminary budget and executive
3 budget hearing, uh we talked about the in growing
4 senior in the \$3.2 billion emergency broadband
5 benefit. That was in the December 2020 Stimulus
6 Packet and uh has DFTA planned to – what's DFTA's
7 plan to enroll these seniors and do we have any
8 number of how many seniors have been enrolled in this
9 discount plan?

10 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: That has been such a
11 challenge. That whole discount plan has been such a
12 challenge. Michael, you want to add to that. We can
13 tell you that we have a range for the 10,000 who –
14 two things that I think are good news in terms of
15 internet access.

16 Of the 10,000 million, excuse me, I wish it were
17 10 million. Of the 10,000 of tablets that went to
18 NYCHA, the broadband was extended for another year.
19 I believe that happened last June, so following June
20 and we have built in a cost for a network or it's
21 part of this particular roll out plan.

22 Michael do you have – I don't have uh any more
23 information on the broadband, except that it has been
24 a challenge to figure out who is eligible. How to
25

1
2 get access to it and Michael, can you elaborate on
3 that?

4 MICHAEL BOSNICK: Sure, as we know it's a federal
5 program and it's based on individual eligibility.
6 So, individual people actually have to apply for it.
7 So, we did advertise that and give information to
8 each of our older adult centers and as part of the
9 wellness calls, we have - we're asking them to make
10 each week for people that they're not seeing at the
11 center. That they advertise this to the individuals
12 and offer to provide some assistance if they need to
13 fill out the application.

14 So, we don't have data on that now but we did get
15 that word out to the centers and some information on
16 how to apply and to help the individuals apply.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, would you be able to get
18 the data from the centers in terms of how many
19 seniors actually were able to benefit from this
20 program? I guess that would be helpful.

21 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah, I think we
22 should.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Hmm, hmm. Uh, my last
24 question is going to focus on the case management and
25 homecare.

1
2 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I know that we talked about
4 there is going to be an increase demand for case
5 management and homecare service in the Community Care
6 Plan. You noted that future steps along with
7 additional funding are needed. So, what new funding
8 has been allocated to meet this need?

9 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I wish Jose were here
10 so I could tell you what we have had increased in
11 home delivered meals. I know that there has been
12 some adjustment and some increases but I know my OMB
13 people are going to be like, you should know that. I
14 don't remember it right now. Uhm but let me see.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: If not then send it to us.

16 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'll send it to you
17 because I don't want to overstate or understate but I
18 know that a lot of good work and thinking has been
19 done in partnership with City Hall, our Deputy Mayor
20 and OMB and obviously with you in your offices on
21 this whole home delivered meals program.

22 And uhm but as you know in year two, home
23 delivered meals increases, the goal is to increase
24 them and also, in year two of the plan, case
25 management also increases because you cannot handle

1
2 home delivered meals without attending to case
3 management.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But is that also going to
5 include an expansion in the EISEP, the Enhanced In-
6 Home Service for the Elderly Program?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uh, I believe it does
8 Councilwoman and I'll get -- I will get back to you
9 with the details on that. Unless Michael, you can
10 answer that right now.

11 MICHAEL BOSNICK: I think you're right. It's
12 best that we just gather that data and send it in.

13 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Okay, yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, because that is such a
15 great program. A lot of people don't even know about
16 it because you know a lot of seniors always think
17 that oh, I have to be on Medicaid to qualify for
18 homecare. And the EISEP program, even though it's
19 not a lot of hours, it just uh, we have seen you know
20 that it's such a great benefit to seniors who are
21 living alone or they have a spouse that needs extra
22 care. So, we just want to make sure that's included.

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Most of the DFTA
24 homecare program is funded through the EISEP program.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, and then New York State
3 allocated \$8 million for unmet needs including
4 waitlists for these services. Do you know how much
5 of this money that New York City received and what
6 did we use it for?

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Uhm, what funding
8 Councilwoman?

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: This is New York State
10 allocated \$8 million for unmet needs including wait
11 lists for like homecare and case management service.

12 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: I'm not aware of
13 anything that we've gotten to date on that. Uhm,
14 Michael, are you aware of anything? Any allocation
15 that we've gotten specific to that? I know we
16 received uhm some emergency care money but are you
17 aware of anything yet?

18 MICHAEL BOSNICK: That was a discussion from the
19 state several months ago and again, I think when Jose
20 does the you know summary of funding for homecare and
21 for home delivered meals, he could provide that.

22 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah but I don't
23 believe that we've received an allocation. I know we
24 received an earlier allocation for meals but I don't

1
2 believe that we received that allocation. So, we'll
3 get back to you on that Councilwoman.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay.

5 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: But we're always happy
6 to hear that the state's going to give us more money.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: They should. I mean, like you
8 know the aging population is growing. I mean, they
9 got to give us our fair share since we you know we
10 all pay state tax.

