

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH

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May 19, 2025

Start: 10:12 a.m.

Recess: 4:19 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan  
Chairperson

Althea V. Stevens  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana I. Ayala  
Gale A. Brewer  
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers  
David M. Carr  
Amanda Farías  
Kamillah Hanks  
Crystal Hudson  
Farah N. Louis  
Francisco P. Moya  
Chi A. Ossé

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

Keith Powers  
Yusef Salaam  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Julie Won  
Rita C. Joseph  
Linda Lee  
Julie Menin

Jess Dannhauser  
ACS Commissioner

Winette Saunders  
ACS First Deputy Commissioner

Margaret Plentikoff  
ACS Deputy Commissioner of Financial Services

Keith Howard  
DYCD Commissioner

Christopher Lewis  
DYCD Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Assistant  
Commissioner

Alan Cheng  
DYCD First Deputy Commissioner

Jeremy Halbridge  
DYCD Deputy Commissioner of Office of  
Administration

Susan Haskell  
DYCD Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services

Darryl Rattray  
DYCD Deputy Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives

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

Valerie Mulligan  
DYCD Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Connect

Mistou Kanabeto  
Covenant House

Vani [sp?]  
Covenant House

Raquea Hemingway  
Figure Skating in Harlem

Jenny Dembrow  
Executive Director at Lower Eastside Girls Club

Jackson Ulloa-Salgado  
Center for Family Life

Yeslie Maldonado  
Center for Family Life

Jirazel Munoz  
Center for Family Life

Cassi Cheung  
Center for Family Life

Anna Maria  
Center for Family Life

Ana Maria  
Center for Family Life

Jaeyoung Ha  
Center for Family Life

Jhodessa Reimer  
Center for Family Life

Nyamekye Reynolds  
You Gotta Believe

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

Anthony Posada  
Legal Aid Society

Ira Yankwitt  
Executive Director of Literary Assistance Center

Andrew Sta. Ana  
Asian American Federation

Aaron Sanders  
Grand Street Settlement

Kate Connolly  
United Neighborhood Houses

Ella Grace Downs  
Girls for Gender Equity

Sebastien Vante  
Safe Horizon

Marsha Jean-Charles  
Brotherhood Sister Sol

Nikita Boyce  
Coalition of Asian American Children and Families

Scott Daly  
New York Junior Tennis and Learning

Gregory Brender  
Daycare Council of New York

Caitlyn Passaretti  
Citizen's Committee for Children of New York

Michael Max Knobbe  
BronxNet

Micharey Almanzar  
Youth Build at NMIC

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

Jose Velez  
Youth Build at NMIC

Jacarrah Sanders  
Youth Build at NMIC

Azael R. Gonzalez  
Youth Build at NMIC

Susan Graves  
Youth Build at NMIC

Emma Hamdle  
Youth Build at NMIC

Mark Merino  
New York Edge

Jibal Ahmed  
Good Shepherd Services

Ashley Chen  
Chinese-American Planning Council

Katrina Armstead  
JCCA

Rachel Gazdick  
New York Edge

Ethan Penha



2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet down, please.

3 Good morning and welcome to today's New York City  
4 Council Executive Budget hearing for the Committee on  
5 Finance joint with the Committee on Children and  
6 Youth. At this time, we ask that you please silence  
7 all electronic devices, and at no time are you to  
8 approach the dais. If you would like to sign up for  
9 in-person testimony or have any other questions  
10 throughout the hearing, please see one of the  
11 Sergeant at Arms. Chair Brannan, we're ready to  
12 begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
14 Sergeant. [gavel] Okay, good morning and welcome to  
15 day six of the FY26 Executive Budget hearings. I'm  
16 Council Member Justin Brannan and I Chair the  
17 Committee on Finance. Today, we'll begin with the  
18 Administration for Child Services followed by the  
19 Department of Youth and Community Development, and  
20 I'm pleased to be joined by my good friend and  
21 colleague, Council Member Althea Stevens who chairs  
22 the Committee on Children and Youth. We have been  
23 joined this morning by Council Members Carr, Lee and  
24 Moya on Zoom. Welcome, Commissioner Dannhauser and  
25 your team. Thank you all for joining us today to

answer our questions. Just to set the table, on the May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, the administration released the Executive Financial Plan for FY26 to 29 for the proposed FY26 budget of \$111-- sorry, \$115.1 billion. The Proposed FY26 budget for ACS is \$2.91 billion which represents 2.5 percent of the administration's total proposed FY26 budget. This is an increase of \$83.4 million for three percent from the original Preliminary Plan back in January. The increase mostly results from the increase of childcare funding to meet market rate increases, funding for Promise NYC, as well as the cost of living, the COLA adjustment, for workers at human service nonprofits and increased funding towards supporting New York's most vulnerable youth and families through childcare, foster care services, and youth safety. As of March 2025, ACS had 560 vacancies relative to their FY25 budgeted headcount. My questions today will largely focus on new needs in the Executive Plan, the federal and state funding as well as the looming childcare voucher fiscal cliff. In its response to the Preliminary Budget, the Council called on the administration to add funding for foster care and called for an action on childcare vouchers and human



2 service provider contract rates. In light of funding  
3 halts from the state and uncertainty from Washington,  
4 we look forward to seeing how the administration  
5 plans to respond. We have the resources to restore  
6 and invest in key services like childcare this year,  
7 while still protecting against risk and under-  
8 budgeted costs, and I look forward to hearing from  
9 ACS on these topics. I want to turn now to my co-  
10 chair, Council Member Althea Stevens, for her opening  
11 statement.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good morning,  
13 everyone and welcome to today's Executive Budget  
14 hearing. My name is Althea Stevens and I serve as  
15 Chair for the Committee on Children and Youth  
16 Services. The part of today's hearing-- the first  
17 part of today's hearing-- committee hearings-- is  
18 Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget for the Administration  
19 for Children Services, or ACS. Thank you to the  
20 Commissioner and his team for joining us today. I wud  
21 like to also acknowledge Council Member Salaam who's  
22 also joined us. Following today's testimony and  
23 questions for ACS, we will hear from DYCD, and then  
24 we will hear public testimony on both agencies around  
25 2:00 p.m. Thank you all for the advocates and

community members who've joined us today, as well. I would like to take a moment-- I will keep my comments here brief, as requested from the Commissioner to keep all testimony brief so we can move to questions from Council Members. ACS Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget is \$2.9 billion, \$122.6 million greater than the Fiscal 2025 Adopted Budget. The Executive Plan includes increased investments for foster care, childcare and Promise NYC, but does not fully fund to address the funding gaps for children childcare vouchers that we discuss at the Preliminary Budget hearing in March. Without the resolution for the funding gaps for childcare vouchers, tens of thousands of families across the five boroughs who rely on those vouchers to access affordable childcare could lose their benefits. Many families could not afford the high cost of childcare without the ACS voucher program, and I-- what I do want to see-- and I don't want to see any eligible family lose their vouchers or denied a voucher. Juvenile justice continues to be an area of concern to myself and this Council. ACS has seen its average daily population of juvenile detentions rise 22 percent in the first four months of this Fiscal 2025 compared to the same

period during the Fiscal 2024. I would like to again better understand of how ACS is rolling out its preventive programs and working on keeping the City kids on track. I will have similar questions for DYCD on how we ensure that young people are not ending up in our juvenile detention centers. I also look forward to hearing how ACS is dealing with staffing issues as well as capital upgrades and conditions at the two secure facilities, Horizon and Crossroads. Today. We hope to discuss many of the budget's actions, including Executive Budget Plan including ACS Capital Plan, the virtual program such as-- vital programs such as childcare, Close to Home programs, Promise NYC, and foster care. I'm particularly interested in hearing how ACS strategizing to me the multifaceted needs of at-risk families across the City and working to increase the utilizations of preventive services that ensure that the health, safety and stability of families and children. It is the City's-- it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that City budget is fair, transparent, and accountable to all New Yorkers. As the Chair of Children and Youth Services I will continue to push for accountability, accuracy and ensure the budget

2 reflects the needs of the interest of our city's  
3 youth. I would like to take this time now to thank  
4 both staff and committee staff for their help in  
5 preparing for this hearing, Saiyemul Hamid [sp?],  
6 sitting here, Financial Analyst, Julia Haramis  
7 [sp?], Unit Head, Christine Yellamaty, Legislative  
8 Counsel, Elizabeth Artz [sp?], Policy Director, and  
9 the entire 18 back at District 16, and I hope you  
10 guys are having a fabulous morning so far. And at  
11 that, I will pass it back to my Co-chair Justin  
12 Brannan.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair.  
14 I also want to thank Julia, Sandra, and Saiyemul for  
15 today's hearing. Just as a reminder for this year's  
16 Executive Budget joint hearings, we'll take public  
17 testimony on the agency's Executive Budget the same  
18 day, meaning today, after the agencies have  
19 testified. If you wish to speak on the ACS or the  
20 DYCD FY26 budgets, just make sure you fill out a  
21 witness slip with the Sergeant at Arms in the back.  
22 I'm now going to turn it over to Committee Counsel,  
23 Brian Sarfo [sp?], to swear in the witnesses, and we  
24 can begin.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE WITH COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & YOUTH 13