11 So, I think whatever question that I did not get
12 a chance to ask, we will submit to you and we will
13 also hear back from you on some of the questions that
14 you were not able to give us the information on.

15 So, I thank you very much Commissioner and Deputy
16 Commissioner for joining us in this hearing today.
17 Lorraine, I'm going to - we still go two more months
18 to go.

19 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yes, me too. Yes, me
20 too.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: We have to use this time to
22 advocate for as much as we can.

23 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And we're going to get
24 as much done as anyone can in the next, I think it's
25 81 days left. We are going to pack it in. Look at

1
2 what we've done just with mental health. Look at
3 what you've done with older adult centers. So, I
4 think two months is a long time in our life.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, it's great seeing you
6 and stay well.

7 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: And you. Thank you so
8 much.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And we will continue to work
10 on it.

11 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So, I'm going to pass it back
13 to our Committee Counsel to call the public panels.
14 Take care Commissioner.

15 LORRAINE CORTES-VAZQUEZ: Bye, thank you so much.

16 MODERATOR: Thank you. We will now begin public
17 testimony. The first panelist in order of speaking
18 will be Kevin Jones, Brianna Paden-Williams and
19 Jeremy Kaplan.

20 I'd like to remind everyone that unlike our
21 typical Council hearings, we will be calling
22 individuals one by one to testify. Each panelist
23 will be given five minutes to speak. Please begin
24 your testimony once the Sergeant has started the
25 timer. Council Members who have questions for a

1
2 particular panelist should use the Zoom raise hand
3 function and I will call on you in the order you
4 raised your hand after the panelist has completed
5 their testimony.

6 For panelists, once your name is called, a member
7 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms
8 will set the timer then give you the go ahead to
9 begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that
10 you may begin before delivering your testimony. I
11 would like to now welcome Kevin Jones to testify.
12 After Kevin Jones, I will be calling Brianna Paden-
13 Williams and then Jeremy Kaplan to testify.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 KEVIN JONES: Thank you. Good morning Chair Chin
16 and members of the City Council Committee on Aging.
17 My name is Kevin Jones and I am the Associate State
18 Director for Advocacy at AARP New York, representing
19 750,000 members of the 50 plus community across New
20 York City.

21 I want to thank you for providing us with the
22 opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing
23 to discuss the Community Care Plan and the city's
24 investment in helping New Yorkers age with dignity in
25 their communities. As many of you participating

1
2 already know, older adults are one of the fastest
3 growing populations in New York city and will
4 continue to make up a greater portion of the city's
5 total population in the years ahead.

6 New York City's older adult population is also
7 becoming increasingly diverse as the city has seen
8 the most significant growth of adults above the age
9 of 65 in Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander
10 communities over the past 20 years, and it is
11 anticipated immigrant New Yorkers will make up more
12 than half of the city's older adult population very
13 soon. In addition to the growth in New York city's
14 older adult population, we have witnessed a growing
15 desire among New Yorkers and others across the
16 country to remain in their communities as they age.

17 In a national survey that AARP conducted back in
18 2018, we found that 76 percent of Americans above the
19 age of 50 said that they would prefer to age in their
20 current home, and 77 percent stated that they would
21 like to continue living in their community as long as
22 possible. However, we found that only 59 percent of
23 those believed that they would be able to remain in
24 their communities as they grow older.

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2 These demographic shifts and changing sentiments
3 among older New Yorkers will require the city to
4 adapt to the growing needs of this population, as
5 well as ensure that older adults have access to high
6 quality services and a continuum of care that will
7 allow them to age with dignity in their homes.
8 However, the city's budget for aging-related services
9 continues to remain woefully underfunded as the
10 Department for the Aging's budget remains about half
11 of a percentage of the city's total budget through
12 FY22.

13 We also know that many of the city's
14 neighborhoods that are witnessing the fastest growing
15 older adult populations lack access to a nearby older
16 adult center or NORC. Additionally, the OACs and
17 NORCs that operate in low income communities of color
18 have historically suffered from inequitable funding
19 allocated by the city, and therefore their impact and
20 ability to deliver comprehensive and quality aging-
21 related services to their clients diminished.