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

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy  
9 Saunders?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I  
11 do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Deputy  
13 Plentikoff?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLENTIKOFF: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good morning.  
17 I'm Jess Dannhauser, the Commissioner of  
18 Administration for Children Services. I'm joined  
19 today by First Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders  
20 and our Deputy Commissioner for Financial Services,  
21 Margaret Plentikoff. Thank you, Chair Stevens and  
22 Chair Brannan and members of the Children, Youth and  
23 Finance Committees for holding today's hearing to  
24 give us an opportunity to update you on our Fiscal  
25 2026 Executive Budget and the work that we're doing

to protect children and support families. I believe there is no greater mission than ours, to keep children safe and help families thrive. Our north start is what is focused on what is best for youth-- children, youth and families. We listen to national and local experts. We use data to guide us, and we learn from the firsthand experience with families and young people. Since I've been commissioner, we have focused on hiring more front-line staff, including Child Protective Specialists, Youth Development Specialists, and detention and Family Court attorneys. We have reduced caseloads for Child Protective Specialists, expanded supports for families and young people in foster care and throughout the juvenile justice system, and launched our new quality assurance initiatives that help us to continually assess and improve our work. We're seeing results. Children are safer. There are fewer children in foster care. There are fewer children maltreated after we have intervened. Mor youth in our care are succeeding in school, work and housing stability, and more parents are accessing supports to help their families thrive. We provide free college tuition to hundreds of young people in foster care,

dedicated one-on-one coaches for thousands of teens and young adults in foster care and the justice system, and training in trauma-based care for all of our foster parents. We're giving young people the tools they need to be successful and independent New Yorkers. Our Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 builds upon our progress. So, I'm going to first share some of that important work with you. We've made important progress in our efforts to keep children safe. Throughout the Adams administration, ACS has been laser-focused in ensuring that the agency has enough Child Protective Specialists to be able to be thorough, thoughtful, timely and responsive. As a result, we have seen caseloads drop from an average of 9.9 in April 2022 to just 7.7 in April 25, well below the recommended national standard of 12. Our frontline Child Protective Specialists come into contact with thousands of children and families each year. Each response is conducted with the utmost compassion and care and each child is carefully assessed by our hardly-trained [sic] workers. If an investigation determines that a child is not safe, our frontline workers take action, working closely with law enforcement, child

advocacy centers, the court system, and other stakeholders to protect the safety of the child. To equip our staff for the skills they need to perform this difficult work, we have enhanced our training and added an extended period of on-the-job learning that allows new Child Protective Specialists to deepen their skills, gain practical casework knowledge, and fully experience the day-to-day job of child protection before assuming a full caseload. During this extended period, new Child Protective Specialists are assigned cases of their own through a structured process with close and intensive guidance provided by the Unit Supervisor, managers and senior workers who serve as mentors. Additionally, ACS continues to build career-long learning into the lives of its child protection teams. We've added training and support on maternal mental health for all of our frontline staff, and we have instituted new courses on the skillful of young people and parents while we enroll thousands of staff and training programs on the skillful assessment of child safety, effective investigative practices, and how to identify and assess substance misuse. We've seen child fatalities and families involved with ACS in



the last 10 years decline by 18 percent during this administration compared to the average of the prior decade. As we continue to evaluate and review this work, we recently began convening a multidisciplinary panel of experts external to ACS to review fatality cases so that their outside expertise can further enhance our work. Protecting children also requires us to go upstream and build trust in communities so that families seek support and get what they need before their circumstances become potentially unsafe. In 2023, ACS established the ACS Support Line to connect families to services without a child protection response. There's been a 500 percent increase in calls to the ACS support line for families seeking connections to prevention services in the last year. We also refer them to a plethora of services outside of the child welfare system. We cannot allow fear to isolate families and place children at risk. This is why we work with schools, shelters and hospitals to connect families to appropriate help before a crisis occurs. It is also why I've been working to open 30 Family Enrichment Centers where any family can walk in for help and connections to a supportive community. While ACS and

our providers make efforts to enable children to remain safely in their homes, some children are in unsafe situations and we must place them into foster care. Nearly half of those children and youth are placed in homes with people that they know, as know that kinship care helps reduce trauma to children and reunify families more quickly. We're committed to the success of the young people in foster care. Through enhanced family foster care we have successfully trained over 98 percent of non-kinship foster parents in a specially-designed trauma-responsive informed parenting program. We have continued to expand the Fair Futures program and this past year more than 4,300 young people age 11 to 26 who are currently or have been in foster care of the juvenile justice programs receive coaching and/or tutoring. ACS' College Choice Program supports young people in foster care to attend college. This year, more than 400 young people participated in College Choice. This is up over 100 percent since we started a couple of years ago. Given the success of these programs, the budget includes additional funding for both Fair Futures, College Choice, and a new program called Career Choice. This summer will be full for

the children and youth in foster care, Close to Home, and detention. Nearly 1,300 students in foster care are enrolled in Summer Rising which is up from 25 percent last year. Over 1,800 youth in foster care Close to Home and detention have applied for SYEP. We anticipate that over 150 students will participate in College Choice summer programming with five of those students studying abroad this summer in Japan, Costa Rica, Haiti, and Spain. In addition, ACS will host 40 students with child welfare experience in the Commissioner's College Internship program. We're also proud of the success for youth in detention; 50 students graduated during the last school year, and 12 youth have already attained either a Regents Diploma or GED in the current academic year. Many of these youth are now enrolled at either Hostos Community College or Borough of Manhattan Community College, completing live college courses while in the secure detention facilities and earning transferrable college credits. During 2024/2025 school year, ACS has continued to prioritize school attendance and success throughout the-- through the consistent integration of academic intervention and post-secondary opportunities, including academic tutoring,

assistance preparing students for the Regents and high school equivalency exam, offering of credit-bearing college courses, and career and college coaching. Facility-based school support teams have been expanded to include dedicated youth development specialists who serve as school liaisons and non-uniform staff who work closely with Passages to support attendance and engagement which has significantly improved. Exam completion and graduation rates have as well across both facilities. This summer we'll be introducing a literacy initiative in detention as an expansion of our current partnership with public libraries and literacy-focused nonprofits, engaging young people in film, book club, and creative writing opportunities. ACS' City Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget is \$2.9 billion, including \$1.05 billion in City Tax Levy. Despite the state's failure to fully fund it's childcare assistance program, which will be discussed in more detail, we believe that this budget enables ACS to build upon our progress. ACS has made a particularly robust effort to expand access to childcare assistance for families with limited income who are engaged in work, school, training, job

search, or that are unhoused. Compared with October 2022 when ACS opened applications citywide, the number of children enrolled in childcare with costs offset by low-income voucher has climbed from 10,683 to 68,783 as of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025. We're disappointed with the outcome of the state budget, despite New York City's success in implementing the governor and mayor's joint vision to expand childcare assistance to thousands more families through the state's childcare assistance program. The recent state budget creates an undue financial burden on the City to maintain these gains. The state budget imposes a 518 percent increase to New York City's annual maintenance [inaudible] requirement from \$53 million to \$328 million, while leaving the MOE of every other county unchanged. While the state has included the potential for New York City to access up to \$350 million by the end of the fiscal year 2026, the federal fiscal year I should say, this is one-time funding that would require the City to spend significantly more CTL. The solution fails to solve the long-term issue that this program is not fully-funded yet. ACS had to stop issuing new low-income childcare vouchers starting May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Children

that meet the income and programmatic requirements will be placed on a waiting list. ACS is working to maintain continuity of care for as many families currently receiving assistance as possible, and we are in discussions with the state and OMB about this. We have submitted a plan to the state that will allow us to continue serving the vast majority of children that currently have vouchers, and last night around 10:30, we got the approval. Despite the challenges presented by the state budget, ACS' Fiscal Year Executive Budget includes critical investments to enhance our work. This includes \$25 million to continue to provide community-based childcare assistance for approximately 1,000 children through Promise NYC. This budget also includes \$40 million annual investment for the Youth Safety and Success initiative that expands and creates five programs for youth who are either in foster care or justice-involved, including Fair Futures, College Choice, Just Us, ACES, and the creation of Career Choice, Workforce Ready for youth in foster care who choose not to go to college. The budget also includes the \$103 million in funding needed to address the annual structural federal foster care deficit and funding

for the state childcare market increase in both Fiscal Year 25 and 26. We're also going to be reinvesting \$8 million into our prevention programs to both address the needs of the workforce and provide more concrete goods and support for families. In conclusion, ACS' FY26 Executive Budget along with the tenacity, commitment and compassion of both ACS and our provider agency staff will enable us to keep children safe while providing youth and families with the supports and resources they need to thrive. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner. We've also been joined by Council Members Restler, Williams, Hudson, Brooks-Powers, Brewer, Salaam, and Menin. I want to jump right in and talk about the childcare voucher funding shortfall. At the Preliminary Budget hearing, ACS indicated that you are projecting a shortfall in state and federal funding allocated to the City by the state to support the City's childcare voucher program through the upcoming federal fiscal year which ends September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Since the state enacted its budget after the release of the City's Executive Plan, there was no increase in state

funding to address the gap. So could you talk a bit about-- there are still federal and state funds in the program through the current federal fiscal year which ends on September 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. Will these existing funds be able to fully recover-- to fully cover vouchers through the end of the federal fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The end of this federal fiscal year, yes. Let-- maybe I'll step back and sort of describe what the state budget did. So the state budget required a 500 percent increase in the City's maintenance of effort. So, from about \$53 million to \$328 million. It also introduced a matching program of up to \$350 million if the City-- before we get any dollar, we have to spend that \$328 million. The matching kicks in after the original MOE of \$53 million, and so we are looking right now, the-- we do not yet from the state have the federal fiscal year 26 allotment that'll get. We know that the-- it's flat funding of \$1.8 billion statewide. Last year, we had \$1.1 billion plus an additional about \$200 million in rollover. So, where this leaves us is-- we have presented a plan to the state which they approved last night to continue to certify



families who currently have children enrolled in childcare with low-income vouchers. If they meet one of three federal criteria, priority criteria. You have to go to the priority criteria when you have limited funds. And we have limited funds because we've had to start a wait list.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What are the criteria?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Those criteria are 300 percent, under 300 percent of the federal poverty level, unhoused or children with special needs. Chair, this is 95+ percent of families current-- children who are currently enrolled. So, the vast majority of families we are going to continue to recertify on their annual recertification request unless they're unknowledgeable for another reason, aged out, income. And so this plan will allow us to continue to do that for the foreseeable future. We have to continue to assess this \$350 million in matches one time, and so what we don't know what happens after that. We also could have shortfalls, so we have to continue to assess over the year, but for the foreseeable future, we're going to be able to implement this plan of recertifying. We're

going to keep a close eye to see if we can open to any on the wait list. So by in large, we're able for the time being to achieve continuity, but I have to say, the state has really made the city-- stuck the city with the bill, with the 500 percent increase in the maintenance of effort in particular.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Can you-- what do you project is the-- beyond what's already budgeted, what is-- what do you project is the current need for childcare vouchers for FY26.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, by federal fiscal year 26-- so most of this is federal dollars. If it's okay to use the federal years. Our projected spending is currently about \$1.52 billion. This has assumptions around the growth. Overall, more will be enrolled in childcare with this plan than last year. Obviously, we have to be careful around the low-income vouchers, but we're projecting up to \$60,000 children will be enrolled with childcare assistance through the cash assistance program at HRA which is mandated. You must serve those families with-- first. And then the low-income vouchers is discretionary and we'll be recertifying in those priority categories. So right now, it's a \$1.52

1 billion, but it's something that we have to watch  
2 very closely.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the average  
5 monthly expenditure for the vouchers?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The average, it  
7 fluctuates depending on some seasonality. I believe  
8 the last claim we had was \$140 million.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Per month?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, last  
11 monthly claim.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you think City  
13 Hall fully appreciates how important this issue is?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you know why  
16 when they went up for Tin Cup Day, they didn't talk  
17 about this?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have been  
19 talking to the state for years about this. The-- so  
20 for the conversation for years was don't-- you know,  
21 make sure you're spending as much money as possible.  
22 Let's not leave any federal dollar on the table,  
23 which makes a lot of sense. We don't control the  
24 allocation, how it goes countywide. The state  
25 structured the plan to encourage counties to spend.

2 So, last year, we were receiving supplemental  
3 allocations, depending on how far we got with  
4 enrollment. So, they said to counties, enroll,  
5 enroll, enroll, and let's see who gets the most and  
6 we'll make the supplemental allocation based on that.  
7 I think there was an understanding that this was  
8 deeply important, but also that the state had a plan  
9 here, because they're encouraging every county  
10 statewide to enroll. They also-- now, at least 12  
11 counties have begun wait lists, and I heard from  
12 another county administrator on Friday that they're  
13 beginning a wait list. For some reason, the state  
14 only put the maintenance effort on the City and not  
15 other counties. And so, as a statewide program  
16 that's been a real priority, I think that there was a  
17 sense that-- and conversations that have been going  
18 on. Deputy Mayor reached out to the Governor's  
19 office. Many people were in conversation, including  
20 myself. I think there was a sense that there was  
21 more momentum there than what there was.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I guess the concern  
23 for us was that if this was such a priority or we  
24 were so worried about having to be stuck with this  
25 bill, then why wasn't it-- when City Hall went to

Albany, why wasn't it on the their top five list?

They didn't mention it at all.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There was a lot of conversations with the state about this issue dating back years.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I have no doubt. I have not doubt from ACS. I'm talking about when City Hall goes up--

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing] No, City Hall as well. You know, there's lots of conversations between City Hall and the Governor's office around this as well, and I think we really believe that there was a statewide commitment to this issue. We obviously are in a position now where we're advocating and we need to continue to advocate. This match is a one-time and not great solution for the City. As we move into next fiscal year, state fiscal years, I think it's really important that we continue to advocate for more resources for this program.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What changed this year? Why is the state changing this?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The state is changing it because I think that they understand that

2 they want to have continuity for children and  
3 childcare, and they chose to make that-- the bulk of  
4 that responsibility to save-- a city responsibility.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, just for the  
6 record, how much does the state's enacted budgeted  
7 include for childcare vouchers?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The \$1.8  
9 billion statewide plus the \$350 million.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And the shortfall  
11 in your estimate is?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: At current,  
13 given that we are-- the maintenance of effort, we  
14 have to spend the \$328 million in federal Fiscal Year  
15 26. We're still assessing what the shortfall will  
16 be. It depends on the growth of the mandated  
17 population. It depends on whether we continue to have  
18 the wait list. It depends on a number of factors.  
19 Our projected spending at this point is \$1.52 billion  
20 on both the mandated vouchers and the low-income  
21 vouchers.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I guess our concern  
23 has been that this is not an issue to play hot potato  
24 on, and I don't think ACS is playing hot potato. I  
25 worry about what City Hall is doing. I don't think

they fully appreciate how critical this is to so many families in this city. I understand the push and pull and the tug of, you know, the state budget and the city budget and what we feel they should pay for, vice versa, but up 'til now, the response from City Hall does not meet the moment in terms of how important this is and the anxiety that families are feeling when they just see their politicians pointing fingers instead of figuring out how to actually pay for this.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I think the fact that we submitted the plan that we did, that the City's putting in a significant amount of resources, there have been dozens and dozens of calls at the highest levels on weekends, nights, mornings, about this with City Hall. It is a big commitment of City Hall and the entire administration. So, I think that it is something that is deeply important, and that has certainly been signaled to me, and the folks working on this are deeply engaged and focused on it, and that's at the highest levels.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are there any other rules attached to the state's appropriation?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I think I  
3 covered-- we do need to have our-- not only the plan  
4 that we submitted around prioritization approved  
5 which happened, as I mentioned, last night. We also  
6 have to have an implementation plan on some of the  
7 technical ways in which we claim we don't anticipate  
8 any issues with that. Everything goes under OCFS  
9 approval around this.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, switching to  
11 federal funding. What are ACS primary federal  
12 funding sources?

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The two major  
14 ones, obviously childcare is a major federal funding  
15 source. We don't have a perfectly clear lens into  
16 that, and because the state takes the federal  
17 dollars, mixes it with some other funding and creates  
18 the allocations to counties, but the bulk of that  
19 money is federal dollars as we understand it. Foster  
20 care and Protective Services combined also receives  
21 close to \$500 million in federal dollars.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Has there been any  
23 impact on ACS' federal funding since this  
24 administration took office?

25 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Not to date.



2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And are there any  
3 contingency plans if there are more funding cuts?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know we've--  
5 - over the years have seen a variety of slow  
6 reduction in federal dollars for foster care. The  
7 Title 4E waiver being-- the Title 4E funding stream  
8 being the biggest one is tied to a 1996 income  
9 standard, and so there's been a reduction in 4E over  
10 the years. OMB has always been supportive of us,  
11 including in this fiscal year to make sure that we  
12 have the resources. We've been able to enhance rates  
13 for foster care. We've been able to invest in young  
14 people. We don't-- it is typically federally a  
15 bipartisan agreement around 4E. we don't see sort of  
16 a major threat there, but we're watching it very  
17 closely, but this is something that, you know, every  
18 day we're watching closely. We're sharing with OMB  
19 whether there's been any grant cuts, whether there's  
20 been anything that sort of we're seeing coming down  
21 the pike. We're talking to other states constantly  
22 to assess what could be coming down the pike. I  
23 think, you know, there are things that don't come  
24 through the ACS budget that really matter for  
25 children. As an example, Medicaid pays for the

healthcare for children in foster care. That is a direct funding from the state to our foster care agencies who operate clinics and mental health sites, etcetera. So, that's something we're also watching closely could have a big impact on young people in foster care. So, we're constantly assessing.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Joined by Council Member Sanchez. I'm going to turn it over to Chari Stevens. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good morning. I'm going to stay here a little bit longer on the childcare vouchers, because as we know this has been a super-hot topic, and so many families are concerned. So, just have a couple more follow-up questions. Due to the uncertainty of the state funding, and I mean, I know now we have a plan and all the-- we actually know how much is being allocated now. How families do we currently have on the childcare vouchers waiting list?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Technically, Chair, we have zero. They'll start to be added this week. It takes about 10 to 15 days to do an

eligibility determination. So, those families who are found eligible for May 5<sup>th</sup> and forward will be placed on the wait list. You know, typically we get a couple thousand or more applications each month, and so we'll be able to share those numbers with you shortly as they're coming in.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, has ACS continued to process the childcare vouchers renewals or has some clients also being placed-- are those clients also being placed on a wait list?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have continued to process the certification with-- the state approval will begin immediately moving too the priority categories, but again, this is-- virtually all families will continue under those federal priorities of 300 percent of the federal poverty line, unhoused, and children with special needs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Child Care vouchers similar to CityFHEPS housing vouchers, cash assistance benefits, and shelter costs are not fully funded at the adoption. Instead, the City adds the additional funding needs for entitlement programs as the fiscal year progress and progressives. How much additional funding is needed in Fiscal 2025 and