22 We commend the city for their recognition of
23 these issues and for their recent efforts to address
24 them with the launch of the Five-Year Community Care
25 Plan, along with their initial investment of \$39.4

1 million in the FY22 budget. We are eager to see the
2 opening of 25 additional older adult centers/NORCs
3 focused in historically underserved communities of
4 color, as well as the expansion of community-based
5 aging services to meet the needs as the city's older
6 populations as it continues to grow. We believe the
7 city's expansion of community-based services and
8 programming for older adults is a critical step
9 toward helping more New Yorkers remain in their homes
10 and age with dignity in their own communities, which
11 has been shown to often improve both physical and
12 mental health outcomes, as well as avoid stays in
13 nursing homes and related facilities.
14

15 These investments into community-based care and
16 services have also been proven to save taxpayers
17 money as these services can reduce the frequency for
18 older adults to be hospitalized or placed in a
19 nursing home. However, as the city begins to
20 allocate the Community Care Plan funding to providers
21 in the coming months, we encourage the Mayor and DFTA
22 to ensure that these funds are distributed equitably
23 and involve the city's full network of local
24 community-based organizations in the process.
25

1
2 During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed how
3 the city's network of local nonprofits and community-
4 based organizations went above and beyond to meet the
5 increased demand for meals, health services, and
6 other vital programs among the city's population of
7 older adults. These organizations are a key piece to
8 ensuring that older New Yorkers are provided with the
9 culturally competent and high-quality services in
10 their communities in the years to come.

11 In addition to the funding that has already been
12 allocated under the Community Care Plan, we urge the
13 city to set aside funding in the next budget cycle to
14 provide older adult centers and NORC providers with
15 additional funds that they can use to invest in
16 technology and technological literacy services,
17 excuse me, in order to help address the digital
18 divide and improve access among older adults.

19 Thank you for giving me the time to testify today
20 and I'm happy to take questions.

21 MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Jones. I would like to
22 now welcome Brianna Paden-Williams to testify.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 BRIANNA PADEN-WILLIAMS: Hello, I am Brianna
25 Paden-Williams the Communications and Policy

1
2 Associate at LiveOn New York. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to testify today.

4 LiveOn New York's members include more than 100
5 community-based nonprofits that provide core services
6 which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our
7 communities as we age. As the city works to build
8 back a better future for New Yorkers, the stakes have
9 rarely been higher to ensure older New Yorkers have
10 the support they need to safety age in their
11 communities.

12 The Community Care Plan works to recognize these
13 stakes investing in funding and articulating the
14 increase and demand for services that is likely to be
15 experienced in the coming years. However,
16 implementing a five year vision amidst a global
17 pandemic and which providers are struggling to stay
18 afloat and which the uncertainties of the new normal
19 has largely made it clear that there is still work to
20 be done.

21 Today, providers have begun receiving award
22 letters for the older adult center and NORC RFP and
23 are starting the negotiation process prior to
24 contracts going into place. Unfortunately, initial
25 reports on this process have raised significant

1
2 concerns on if investments made in the care plan are
3 sufficient to fully fund the number of contracts it
4 seeks to execute. Representative of this, you are
5 hearing of the city urging providers to enter into
6 contracts upwards of \$1 million less than was
7 proposed within the providers application.

8 In response to these challenges and others that
9 we have heard throughout the RFP process, LiveOn New
10 York recommends DFTA must extend the timeline given
11 to RFP award winners to review and enter into
12 contracts. Currently, DFTA is giving providers just
13 five business days to submit budget documents and
14 scopes of work. This is in response to budgets and
15 units that are vastly different from what was
16 originally proposed.

17 Second, the city must retract its position that
18 providers enter a ten percent de minimis indirect
19 cost rate when finalizing contractual budgets and
20 instead commit to entering into contracts with each
21 providers indirect cost rate.

22 Third, given the diverging bottom line budgets
23 between award and proposal, the Department for Aging
24 must provide further contacts and justification when
25 responding to award recipients in a way that

1 significantly alters the proposed budgets or units.

2 And beyond the RFP, the Community Care Plan

3 articulates growing demand for services critical for

4 older New Yorkers living in communities including

5 case management, home delivered meals, homecare and

6 more. And to truly address these increases and

7 demand, LiveOn New York recommends the following: An

8 investment of \$16.6 million to serve existing clients

9 within traditional home delivered meal program;

10 invest the required funding to the GetFood client

11 transitioning to the home delivered meals contracts

12 at a higher rate; as well as expand investments in

13 case management to ensure all clients can be screened

14 for case management eligibility and receive the

15 critical services they should be eligible for.

16 In addition, LiveOn New York strongly supports

17 the Bill 1219, that would provide assistance to older

18 adults with bed bugs in their homes. Everyone should

19 be able to safely age in their homes without the fear

20 of bed bugs infesting their homes and this act would

21 provide older adults living in housing residences

22 with the necessary support and services to eradicate

23 bed bug infestations in their home.

24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

1
2 MODERATOR: Thank you. I would like to now
3 welcome Jeremy Kaplan to testify. After Jeremy
4 Kaplan, I will be calling on Philip Chong and then
5 Peter Kempner.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 JEREMY KAPLAN: Thank you and good afternoon
8 Council Members and thank you Chair Chin. My name is
9 Jeremy Kaplan, I am the Executive Director at Encore
10 Community Services. A nonprofit serving older New
11 Yorkers on Manhattan's westside from 110th Street all
12 the way down to 14th Street. We offer a range of
13 services to help seniors age successfully, including
14 operating an older center. We were just approved for
15 an older adult network in the theater district and we
16 also provide home delivered meals in residential
17 buildings and more.

18 Over the past ten years, the number of older
19 adults in the city has skyrocketed. The 65 plus
20 population has increased 12 times faster than the
21 city's under 65 population and now represents 1.24
22 million people across the five boroughs and these
23 numbers are only continuing to grow.

24 We were thrilled by the announcement of the
25 Community Care Plan this spring and we applaud the

1
2 city for beginning the rollout. The plan is an
3 important step for our city in expanding services
4 that support the health and wellness of older adults.
5 Services including older adult centers in NORCs with
6 an emphasis on community partnerships, continuity of
7 care, virtual services and congregate programming are
8 key to successfully aging and avoiding institutional
9 care.

10 With that said, as the plan takes shape we do
11 have a couple of concerns. I could not agree more
12 with the Commissioner when she said that strategic
13 investments need to be made going forward. While the
14 Community Care Plan represents a sorely needed boost
15 to senior services. Our city must consider long term
16 needs of older New Yorkers.

17 In the November budget modification, the
18 Administration must fully allocate outyear budgets
19 that are needed to sustain these contracts. For
20 which funds are not currently in place.

21 Without proper outyear projections the contracts
22 will face a fiscal year cliff in 2023. Furthermore,
23 in order for the Community Care Plan to be one that
24 is truly comprehensive, the long term food security
25 needs of seniors must be factored in. Many of the

1
2 HDM and older adult center contracts interact with
3 one another. Our kitchens, our facilities are
4 inextricably linked. We need better infrastructure.

5 The reimbursement rate for the home delivered
6 meals contracts are capped at \$2.20 below the
7 national average for urban areas. New York City can
8 do so much better by our older New Yorkers. We urge
9 the city to invest \$16.6 million to serve existing
10 clients within the traditional home delivered meals
11 program.

12 Increasing the HDM rate will also demonstrate
13 foresight to the fact that many recovery meal
14 participants will qualify for home delivered meals
15 past 2022 and right now, there is absolutely no plan
16 for them. The program will require critical
17 infrastructure enhancements reflecting the rising
18 costs of food, changes in the labor market, and
19 heightened cost of insurance, gas, packaging and
20 storage. It is critical that we build on the good
21 work of the Community Care Plan and create a strategy
22 for addressing the needs of older New Yorkers for
23 many years to come.

24 Thank you to the Council. Thank you Chairperson
25 and members for your time today.

1
2 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. I
3 would like to now welcome Philip Chong to testify.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 PHILIP CHONG: Thank you Chair Council Member
6 Chin, Speaker Johnson, members of the Aging
7 Committee, and Commissioner Lorraine Cortez Vazquez
8 for your time and the opportunity to speak to you.

9 My name is Philip Chong, President & CEO at
10 Quincy Asian Resources. We call ourselves QARI with
11 the acronym, a non-profit immigrant social service
12 agency based in New York City and Massachusetts. So,
13 we've serving the Asian and immigrant communities
14 since 2001. We provide wrap-around services in youth
15 development, family support, food security, uhm
16 social justice, adult education, and workforce
17 development.

18 So, during the pandemic, QARI has been working
19 tirelessly to help support our clients to access
20 food, vaccination, comfort, and important information
21 to navigate the unprecedented challenging time. In
22 2020, QARI was awarded as the anchor Pan Asian meal
23 provider to prepare and deliver culturally sensitive
24 meals to elders and vulnerable families across all
25 five boroughs.

1
2 In the past twelve months, we have delivered over
3 1.8 million meals to the people in the New York City.
4 As we all know, the pandemic has created many
5 barriers and challenges in all aspects of our lives.
6 We faced as many challenges as you can imagine from
7 limited resources, supply chain disruption, labor
8 shortage, and increasing food prices. As an
9 immigrant and Asian American myself, like many other
10 immigrants and refugees, we fight for our
11 survivorship and advocate for others to ensure they
12 are being taken care of.

13 For the silver lining, through this program, the
14 GetFood Program, our immigrant restaurant owners
15 could reopen and provide hundreds of employment
16 opportunities to the immigrant communities; and
17 elders showed their appreciation and call us to say
18 how much they enjoyed the Pan Asian meal that we
19 provide especially during the winter time when the
20 major snow storm made our door-to-door delivery to
21 become extremely challenging.

22 But we know we cannot give up because the elders
23 have been counting on us. Unfortunately, we faced
24 even more challenges when we witnessed increasing
25

1
2 Asian hate crime in the city and across the country
3 in the last 20 months.

4 Elders that we serve continue to raise the
5 question to us whether they made the mistake to move
6 to this country. In May, QARI worked with two
7 community members, Julianna Lee and Oanh Nguyen, to
8 distribute whistles to the elders in New York City,
9 Los Angeles, and Massachusetts. In thinking about
10 how they could help support vulnerable elders, they
11 connected with QARI and the Whistle Against AAPI Hate
12 project was born.