2 Fiscal 2026 to eliminate the need for childcare  
3 vouchers, waiting lists, and-- so that all families  
4 on the wait list could be provided a voucher?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, this is  
6 still something that we're assessing, but I can --  
7 for Fiscal Year 25, \$739 million has been added into  
8 the childcare budget. That's about \$70 million in  
9 CTL, \$57 million in state dollars which is for  
10 families who qualify for child welfare involvement.  
11 And \$613 million in federal funding. And so right  
12 now, since the-- we get the appropriation from the  
13 state budget, the fiscal-- say fiscal year 26 will be  
14 for federal fiscal year 26. So, once we get that  
15 we'll be clearer on what should be added. OMB is  
16 also looking at now that this introduction of this  
17 match, what should be-- what dollars should we take  
18 for city Fiscal Year 25 since it covers across the  
19 federal fiscal years. And what should we put forward  
20 for Fiscal Year 26. So that analysis is happening  
21 right now.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If the full need  
23 for Fiscal 2026 was not adopted, was not budgeted by  
24 adoption, would ACS be able to resume enrolling new  
25 clients and processing renewals for childcare, if it

2 was assumed the entire amount needed would be  
3 allocated in November in Preliminary Plans? Is this  
4 typically done for entitlement programs? If not, why  
5 not?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, in this  
7 instance, we get reimbursed by the State as we submit  
8 claims for enrolled children. And so-- and part of it  
9 is looking at what those claims are, drawing down the  
10 federal dollar through the state and adding it to the  
11 budget. It is such a dynamic spending plan that I  
12 think it's important for us to be in constant  
13 conversation with OMB in adding those dollars as we  
14 go, but again, the plan for this year has been  
15 approved that we are going to continue to recertify  
16 families, and so we're confident that the resources  
17 at least for the foreseeable future will be there to  
18 be able to do that.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: With the new  
20 priority rules for renewals, you said that the vast  
21 majority would be renewed. How many would not be and  
22 why?

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Our estimate is  
24 somewhere around 2,000 of the nearly 70,000 children  
25 who are enrolled. This includes families who make--

who qualified because the previous category was 85 percent of area median income, 85 percentile. That's going to change to 300 percent of the federal poverty limit. We have to make that change, because when you have limited funds, you have to go to priority categories that are federally structured, and so this was the furthest we could get using each of these priority categories. So, we expect somewhere around 2,000 children who are the highest income levels that qualified under 85 percentile area median income. If they're unhoused or they have a child with special needs, they will continue to qualify.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Many families in this city relies on childcare vouchers to provide quality care for their children. In recent years, ACS has seen a large increase in demand for low-income vouchers. What does ACS attribute the increase in voucher demand for?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: For so many years there wasn't funding, right? This has actually been a period of extraordinary and unprecedented growth in the program. There's a few reasons for that. One has been increasing investment at both the city and the state levels. The other is there was

2 federal dollars that could be rolled over that were  
3 pandemic dollars that we relied on for some time, and  
4 there was a smaller than typical population of  
5 families who enrolled in childcare through cash  
6 assistance because in the work rules. As those  
7 things are changing, again, this plan will-- means  
8 that more children will be in childcare this time  
9 next year as this year, because we expect that the  
10 mandated cash enrollment will grow significantly and  
11 will be able to maintain the vast majority of  
12 children currently enrolled. But this was an  
13 opportunity that was rare. We-- when we started in  
14 2022 we had a waiting list of 35,000 children. Not  
15 only did we clear that, we enrolled nearly 70,000  
16 children at this point. So, it's been a huge success,  
17 and you know, we are glad that we're going to be  
18 maintaining these gains.

19 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you provide the  
20 committee with actual annual expenditures for  
21 childcare vouchers dating back to Fiscal 2019.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure. For  
23 federal Fiscal Year 2019, we have \$416 million. For  
24 federal 2020, 413 million. For federal 21, \$319  
25 million. You can see the dip there because of COVID.

Federal Fiscal Year 22 it begins to come back up at \$349 million. federal Fiscal Year 23 is \$607 million and federal Fiscal Year 24 is \$901 million. We don't have 20-- we're done with 2025 yet, but expect to be much higher.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Executive Plan includes additional \$5 million in city funds in Fiscal 2025 and 39.5 million in Fiscal 2026 related to childcare vouchers. What is the additional funding for, and how is this funding amount determined?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, so far, for Fiscal 26 we've added \$104 million combined between the January and the Executive Plans. In part, this is to cover the rates that the-- remember the state increase the rates in the fall, so that was a significant increase. And to make sure that the 25 percent that we must pay on the mandated vouchers so that there's a CTL component in the mandated, that that is covered as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does Executive Plan include an additional \$348.9 million in state and federal funding in Fiscal 2025 only for childcare



vouchers. How was this amount determined and why was this additional funding required?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This is- us actually claiming federal dollars and being able to move them into the budget through our monthly claims at the state level.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does any of this funding addresses the ACS childcare funding gap?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I'm sorry, Chair. Say that again.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does any of that funding address the ACS childcare funding gaps?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It'll -- for Fiscal Year 25, it allows us to continue to-- for a while enroll and now continue to recertify families.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Childcare vouchers are utilized by a wide range of families across the City. Is it a priority for City Council that all communities are eligible for the program are available to access. Can you provide a demographic breakdown on voucher participants?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And can you provide a thorough breakdown for how vouchers are distributed?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, we can  
3 provide both. I think-- I know we can't approach the  
4 dais, but we might just give you the -- instead of  
5 going through every Cd, we'll give you the--  
6 Stephanie will bring it up. For borough-based  
7 Brooklyn is \$42,000. I actually think we should give  
8 a different-- this one has my notes on. For  
9 Brooklyn, 42,000; Bronx 14,000, Manhattan 2,800;  
10 Queens 8,000; Staten Island 2,000 for a total of  
11 about 69,000. One thing that has been important in  
12 our roll out of this plan is that we identified 17  
13 priority community districts that were typically  
14 under-served. And so even with this tremendous  
15 increase overall, we have outpaced the growth in  
16 those 17 community districts. So, we've been able to  
17 have this more equitably distributed geographically.  
18 We have a ways to go on that, but there are  
19 communities where at the beginning of this had less  
20 than 60 children enrolled, and now have nearly 2,000  
21 children enrolled.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What did that  
23 outreach look like?

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It was a  
25 combination of things. We had City Council Members

who were supportive of that. We worked with the Robin Hood foundation to help us to outreach through community-based programs. We made sure that we were educating the public. My City was created to make it easier for people to apply and not have to just bring their documents downtown. So that was something that provided greater equity as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Executive Plan includes an additional \$25 million in city funding for Fiscal 2026 only for Promise NYC, a critical program that provides access to affordable childcare for undocumented families. Does this funding support the same thousand slots that are funded in the current fiscal year?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, it does.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Has ACS requested that OMB baseline funding for Promise NYC?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We've requested that the funding be available in 26, and we're very, very pleased that it is.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you provide the most recent breakdown of slots utilized for Promise NYC by borough?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. Brooklyn  
3 is 334. Queens is 331. Staten Island is 62. The  
4 Bronx is 271, and Manhattan is 192. Currently  
5 there's 1,190 children enrolled.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Executive Plan  
7 includes \$1.5 million in city funding in Fiscal 2026  
8 for faded related repairs in the Children's Center.  
9 The plan also includes state and federal funding  
10 which with \$531 million in Fiscal 2025 and \$148  
11 baselined starting in Fiscal 2026 for transportation-  
12 related services for the Childcare Center. Why was  
13 additional funding required for this work, and this  
14 work-- is this work is capital eligible?

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, the-- we  
16 have capital dollars for the Children's Center, about  
17 \$15 million. We also have the one piece that you're  
18 referencing that is not capital eligible, I believe,  
19 is the façade. We had some issues with the façade  
20 and have to do updated pointing of the building at  
21 the Children's Center. On transportation, we're  
22 doing a lot to make sure the children are getting to  
23 school, and so we're constantly assessing what the  
24 need is there. Do you want to talk a little bit  
25 about the effort to get kids to school everyday?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Sure. So,  
3 good morning, Chairs. Thank you so much for asking  
4 about the Children's Center. Just to talk a little  
5 bit about the effort to take children to school on a  
6 daily basis. As you know, we make our very best  
7 effort to keep children in their community schools.  
8 With that being said, we have numerous childcare  
9 chaperones that take children to their community  
10 schools whether it be Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan,  
11 Staten Island on a daily basis. With that being  
12 said, we're also responsible for taking children to  
13 their medical appointments, their visits, and  
14 anything in their normal daily routine. It is  
15 important for us to keep the community ties for our  
16 young people. So, transportation is a very big deal  
17 at the Children's Center.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How is that funding  
19 amount determined?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It depends on  
21 the census and what the cost is. So, we really just  
22 make sure we've got what we need to get the kids to  
23 school, and we ask our Finance Department to work  
24 with OMB to make it happen.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many youth were  
3 served by the Children's Center in 2024, and how many  
4 in 2025?

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Can you say  
6 that again, Chair, I'm sorry?

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many youth were  
8 served by the Children's Center in Fiscal 2024 and  
9 2025?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't have the  
11 exact number of total for the Children's Center, but  
12 typically we've been averaging a slight reduction in  
13 census at the Children's Center, a little bit below  
14 70 which is slightly down from years prior.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The PMMR shows an  
16 increase in the number of youth admitted into  
17 juvenile detentions as compared to the same period  
18 last year. What is the current population of each  
19 Horizon and Crossroads?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, this  
21 morning we have 301 across both, and it's pretty even  
22 across the two sites.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Since the  
24 Preliminary Plan, has ACS made any changes to  
25 increase access to higher education?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have  
3 continued to fund the College Choice program. We're  
4 going to see that is-- that's growing dramatically  
5 over the last couple years. And so, we do have  
6 additional dollars in the youth safety and success  
7 program. Within detention we have expanded program as  
8 well with CUNY. That's not a huge cost to us,  
9 because we've got great partners at CUNY, but we have  
10 Hostos Community College. We have the Borough of  
11 Manhattan Community College, and we're continuing to  
12 expand those programs.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: When we were at the  
14 detention center on our visit a couple of months  
15 back, one of the things the young people expressed  
16 concern about was that they were taking the same  
17 college courses over and over again. Like, they were  
18 doing, like, the beginning stages. Have we had time  
19 to address that, and are we able to expand what is  
20 being offered to these young people as far as like  
21 college courses?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, we brought  
23 that back to our partners at CUNY. They're working  
24 on trying to make sure that there's-- obviously, we  
25 want to make sure we meet the need, that the young

people have the skills that they need to continue to advance in college, but at the same time to have additional programming. We changed this summer. Love to have you come back out. We're doing a big push around literacy, a lot around SYEP enrollment, and a lot of work to try to get young people engaged. College-- also, doing some of-- you also heard them talk about some of the work that they want to do around the facilities, painting. We're making sure that they have the capacity to do that. That is ready. So we're trying to beef up the program across the board. As you know, you know, we've had more success in getting young people across the finish line with their high school equivalency or their high school diploma, and so this has been a major push to make sure that they have what they need from college and beyond.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I definitely want to keep taking about, because we should be flooding young people with resources and opportunities so that when they come back they are set up for success, and you know, talking to those young people there asking, "We want more. We want more." And not being able to give that to them is a



1 huge concern of mine. So, definitely want us to  
2 continue to talk about that, because I know even in  
3 your testimony you cited the work that's being done  
4 with Hostos and BOCC [sic], but that was not evident  
5 from talking to the young people of, like, getting  
6 what they need. One of the young men said that he  
7 had been there for quite some time and he had took  
8 the course several times. And so, you know, for me,  
9 it's just thinking, like, we live in the ages where  
10 they can do the classes virtually and it doesn't make  
11 sense why if they are able to advance that we're not  
12 accommodating that. So, definitely want us to  
13 continue to have conversations about them not only  
14 having access to college, but also career-ready. I  
15 know some of the young people were doing some of the  
16 stuff through SYEP and they were talking about  
17 gardening and horticulture and all these things that  
18 they were learning and painting, but also just making  
19 sure that we're also setting them up with some type  
20 of skills as well.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely.

23 And different kinds of skill development, not only  
24 around sort of trade skills, but also we're doing  
25 work around debate and a variety of ways to get young

people engaged, and hope to have you out for some of those events.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, and I remember even us talking about doing some civic engagement stuff with the young people.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because that was another thing that came up there and having conversations about, and so even thinking about how even when they're in the secure facility, how are we making sure that they're civically engaged, what that means, and how do we have them to start to advocate so when they come out they can be well-adjusted.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And vote. And vote. We've work that we're doing on that as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, I know. So we did have a conversation about that, and I was supposed to come back and tell Council Member Yusef and Reilly because I volunteered them to come back with me and talk to the young people because they requested it. So, I forgot to tell you guys that.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We would love that.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The kids did  
3 request that, so sorry. So, he knows now. So, Close  
4 to Home is a critical program that helps young people  
5 stay out of secure detention and give them  
6 opportunity to remain in their communities. How many  
7 young adults are currently enrolled in Close to Home?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we  
9 currently have about 156 slots and about 80 percent  
10 of those are used as well, 85 percent.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said 85?

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we've  
13 grown. We started the RFP. It was at 129 slots. We  
14 worked with OMB to increase that to 156 for the  
15 current year. We'll be at 162 next year. So, we're  
16 adding girls' beds, boys' beds, both, making sure  
17 that we have LSP for girls, and next year we're going  
18 to have an additional six non-secure placement beds  
19 for boys. And so, we're constantly assessing this and  
20 OMB is very-- has been very supportive where we need  
21 to grow. If you recall, it was at 300 beds in 2022,  
22 and we took many of those down, but we're making  
23 sure we have the capacity going forward.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But that's why it's  
25 kind of frustrating because the whole point of the

RFP, it was like we're right-sizing, and then now we're growing which a lot of providers complained about because they knew they would be in this predicament because it's a lot easier to shrink than to-- to go down than it is to go up, because they were saying it's a lot to put those beds online. So, some people gave up property and finding space. and so, you know, I'm just concerned that like when we said we were right-sizing, we're actually-- did not right-size, because it seems like it's the wrong size if we're continually growing. So, I'm just trying to understand what is the logic behind that.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: At that time, there were about 60 children in Close to Home when we right-sized to the 129. We immediately began adding beds back before certain facilities were taken offline. We do also have capital dollars committed to look for additional sites and see what might be able to be renovated. It is a challenge to bring those buildings back online, but we've kept many of them including one in Brooklyn online so that we can-- even though it's not currently being utilized, so that we can renovate it and make sure that we have the capacity that we need.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. It's just  
3 kind of frustrating, because it's not just the  
4 bringing the beds online. It's the staffing and  
5 training, all the other things that it entails, and  
6 so now providers are kind of left with figuring that  
7 out, and so I just want us to be more mindful,  
8 especially like when RFPs are coming out. How do we  
9 make sure that, you know-- we're seeing a right-  
10 sizing, but like we also need to be able to  
11 anticipate as well. I mean, obviously we don't want  
12 kids in secure or Close to Home. We want young  
13 people to be thriving. But what does the balance  
14 look like?

15 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Understood.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Has ACS seen an  
17 increase in placement in Close to Home in the past  
18 six months?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes, we have.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And do you have  
21 like a percentage-wise of how much?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, we're up  
23 about 50 percent over the past year.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 50 percent.  
25 [inaudible] state Fiscal Year 2026 budget was

currently enacted. State funding plays a critical role in ACS programming as well as a large contributor to ACS' overall budget. Has ACS determined if the final state budget may positively or negatively impact the agency?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The biggest issue there-- and I'll note that we continue not to get a lot of support for Raise the Age or Close to Home. These are the kinds of programs that are funded around the state by state dollars, but not in the city and this has been something we've been concerned about. There's been some good advocacy around additional upstream investments as well, but we have not seen that either. The other big challenge is the childcare challenge we've been talking about.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I definitely want us to just, you know, moving forward to be more coordinated around how the city can continue to advocate for those things alongside ACS. When we're talking about like the Close to Home or Raise the Age and the support that we're not getting, I think that we're not as coordinated as we should be. I think we-- you know, I know myself and other Council

2 Members went to the state to do some advocacy and we  
3 should have definitely been on more cord [sic] around  
4 that. So, definitely moving forward, I just want us  
5 to make sure that we're on the same page. And can you  
6 share any proposals or policies in the final state  
7 budget that you expected to impact the city and how?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Beyond  
9 childcare and the continued issues that we have  
10 around the MSAR rates, the continued issues that we  
11 have round some of the juvenile justice funding.  
12 There's nothing introduced beyond that that we're  
13 concerned about.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I'm  
15 going to have questions [inaudible].

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Chair.  
17 We now have questions from Restler followed by  
18 Brooks-Powers.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You keep  
20 surprising me, but I'm happy to have the opportunity  
21 to ask questions. Commissioner, good to see you. I  
22 want to thank Chair Brannan and Chair Stevens. Chair  
23 Stevens for her, like, exceptionally strong and  
24 outspoken advocacy for childcare vouchers, and Chair  
25 Brannan has made childcare funding as one of his top

priorities as Chair of our Finance Committee which has been to the great benefit of families across the City. Commissioner, I do agree with you and Chair Brannan that ACS has, you know, done a great job in enrolling more families in childcare vouchers under your leadership and during your tenure. I also think that City Hall has been totally MIA on this issue, and we all could see the emerging crisis of the lack of childcare funding in the state budget, and we heard no public advocacy from the Mayor and his team throughout the entire budget process. When you came before Cahir Steven's Committee on March 20<sup>th</sup> for our Preliminary Budget hearing, there was zero traction or progress whatsoever toward funding appearing in the state budget, and as a result of advocacy from this body and providers across the City and our great colleagues in the state legislature and leadership in the Governor's office, we have now have access to funding to maintain childcare vouchers for the 60,000+ kids who are enrolled. I credit your team for coming up with a plan that meets the federal requirements and the state for approving it. I'm rally focused on what funding we need in the city budget when it's adopted to ensure that we can



maintain re-certifications for all kids who currently have childcare vouchers. So, is the \$53 million that's been the maintenance of effort for the past, is that currently in ACS' budget?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Now, obviously, the state budget was adopted post the City's Executive Budget. Does that mean that we should fully anticipate that the \$328 million-- is that the right number on the new maintenance of effort figure--

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]  
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: that will be included in the City's Adopted Budget in June?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That is the-- the conversations we've had with OMB, that is our expectation.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. And for us to reach the full match of accessing the full state funding that's available to use in enrolling, you know, leveraging this \$350 in state funding, that would mean that \$403 million really should be in the city budget come adoption in June, is that right?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: No. So, the  
3 match is available. It's a one match, \$350 million.  
4 it is available both for federal Fiscal Year 25 which  
5 we're in.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And federal  
8 Fiscal Year 26, and so--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]  
10 Some of the funding you're spending down this current  
11 fiscal year-- this current federal fiscal year will  
12 count toward it.