13 In New York, QARI partnered with City Harvest at
14 its mobile food pantries, Charles B Wang Community
15 Health Center, New York Chinese Consolidated
16 Benevolent Association, Protect Chinatown, and NY
17 Visiting Nurse to distribute these whistles to the
18 elders.

19 As we think of many of our parents and
20 grandparents and their vulnerability as AAPI elders,
21 we hope that the whistle will provide a sense of
22 protection from potential harassment and harm, and a
23 reminder that the community is standing with them.
24 Given the little control we hold over random acts of
25 violence and hate, even small things can have a big

1
2 impact. Each whistle is accompanied by a note in
3 Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and English to share our
4 message to the elders that their community is
5 listening and standing by with care and support for
6 them.

7 We know our work cannot stop here when the
8 GetFood program is coming to an end in November.
9 With the track records that we have, we developed a
10 multilingual digital platform for SNAP recipients to
11 purchase fresh produce from the local farmers. In
12 the meantime, we are planning to launch the nation's
13 first clean energy powered mobile food distribution
14 network, focusing on plant-based in New York City to
15 provide access to fresh produce and culturally
16 sensitive meals to our elders and the vulnerable
17 families.

18 What the pandemic has taught us is the importance
19 of distributing timely and effectively to our
20 clients. As the Department for the Aging and the New
21 York City Council work together to devise a strong
22 vision and Community Care Plan that will determine
23 for our city innovates the senior service system to
24 be more responsive to the needs of our immigrant
25 seniors. We ask you to keep immigrant-centered

1 providers and voices at the table. We are looking
2 forward to collaborating with DFTA in different
3 innovative ways to help support our elders and their
4 family members.
5

6 As the QARI slogan says, we are immigrants
7 supporting immigrants. We are strong -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 PHILIP CHONG: And we're immigrant strong. Thank
10 you so much.

11 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. I
12 would like to now welcome Peter Kempner to testify.
13 After Peter Kempner I will be calling on Alexander
14 Ryley and then Gil Bloom to testify.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 PETER KEMPNER: Thank you very much. My name is
17 Peter Kempner and I am the Legal Director and Elderly
18 Project Director at Volunteers of Legal Service.

19 VOLS was established in 1984 and our purpose is
20 to leverage private attorneys to provide free legal
21 services to low-income New Yorkers to help fill the
22 justice gap. Our Senior Law Project focuses our
23 services on helping low-income New York City seniors
24 plan for the future by obtaining wills and other
25 advance directives. This planning allows seniors to

1
2 ultimately make their wishes clear, empower their
3 chosen caregivers, and allows them to age in place in
4 the community for as long as is feasible.

5 In addition to our life planning services we
6 operate a legal advice hotline for seniors. Legal
7 issues related to eviction and homeless tops the list
8 of questions we hear about from our clients. While
9 both New York City and New York State have taken
10 significant steps to protect the rights of low-income
11 tenants in recent years, landlords continue to push
12 forward with their efforts to force out long-term
13 tenants in rent regulated housing, many of whom are
14 seniors.

15 The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act
16 of 2019, eliminated many of the perverse incentives
17 landlords had to force long-term tenants out, such as
18 high vacancy rent increases and high rent
19 deregulation. The Universal Access to Counsel
20 program now ensures that seniors at or below 200
21 percent of the federal poverty level receive free
22 representation in eviction proceedings.

23 But even as these reforms and programs represent
24 progress in reducing evictions and homelessness
25 amongst New York City seniors, many threats remain

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2 unaddressed. One of the most challenging situations
3 a senior can find themselves in, is a bed bug
4 infestation. Beyond the bites, property damage, and
5 the trauma that an infestation can cause, this is a
6 situation that can put a senior at risk of eviction
7 and homelessness.

8 Many landlords are eager to bring holdover
9 proceedings based on a nuisance claim where a senior
10 tenant is the victim of a bed bug infestation. In
11 fact, one of the few types of eviction cases that
12 have been allowed to move forward in the face of
13 recent and current pandemic related eviction
14 moratoriums are hold over proceedings where the
15 landlord is alleging a tenant is causing a nuisance.

16 Many seniors who are fully willing to comply and
17 cooperate with their landlords in taking the
18 necessary steps to treat and hopefully eliminate a
19 bed bug infestation, may find themselves unable to do
20 so because of physical limitations or disability.

21 Intro. 1219 clearly recognizes, that for a bed
22 bud infestation to be properly abated the tenant must
23 declutter, bag personal items, move heavy furniture
24 and appliances. Otherwise, the efforts will be in
25 vain. Seniors with able bodied friends and family

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2 members or those who have the financial resources to
3 hire help will be able to properly prepare an
4 apartment for bed bug remediation.