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It could. OMB  
14 is making-- doing an analysis and making a judgement  
15 about whether or not it is more advantageous to the  
16 city budget to take it now or later, and the best way  
17 to add those--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] But  
19 still we're talking about six weeks before the end of  
20 the fiscal year for our purposes, right?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's federal,  
22 so--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER:[interposing]  
24 Understood it's the federal Fiscal Year, but the  
25 question of what needs to be in the Adopted Budget

2 and what we're spending down now for the current year  
3 versus what we need in the Adopted Budget for next  
4 year, it shouldn't be far off the \$403 million that  
5 are needed to ensure that we're able to recertify  
6 each and every, you know, 97 percent of the kids as  
7 you testified to today.

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I don't  
9 expect that it's going to take us a long time to  
10 figure out what that--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] But  
12 it should be a number close to \$400 million and it  
13 should fully appear.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Across the two  
15 years, yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Across the two  
17 federal fiscal years, but it should appear in this  
18 budget, in the Adopted Budget.

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It could. It  
20 could come into City Fiscal Year 25 to some extent.  
21 It could come into City Fiscal Year 26. The key is  
22 that we have sufficient-- every dollar over the \$53  
23 million maintenance of effort is eligible for the  
24 match.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And so I think  
3 it's just some analysis of what is best for the City  
4 to make sure we can obviously close this year well  
5 and be positioned next year to implement the plan  
6 that we're talking about around recertifications.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, we're just  
8 now beginning the federal work requirements again for  
9 public assistance recipients. HRA has begun  
10 implementing that policy. They're ramping up. If  
11 the modeling that you all and HRA have done for the  
12 anticipated take-up for the mandated vouchers come to  
13 fruition, about 40,000 additional kids is what has  
14 been predicted, are you confident that we could--  
15 that we have the resources in place to recertify and  
16 provide a voucher to every single kid who meets the  
17 criteria that you've laid out and that has been  
18 approved by the state for the upcoming fiscal year?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I think that is  
20 to be determined. I think the--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]  
22 What would be the circumstances--

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Mayor  
24 [inaudible] deserves a lot of credit for putting--  
25 allowing us to continue with this plan and go as far

as we can with recertifications. Even, you know, continue to pay attention to whether we can have any opportunities on the wait list. The--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] But separate and apart from the wait list-- just asking on the recertification piece. If the federal--

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing] As we go out--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] If the public assistance recipients, the mandated vouchers, come in at the estimates that you've all made-- obviously if it's way above then that changes the game, or if it's way below it changes the wait list game. But if it comes in at approximately those estimates, that seems like the biggest unknown variable, what-- do you have-- are you confident, you and your team, that you have the resource to recertify every eligible family that has met the criteria that's recently been approved by the state?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And I'll say for the foreseeable future, we're going to have to look. We have not gotten our allocation from the state yet. We know it's flat funding statewide, but we don't know what it looks like for the city yet.

2 We have to see if, you know, if all these projections  
3 come to fruition.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The state  
5 funding is comparable to last year.

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It is  
7 comparable statewide--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I  
9 mean, if it's comparable--

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [inaudible] how  
11 much we spent--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: separate and  
13 apart from the \$350 million match, if the existing  
14 funding that we've been getting from the state is  
15 comparable to previous year-- I'm just trying to  
16 understand. It doesn't-- it sounds like we should be  
17 able to recertify every single child that meets the  
18 eligibility criteria which is 95+ percent, 97 percent  
19 of the kids.

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's the  
21 goal. As we get out deeper into federal Fiscal Year  
22 26, right, we're talking a year+ from now-- this \$350  
23 million is a one-time match. I--

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] We  
3 have a lot of federal unknowns right now that we're  
4 all reckoning with.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I know, but I--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]  
7 And--

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]  
9 What I can promise you is like we are going to be  
10 assessing that constantly. The policy of the  
11 administration is to recertify.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I hear you, but--

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]  
14 And I don't want to give you a level of confidence  
15 when we don't have an allocation.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: No, that's fair.  
17 I just-- look, we're-- as of March 20<sup>th</sup>, we were--  
18 OMB was planning to start kicking kids off their  
19 childcare vouchers in the upcoming weeks, and we've  
20 now been able to secure additional funding and have a  
21 plan in place for every kid to be able to get their  
22 childcare voucher renewed for another year. That's a  
23 huge victory and it's a credit to your team that  
24 you've enrolled so many kids efficiently and  
25 effectively that we're in a position to be able to do

1 this. We-- barring, you know, dramatic changes, we  
2 want to be in a position-- we want to be confident.  
3 We are confident that the resources are there to  
4 recertify every single kid for another 12 months for  
5 their vouchers, and we want to understand that the  
6 City is similarly committed to that goal. Our  
7 analysis shows that we have the resources to be able  
8 to do it, that we can keep every kid who has a  
9 childcare vouchers enrolled in their voucher for  
10 another year. It sounds like you also think we have  
11 the resources to be able to do that, barring dramatic  
12 unforeseen.  
13

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This is  
15 absolutely the administration's goal, and I do want  
16 to note that the-- another reason we are here where  
17 we have a plan where we're going to be able to  
18 recertify the vast majority of families is because in  
19 January the Mayor and the Budget Director said you  
20 can continue to enroll. You can continue to  
21 recertify as we advocate around the state budget.  
22 They took risk at the city level, added City Tax Levy  
23 dollars to make sure that that could happen. So, I  
24 do take issue with the idea that this was not  
25 something that the administration was deeply



supportive of. The way in which that was done you might take issue with, but they put real resources on the table to make sure we could get to this point even with a delayed budget--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] Our understanding is the state directed the city to do that, but under any circumstances, I'm happy that we've continued to recertify and enroll kids through the state fiscal year and that we are now in a position to have the resources to ensure every kid-- essentially every kid who has a voucher toady should be able to have it for at least 12 more months while we navigate future state and federal funding dynamics [sic].

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And families should know, anyone who gets a recertification is eligible for the entire year.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Right.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: This is not something where you, you know, get recertified and then six months later you have to get recertified. So, families should be assured if they get word from ACS that their voucher has been recertified, they have that for the entire year.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I've talked too  
3 much. I apologize to the Chairs. The last question  
4 is just should we develop some sort of more frequent  
5 reporting structure for you all to share information  
6 with the Council so that we understand how enrollment  
7 is proceeding, how take-up is going, how spending is  
8 going to be able to course correct as needed through  
9 the fiscal year?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are very open  
11 to that conversation. As you know, we've been  
12 working hard to keep the Council up-to-date  
13 constantly, and so you let us know what's needed and  
14 we'll work to make it happen.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate the  
16 answers today. Commissioner, I appreciate the work  
17 of you and your team.

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thanks, Council  
19 Member.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And now we have  
21 Council Member Brooks-Powers followed by Williams.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
23 Chair. Thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony  
24 today. How does ACS expect the wait listing of  
25 families seeking a childcare voucher to affect

2 southeast Queens, and does ACS have any protection  
3 for how many families in Council District 31 and  
4 across southeast Queens will be placed on the wait  
5 list?

6 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't have  
7 that exact projection for you right now, Council  
8 Member, but we can work on looking at that. My  
9 estimation, you know, that it could affect dozens of  
10 families who are applying. We are working hard to  
11 provide that continuity. I also-- there are-- we're  
12 going to make sure that in our public education,  
13 we're also speaking to many other childcare resources  
14 that are available through our partners at New York  
15 City Public Schools. There are some federal programs  
16 that are also available to families, and we also-- if  
17 families are receiving cash assistance and working,  
18 they are also eligible for childcare. So, this plan  
19 will actually grow the number of children enrolled in  
20 childcare. And so we hope that that meets the need  
21 of as many New Yorkers as possible, and we're looking  
22 to continue to try to assess that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
24 for that. And if your office can be able to provide  
25

that information, that would be really great just to have line of sight of what that looks like.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yeah, I'll ask my team to-- as we develop the wait list, which is starting, to make sure that we're communicating.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Perfect. And then how has demand for Promise NYC changed across years? Are there more families participating in the program this year compared to last year?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There are more families participating. We're up to-- and thanks to the investments of the administration and the Council, we're up to around 1,100 families in Promise NYC. It is a capped allocation at \$25 million. It's all City Tax Levy, and so the demand is undoubtedly higher than what we're able to enroll, but we're proud that we've been able to create and maintain this important program.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that. And just kind of echoing what some of my colleagues have already shared, just the concern that from what we've seen, we didn't see much more forceful advocacy during the state budget negotiations for more funding for the childcare

voucher program. While you said that the admin had been doing so, I just would like-- in the future, maybe if there's more coordination with the body with the Chair to be able to activate the Council to support those efforts, but thank you for your responses.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Understood, Council Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Questions from Council Member Williams followed by Salaam.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello, afternoon.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Or it's still morning. So, I had a question about foster care. So, even though the FY26 Exec Budget allocates \$622.4 million for foster care services, an increase from last year, it still falls short of the council's request of about \$134 million with no funding specifically targeted to address the ongoing pay disparities for foster care workers, how does ACS intend to improve retention service quality, especially in the foster care system? And yes, the question.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So this is an  
3 ongoing conversation that we had with OMB to address  
4 two cliffs. One is from the Title 4E waiver and one  
5 is from the MSAR rates which fund the foster care  
6 parent rates, adoptive parent rates. And so  
7 throughout the years we assess our census and look at  
8 the expenditures and where we are. Funds have been  
9 added in Fiscal Year 25 and we'll look at that with  
10 OMB in 26. So, we expect to be able to continue to  
11 enhance foster care services. I know that the  
12 providers are disappointed that the state budget did  
13 not include the full COLA that they were calling for,  
14 but that will be put into our budgets. We also have  
15 been working with providers to provide them  
16 additional resources. So, there's going to be  
17 significant additional resources in our Youth Safety  
18 and Success Program so that they can continue to  
19 expand Fair Futures and College Choice. We're also--  
20 we are giving them slightly higher allocations based  
21 on so that they're serving 500 children. Typically,  
22 an allocation will be 510 or 520 to allow them to  
23 grow and allow them to make investments in their  
24 staff and beyond. We've added tens of millions of  
25 dollars and when we look at some of the key

initiatives around-- this is our providers-wide around the indirect cost rate, the workforce enhancements, the COLAs that affect prevention. We're seeing tens of millions of more dollars go in. We're constantly working with our foster care providers around this and expect to be able to not only maintain, but increase the investments.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. So, still foster care. The Executive Plan swaps \$102 million in federal funding for City funding in Fiscal 2025 only for foster care. I think this is what you were talking about.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The [inaudible], yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Why was the funding swapped? How is this funding amount determined? Why was funding swapped for only one year and not baselined? And how much is the full budget for foster care in Fiscal 2025?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, the full budget is around \$622 million. We have-- that \$100 million that's for Fiscal 25. So, that \$100 million is-- was for this one time. We have to assess what

happens with our cost and census going forward. It relates directly to the 4E waiver. Actually,--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]