5 Sadly, this leaves behind the most isolated
6 seniors who have the least resources. These are the
7 very seniors who if evicted will face homelessness
8 because they don't have anyone to take them in, nor
9 will they have the financial wherewithal to find safe
10 and affordable alternative housing.

11 I have seen bed bug related nuisance hold over
12 cases play out repeatedly in Housing Court. The
13 parties reach an agreement or the Judge orders access
14 for bed bug treatment and the senior tenant is unable
15 to comply because they cannot properly prepare their
16 apartment for remediation. Too often this spirals
17 out of control ending with a frustrated Judge letting
18 an execution of a warrant of eviction go forward.

19 Legal services attorneys are often able to tap
20 into some resources from non-profit agencies or
21 government agencies to avoid this outcome, but these
22 resources are scarce and difficult to locate. The
23 mandate in Intro. 1219 that the services be the
24 subject of educational and outreach campaigns, will
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2 ensure that seniors in need and their advocates will
3 be able to avail themselves of the program.

4 Beyond the human toll of homelessness resulting
5 from a bed bug infestation, from a cost-benefit
6 perspective it is clearly preferable to invest
7 taxpayer dollars in a program like the one outlined
8 in statute or the bill, than to pay much more to
9 house a senior in a shelter or other type of
10 transitional housing.

11 In addition, homelessness leads to deteriorating
12 health outcomes for seniors resulting in increased
13 costs in Medicaid, Medicare, they may find themselves
14 in a nursing home or other facility, most often at
15 taxpayer expense. Our hope is that the assistance
16 and support outlined in Intro. 1219 will save
17 disabled New York City seniors from eviction,
18 homelessness, and the spiraling negative impact that
19 this will have on their health and wellbeing.

20 Thank you for allowing us to submit this
21 testimony today.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 PETER KEMPNER: And for supporting the needs of
24 New York City's seniors.

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2 MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Kempner. I would like
3 to now welcome Alexander Ryley to testify. After
4 Alexander Ryley, I will be calling on Gil Bloom.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 ALEXANDER RYLEY: Good afternoon. Thanks very
7 much for the opportunity to testify about this
8 proposed legislation and uh, well, before I talk
9 about how much I agree with everything Pete Kemper
10 just said, I will say that I am Alex Ryley, Director
11 of the Elder Law Practice at the Legal Aid Society.

12 The Legal Aid Society is the oldest and largest
13 nonprofit public interest law firm in the United
14 States. We work on more than 300,000 individual
15 legal matters annually for low-income New Yorkers
16 with civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems in
17 addition to law reform representation. So, I am
18 within the civil practice where we have various
19 practices not just elder law but employment law,
20 immigration health law, homelessness rights,
21 practices.

22 So, yes, I agree with and support everything that
23 Pete Kempner just said and we very much support this
24 legislation. What I wanted to contribute is just a
25 couple of suggestions on the subject first of all of

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2 public awareness. So, even if this were to be
3 implemented, well, first I should say that in my
4 recollection of the original version of this
5 legislation, called for DFTA to implement this
6 program and the present version calls for DSS I think
7 to do it with the assistance of DFTA in terms of
8 outreach.

9 If this program were to be in effect, it wouldn't
10 work if people don't know about it and obviously
11 that's why DFTA is being called upon to help with
12 outreach but in addition to DFTA's assistance, one
13 possibility would be to require landlords, property
14 owners to notify DFTA or whatever administering
15 agency there is, DSS of a bed bug infestation where
16 there is known to be an older person in the dwelling.
17 Just as a landlord is required to notify a marshal if
18 there's an older person in an eviction situation and
19 the marshal is required to notify APS. That's one
20 thing, and then also, it would be worthwhile for DFTA
21 to coordinate with other agencies. For example,
22 Department of Finance which administers the SCRIE and
23 SHIE programs to include mailings of the various
24 documents that Department of Finance sends to older
25 people in relation to those programs.

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2 Its certainly been my experience and I'm sure Mr.
3 Kempner's too, that uh, that older people are often
4 hesitant to report bed bug infestations to their
5 landlords, partly because they think they are going
6 to get in trouble or the landlord is going to get
7 mad. So, if they were to know that this program
8 exists and that there is support for them out there,
9 then I think this would also lead to more timely
10 reporting which would be terrific for everyone.

11 The last thing I wanted to mention is that the
12 problem of older people not being able to make
13 necessary preparations in their apartments for bed
14 bug eradication, is identical to the problem of the
15 rises in relation to other housing code violations.
16 So, before bed bugs reemerged in New York City a
17 number of years ago, we would still see many
18 instances where there were housing code violations in
19 older peoples apartments that need to be corrected
20 but landlords would say, well, we can't do that
21 because you know the dresser is in the way. Or the
22 armoire is in the way or whatever it is and you know
23 our people are not going to move those items because
24 we don't want the liability. All that kind of thing
25 and then, there would be a stalemate because the

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2 older person can't do it. They have no one in their
3 family who can help. There's no service in the city
4 available for this.

5 So, we're hoping that in addition to this
6 legislation, there could be legislation that would
7 also require an agency to provide this additional,
8 really identical sort of service with respect to
9 other housing code violations. And then actually it
10 would be a much simpler service. It would be a
11 matter of just moving a couple of things as opposed
12 to the very labor intensive work needed to prepare
13 for bed bug remediation. Thank you very much.

14 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. I
15 would like to now call on Gil Bloom to testify.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 GIL BLOOM: Hello, good day, my name is Gil
18 Bloom, I am representing the New York's Pest
19 Management Association. I'm also the owner of
20 Standard Pest Management, a New York based firm doing
21 business since 1929. I served as one of the
22 entomologists members on the New York City Bed Bug
23 Advisory Board and subsequently conducted training to
24 a number of New York City agencies and authored bed
25 bug manuals for NYCHA and HPD.

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2 I've also provided in-service bed bug training to
3 New York City DOA, several social service agencies
4 including SAGE, Heights and Dora and Carter Burden.
5 With this extensive background, I would like to offer
6 the following knowledge for consideration: I would
7 add that bed bugs can be especially problematic for
8 seniors as they tend to react less to bites and they
9 may not see them as well.

10 Furthermore, they may become reservoir units
11 effecting other units and in addition, they may be
12 denied health and other aids due to the presence of
13 bed bugs. Perhaps the single most important aspect
14 of addressing bed bugs is that successful management
15 lies in the details. And that a macro level of
16 threat needs to be addressed, such as limited moving
17 of furniture and in some cases deep cleaning, it is
18 frequently the lack of microlevel assistance that
19 results in lacking bed bugs an inevitable
20 reinfestation. Much to the dismay of all concerned,
21 residents, neighborhoods, pest management and
22 property management alike.

23 The second biggest issue I've observed over the
24 years is the lack of bed bug knowledge and basic
25 preparation protocols among the assorted vendors and

1
2 ad-hoc prep persons. I have seen and reviewed
3 successful cases of assistance but far too often am
4 aware of situations that leave much to be desired.

5 And that they exacerbate the situation through
6 unintentional spread overlooking the important basic
7 best practices thereby providing for a false sense of
8 required preparation. The unnecessary discarding of
9 items and at worst, illegal unsuccessful and
10 dangerous placement of items in plastic bags with
11 insecticide strips.

12 If this proposed legislation is going to have a
13 measurable positive outcome on bed bug management for
14 those in need of assistance, it must be guided by
15 sound entomological protocol and best practices.
16 Which should be consistent but evolving in accordance
17 with new bed bug control practices. The goal is not
18 to make pretreatment assistance more difficult but
19 rather have it provide for truly effective steps in
20 regard to the nonchemical aspects required for
21 successful bed bug remediation.

22 As an example, I have attached a recent research
23 which I was in review it for, which addresses the
24 occasional extent to which the assistance may be
25 needed. The link is included on the document I

1
2 provided. It's out to get bed bugs out of your
3 belongings by Cornell Community IPM Program. Ergo, I
4 recommend the establishment of a limited oversight
5 group comprised of health, aged, pest management, a
6 representative of Cornell Community IPM Program and a
7 social work practitioner.

8 The goal of this group would be to establish base
9 guidelines and best practices to which all funded
10 services would have to abide by. In addition, this
11 information to be made available to all New Yorkers
12 and stakeholders regardless of socioeconomic status
13 as bed bugs do not discriminate.

14 Our concern is that misguided attempts at
15 assisting people only exacerbates and spreads the
16 problem. The inaccurate information such as bed bugs
17 jumping, which they do not. They do not jump; they
18 do not fly. You know, only creates a worse scenario.
19 It's important to deal with a bug you have to deal
20 with it at the bug level to begin with and then move
21 up through the different agencies. Thank you.

22 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. At
23 this time, if your name has not been called and you
24 wish to testify, please raise your hand using the
25

1
2 Zoom raise hand function. Seeing no raised hands,
3 Chair Chin.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I wanted to thank all
5 the panelists. Yeah, I wanted to really thank all
6 the panelists for testifying, especially the three
7 panelists that talked about the bed bug legislation.
8 And thank you for your suggestions and hopefully we
9 can incorporate you know some of your suggestions
10 into the legislation and get it passed.

11 I think for uhm, for Peter and uh, and uh, let's
12 see Alex Ryley, great to see you guys. If you could
13 provide us some data in terms of cases, I think that
14 would be helpful. Because from the testimony you
15 know you heard earlier from DFTA and there is no
16 statistic. I mean, they're not gathering information
17 about seniors that had to go through the bed bug
18 situation.