Yeah, and just quickly-- does the--

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]

Sorry, Margaret's going to correct me.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Go ahead.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PLENTIKOFF: Hi, the 25 budget is for \$814 million and the 26 budget is for \$674 million.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Does the agency plan to adjust the baseline budget to be more aligned with the current level of demand and the required reimbursement rates?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are not making any reductions in foster care funding. We're going to be working with OMB over the coming months to assess what the cost will be and to address that to make sure that we can maintain the funding necessary.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I have, like, two more questions. The other question is-- switching gears a bit-- on Child Protection



Specialist caseload. CPS workers are often one of the first interactions families have with ACS, and it is crucial to ensure these specialist are attentive to each individual case. There's so many, like, Law & Order stories on this, and the dangers of very high caseloads. So, the average caseload of CPS impacts the time they can spend on each case and ensure they are not overwhelmed. What is the current average caseload ratio for CPS workers? What is the ideal ratio? How is this ratio determined? And does ACS collect information on how many hours are spent on each case? If so, what is the average amount of time spent per case, and factors that cause the time to vary?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, I couldn't agree with you more, Council Member. This is vital. This time in 2023 in April/May of 2023 we had 951 active CPS in our protective diagnostic and CARES units. In 2024 we had 1,055. Today, we have 1,014. Our current caseloads-- cases have gone down from about 9.9 to 7.5. As of last Thursday-- I get it weekly-- we were at 7.9. The spring is a typically busier season in child protection. This is really, really vital. So, we have certain units that are

dedicated to particularly challenging cases, Hospital and Sex Abuse Units being one example of that, and they have lower caseloads. We also-- this is really critical around supervision. So, if you have a-- as you're referencing, if you have a case that takes additional investigatory steps, right? You're going to the Child Advocacy Center. There might be interaction with law enforcement or others. That might take more of your time if there's a need for a child removal, and so the supervisors and Child Protective Managers-- we have the CPS, right, as you know well, but for everybody else. Then you have the supervisors, and then you have Child Protective Managers. We've been able to raise the salaries of Child Protective Managers, because it really, really matters. They are looking at the pending rotation. And so, if they have a staff who has a case that's busier, they are skipping them in the pending rotation to making sure that they're going to the next available CPS so that nobody gets overwhelmed with cases. This is obviously challenging work. Caseloads have to stay low, and we're proud that we've been able to decrease them. The national standard is 12. We are well below that. If you look

1 statewide we have the highest rates of timely  
2 assessment, the highest rates of assessments closed  
3 on time, and so we are always making sure that our  
4 child [inaudible] process. We're so grateful for our  
5 Child Protective Specialists. I want their caseloads  
6 to be as low as possible. That's why we're  
7 continuously hiring, and also why we've invested to  
8 make sure they don't just get thrown into the job,  
9 right? There's about an eight-month ramp-up to a  
10 full caseload in that work.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Have you also  
13 assessed like increasing their salaries? I know this  
14 has come up in, like, previous budget hearings, but--  
15 or just hearings in general. But because this is a  
16 budget hearing, like, is there any plans to increase  
17 their salaries?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, they're  
19 part of the collective bargaining agreement that has  
20 increased their salaries. They have-- along the way,  
21 around six months they get an additional bump, and so  
22 we make sure that they continue to grow in that role.  
23 You know, one thing I'd always like to look at, we've  
24 got some-- many CPS go back to school. They get their  
25 Master's. They become a supervisor and they move in

that trajectory. We have some CPS who this is their calling to do the direct work for their entire career. We're always looking at ways in which we can support them, and so we pay them an additional for becoming a peer mentor. So, always trying to find ways to invest in all of our CPS, in particular the CPS who stay in this work for decades and are so valuable to our city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council Member Salaam followed by Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you and good morning.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Can you tell us how many Harlem families have been and are-- or are projected to be impacted by the City's freeze on childcare voucher-- on the childcare voucher program and what ACS is doing to communicate updates or alternatives to affected parents?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Council Member, I can give you the list of enrollments that we shared earlier of-- and then it goes by neighborhood, so you'll be able to see that. The wait list policy just started on May 5<sup>th</sup>, and so we don't have-- with

about 10 to 15 days for eligibility, but we'll keep the Council up to date on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Sure. And will ACS commit to resuming enrollments now that the state has increased contributions?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We will be able to continue recertifications. We are going to keep a close eye on whether the wait list can be opened at any point, but right now the priority is to ensure the continuity of care.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Dealing with underfunding, why did the Executive Budget exclude the City Council's request for \$134 million to support foster care when ACS' own plan acknowledges shrinking federal support?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Just because this is an ongoing assessment. And so the-- our census fluctuates sometimes. Our census-- we've been reducing the number of children in residential care. We've had consistently about a 10 percent reduction in residential care, fewer than-- about nine percent of young people who are in foster care or are in residential care. That's a costly program, and so we're constantly assessing the ongoing need and what

state reimbursements we get and federal reimbursements because we claim for federal reimbursement. It's a complicated process, and so we just need to continue to assess what the need will be in Fiscal Year 26.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Is there-- do you have the expected impact that it will have on the Harlem Supports the Youth or placement outcomes?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We don't expect any impact. In fact, this-- we are not making any reductions in our foster care programming. In fact, we're adding significant dollars to our Youth Safety and Success Program. So, we're going to have in Fair Futures about 4,300 kids we serve now. We're going to go to 6,300. College Choice is going to go from 430 to 530. We're creating a new career choice program that'll impact 230 children. We also investing in juvenile justice prevention, a girls program that'll go from 48 slots to 72, and a citywide program called ACES that will be expanding from 160 to 60 over the next 18 months.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And just one last question. Considering the tragic death of four-year-old Jameek Mulden [sp?] in Harlem, how is ACS

evaluating failures in previous investigations that were deemed unfounded?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you for that question, Council Member. It's deeply important, and it was a horrible tragedy. We are bringing together multi-pronged effort. The first is-- as it relates to fatalities, we're bringing together experts and a multidisciplinary panel, the Medical Examiner, NYPD, medical professionals, mental health professionals, maternal health professionals to help us to assess what could have been and done differently by ACS. What connections could have been made to the-- for the family? In some instances, children weren't known to the system, and we need to make sure that families trust places. This is why we're opening Family Enrichment Centers. This is why we're doing more preventive services and investing dollars into our preventive system. We have to have an all-out effort, number one, to make sure that families have the supports that they need and when children are in danger we act, we make the right assessment and we act to protect them. These strategies including the panel which will again meet on June 2<sup>nd</sup> to really help us assess ways in which we

can get stronger and stronger, our key to protecting children. We have reduced fatalities of children known to ACS by about 18 percent. That is not good enough. We are going to continue to make sure we work to protect every child in this city.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And just a follow-up, are there any safeguards in place in addition to what you mentioned, to reassess cases when new community reports emerge? And also, does ACS plan to publicly review or revise its CARE program criteria and investigative thresholds following this tragedy?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, CARES program is a differential response program. This is unrelated to this tragedy, I will say, and to-- and some of the public reporting that CARES has been associated is not accurate. This is why we're bringing in the panel to have conversations around this, but we on every single case-- every single report, ACS is responding within 24 to 48 hours. We're making sure we have consultants in law enforcement, about 120 investigative consultants that are former detectives. We have consultants in substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence and



intimate partner violence. So, we're looking at all of those protocols. We put out an RFP recently to revise our clinical consultation program, because we want those consultants going out with CPS. We want out investigative consultants engage with CPS every single day, and so we are refining those programs as well. So, everything gets looked at. Every Thursday we are in ChildStat where we look at all the key data, not only around caseloads but timely responsiveness. We review a case together to make sure that our assessments are excellent and up to date. This work is deeply important and we're going to continue to refine everything we can, and now with the help of outside experts to make sure that this is strong. For every CARES case, there's an assessment by not only what we call our applications staff who receive all the cases 24/7, and making sure that we are responding immediately. They assess. If there's any issue during that time, during the CARES case, it can be retracked to an investigation. This happens in about 10 percent of cases. And so-- And the CARES staff does a full safety assessment as we do in investigations. And so we're always looking at everything, but don't see a reason to change that at

this moment. But we are looking at-- we've added CARES. We have an intensive coaching for expert CPS, experienced CPS who coach staff on the highest risk cases. We have added CARES into that protocol to make sure that they get the intensive coaching as well. So, lots of incremental changes to make sure we are continuing this trajectory of reduced fatalities, but accelerating it, because we're not going to be satisfied until it's zero.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. You know, just echoing it. You know, want to make sure that we don't have any more deaths. You know, that to me is the most paramount and important thing. Of course, as you all are mandated, but I definitely appreciate that. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you, Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We have questions from Council Member Brewer followed by Hudson.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you. I assume, because I like to be positive, that Head Start does not disappear. That's not you, I

understand that. But is the administration planning, God forbid that should happen?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's not our program directly, Council Member, as you mentioned--