19 So, if there were like court cases that you are
20 familiar with or clients that you have helped with
21 this situation, please you know provide us with some
22 data so that we can strengthen the legislation. And
23 also, when you talk about you know in terms of uhm,
24 you know outreach, education that is needed. More
25 than just giving it to the senior center and allowing

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2 senior centers to do a workshop with two. That's not
3 sufficient. So, I think we can definitely you know
4 expand on that process.

5 And also, thank you to uhm, Mr. Bloom for your
6 technical you know expertise and we can see how we
7 can incorporate some of that also to strengthen the
8 legislation. So, thank you again on that.

9 Uhm, is the other panelist uh, is it from Encore,
10 is it Jeremy Kaplan, are you still on? I think he's
11 still here but I just had a question for him.

12 JEREMY KAPLAN: Hi.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Hi Jeremy, great to see you
14 again.

15 JEREMY KAPLAN: Hi, Chair Chin.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I know I saw you last month on
17 the GetFood part. Uhm, could you just like give us
18 because I know you heard from DFTA that your network
19 was funded. Do you want to share some - what was
20 your experience in terms of the contract negotiation,
21 the timeline? Uhm, was there any obstacle that you
22 had in terms of with the RFP?

23 JEREMY KAPLAN: Sure, uhm, well, we received our
24 notification, our formal notification middle of last
25 week. We had applied for - we had applied for a

1 network which in our case it was a small network of
2 two centers. That included our existing center.
3 Uhm, and an additional one for an expansion to launch
4 a lifelong learning center.
5

6 We were approved for the network which
7 essentially included the renewal of our additional
8 center and the lifelong learning center. So, we were
9 very, very happy with that. Uhm, the budget that we
10 received was lower than the budget that we had
11 submitted for. With that said, so was the proposed
12 contracted units. You know again, just you know
13 having just gotten the notification uhm later last
14 week, having dug into whether or not that was
15 proportional. You know I hope it was. Uh, uh, but
16 uh we were asked to turn things around in seven days
17 and we told our friends over at DFTA that we would
18 definitely need more time. Uhm particularly around
19 some of the facilities and leasing issues that we're
20 looking into related to this expansion. We are
21 hoping that we will be afforded that additional time.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, so they haven't gotten
23 back to you yet?

24 JEREMY KAPLAN: Well, I just, I just put in the
25 request earlier this morning.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay.

3 JEREMY KAPLAN: I think our seven days is up on
4 Wednesday or something of this week, so.

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, the Commissioner said
6 that she will grant extension you know when it is
7 needed.

8 JEREMY KAPLAN: I'm very hopeful. I'm very
9 hopeful that we'll get some more time to deal with
10 those negotiations.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so that's good. So, you
12 said that the budget is less but you also, the
13 contract the number?

14 JEREMY KAPLAN: Yeah, the budget was less but the
15 units, it appeared to me we're less proportionately
16 in our case. Uhm, again, I need to dig into the
17 numbers to verify that.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, I think one of the
19 questions that I asked the Commissioner earlier, I
20 don't know if a provider would think about in terms
21 of budget that would calculate as a per person pause,
22 versus you know like what the Commissioner was
23 talking about. Right now they use like cost for
24 meal, cost for this and that but like, with DYCD and
25 you know for youth programs or – they have a per

1 student cost. Like for after school program and
2 summer programs. I guess in the future they will
3 look at to see whether that is also feasible.
4 Feasible for seniors like per cost per seniors.
5

6 JEREMY KAPLAN: I think that would be super
7 helpful and in fact, in the RFP there was a reference
8 to an average cost per senior, which is what we use
9 to base our budget off of.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Hmm, hmm.

11 JEREMY KAPLAN: You know the RFP also made it
12 clear that that was just the average uhm, and that
13 some awards may you know may be above or under that
14 but we found that super helpful when constructing our
15 budget for the RFP.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay great. Thank you.

17 JEREMY KAPLAN: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Is Philip Chong still on? If
19 not, yeah, because I just wanted to – a question
20 about the GetFood Program transition. But we can
21 follow-up with him.

22 So, once again, I really want to thank all the
23 panelists, everyone for joining us today and for your
24 testimony and we really look forward to you know
25 strengthening the Community Care Plan and fight for

1 additional resources for our older adult population.
2 We still haven't given up on the home delivered meal,
3 the \$16.6 million. Hopefully uh, that will be in the
4 November plan budget because we know that there will
5 be an increase cost for that.
6

7 So, I wanted to thank all the Committee Staff
8 that helped put together you know today's hearing and
9 all the Sergeants for organizing the hearing. I'll
10 pass it back to our Committee Staff, Crystal.

11 MODERATOR: Well, that concludes this hearing.
12 Thank you everyone.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, so this hearing is now
14 adjourned at 1:38. [GAVEL] Thank you.
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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 December 15, 2021