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] I know, but it is one administration.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Understood. I'm just-- I know that there's lot of contingency planning going on across the entire city to make sure that most important programs continue, and looking at what might be cut. Also, advocacy, right, to make sure that we head off any potential cuts. Head Start is vital to our communities.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Vital. Vital. Second, Fair Futures is fabulous, I agree. So, do they handle most of the young people coming out of foster care, or are there still others that are in need?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, with this funding, we'll be able to cover every young person leaving foster care aging out and young people who leave as teenagers. In addition, it's going to allow us to outreach to young people up to their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. And so, they should increase. So, if any

young person didn't have a coach upon leaving, they will have access to a coach, and we encourage them to reach out to us at ACS, the Office of Advocacy, or to the provider agency, because they're absolutely eligible for that support.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: This is more on the migrant side, but obviously when you're in the youth migrant shelter-- I happen to know because I've got them in my house-- then they-- once they're 21, they have to leave the youth shelter and I guess go to the adult shelter. Is that a group of young people that Fair Futures-- they're not in foster care. They're in youth, but they go out God knows where when they leave. Is that a group that you're working with, or that's separate?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: That's separate at the moment, but I'd be happy to talk to my colleagues about that, because it's a-- as you know, it's a very effective program. We are-- we do have Fair Futures in our juvenile justice side, community-facing. So, through our Family Assessment Program, the FAP program, which is in every borough, families can come in to get-- a young person can come in to get that support through a Fair Futures coach. So,

there is a potential avenue there. It's not-- it's not designed to sort of serve all of the young people in the RHY system, but that is definitely something we'll take up, have the conversation.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. I think it would make sense, because I happen to know how vulnerable they are, since they're in my house.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: The other question is the new needs. Did you-- maybe I missed it because I went downstairs for a few minutes to another meeting. But did you apply for any new needs in this budget?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: You know, our new needs, Promise is a big one. We are obviously assessing the foster care situation that we've been talking about if there's a new need or a cliff there. And then they have-- OMB's added about \$104 million for childcare in Fiscal 26.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Right, I heard that discussion.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, and obviously, even though it was announced a long time ago in the State of the City, the Youth Safety and

2 Success Program, which will ramp up and within two  
3 years be about a \$40 million plus investments in Fair  
4 Futures, College Choice, all the things I've been--

5 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Okay.

6 And in terms of foster care, I know you're way down  
7 which is fabulous in terms of the numbers. The

8 number of young people in foster care who are also

9 NYCHA foster care parents, do they meet on a regular

10 basis? Do they have input? They do complain to me a

11 lot about foster care, because people complain to me

12 about everything. But the question would be is that

13 a group of people you hear from? Do they have some

14 way of discussing their concerns, etcetera? I don't

15 know what the percentage of, but I bet it's high of

16 young people in foster care in NYCHA-- families.

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And this-- just

18 to understand, Council Member. This is young people

19 who have their own apartments in NYCHA?

20 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: No, these are

21 people-- these are young people who are being cared

22 for by residents of NYCHA.

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: There's not a

24 specific engagement with them. Obviously, all of

25 them are eligible for all of the programming that we

described earlier, but that's an interesting idea, and we'll take it up.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: I'll get a lot of complaints. Some justified, some not. But I just think that's a group of people who I think have issues within NYCHA, not to mention with the young people. It would be a group to have some discussion with, I would suggest that.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We would love that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And then just finally, in the daily news over the weekend, I think big money, little victims, 50 years on. I'm sure you saw it. One new need suggestion would be just when, you know, when families get in trouble, I don't know-- and they can call the hotline, etcetera. These are families where young people are in trouble. So there's always this new need notion that I always like is where you can access at the moment some kind of support, meaning resources that could come, a crisis, emergency cash, youth mental health, etcetera. How does-- is that through the youth line that they would be connected to services and maybe funding?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, yes,--

3 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Those  
4 issues do come up.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely, and  
6 we want to address them as early as possible. This  
7 is why we have strengthened our preventive support  
8 line, 212-676-7667. We've been doing a lot of public  
9 work around this. We've seen a huge increase in the  
10 outreach there. If there are needs that are not met  
11 through ACS, whether that be for cash or other  
12 things, we will connect them to our colleagues at  
13 HRA, and we want the public to know that if they have  
14 a need for support, you can get family therapies,  
15 concrete needs. We're doing a lot work with our  
16 preventive providers over the next couple of months  
17 to look at ways in which we can further invest some  
18 reallocation of some dollars in both the workforce  
19 and meeting concrete needs for families. Maybe  
20 there's a situation where the family's doing okay,  
21 but the home is very unkempt. Can we get deep  
22 cleaning in there? We obviously can put home-making  
23 in there to support. So, we're doing everything we  
24 can to lean into trying to meet--



2 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] And  
3 that's through the hotline that kind of help can be  
4 available.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Absolutely.

6 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay. And then just  
7 finally, just overall-- obviously, we'll--

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: The preventive  
9 support line, not the child abuse hotline, just to be  
10 clear.

11 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Okay, no, I  
12 understand, the one you just gave us.

13 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yep.

14 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Nobody knows that  
15 number. So, you need to tell people about--

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll get it  
17 out more and more.

18 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Our newsletter has  
19 more subscribers than anybody else's newsletter.

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We would love  
21 to get into it.

22 CHAIRPERSON BREWER: And then just, I  
23 guess, in Albany you talked about that budget. But  
24 the whole notion, we're all trying to figure out ways  
25 of cutting poverty, child poverty. So, is that

something that the administration as a whole is thinking about in terms of some of these initiatives?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: it's essential, and I know that the Governor's made some very laudable investments in tax credits, and --

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: [interposing] Yes.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: anything that we can do to reduce poverty amongst children is helpful for a lot of reasons, one of which is a reduced reliance on the child welfare system.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Well, we agree. We're just trying to make sure it happens. You think that some of these steps are either locally or in the state are helping to do that.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I think there's been a lot of work at HRA and our providers to make sure that folks have housing stability which is key, that cash assistance is getting out. We're doing a lot of work to see if our child-- we don't want people to have to come to the Child Welfare system for that basic help, but we do-- when people do, we want to have the help for them. We are-- our school-based support programs have a new dimension to them where you don't have to sign up for a prevention case

if you just need a little bit of support and they can navigate you to the kind of help that you need. And I think we should all be concerned that the child poverty are in our state and nationally is going up.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Way up.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, I don't want to pretend as if we have that solved. It's going to take investments at every single level of government.

CHAIRPERSON BREWER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Hudson?

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much, Chair, and hello, Commissioner. ACS contracts with various providers for services administered across the City. Many of these providers' facilities may require improvements or repairs that can be implemented through the City's capital program. Can you share how many provider capital requests ACS has received so far in Fiscal 2025 and what kinds of work the requests are for, and how many were received in Fiscal 2024?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't think  
3 we have any, Council Member. We do have a couple  
4 that are Council Member priorities that are in our  
5 budget, but I don't think any from providers.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. So, none  
7 from providers. What about--

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: [interposing]  
9 Not to my knowledge. We can confirm.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Fiscal 2024?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't believe  
12 we had any then either.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. And of the  
14 ones that you have from Council Members, how many of  
15 those capital requests have been fulfilled to-date  
16 this fiscal year?

17 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We'll have to  
18 get back to you, Council Member.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. Then, can  
20 you share how ACS prioritizes capital needs requests  
21 from the provider network when you do receive them?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Clearly, I have  
23 to engage on this issue. I don't--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: [interposing]  
25 Okay.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I don't-- we  
3 have not had a lot come through. We do have-- and  
4 maybe part of the reason is that with our foster care  
5 providers there are ways through the state rate  
6 mechanism for them to make capital improvements and  
7 for them to also make-- get reimbursed for  
8 maintenance efforts, and so it might be why ACS is  
9 low--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: [interposing] Not  
11 much was coming through.

12 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: because--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We also know  
15 that-- we also for things like our Family Enrichment  
16 Centers, we put out dollars, additional dollars in  
17 start-up budgets to make sure that they can build out  
18 the facilities. So, we'll take a close look at it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, great.  
20 Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, with  
23 regards to-- there's a bill in Albany that looks to  
24 compel ACS to work with DOI. Is that something that  
25

2 would be better done voluntarily by ACS rather than  
3 having Albany compel ACS to do that?

4 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we work  
5 very closely with DOI. We provide information on  
6 critical incidents across our juvenile justice and  
7 child welfare system. A component of the bill is  
8 looking at whether unfounded cases ought to be given  
9 to DOI. And so, there is-- on unfounded cases state  
10 law prohibits the disclosure of those cases. It has  
11 certain categories of-- obviously OCFS oversees us.  
12 They do reviews of us very closely after any critical  
13 incident. In addition, the DA's office can get  
14 information if they're doing a prosecution. On  
15 unfounded, DOI is not listed as one of the entities  
16 that can get that, and so it actually requires a law  
17 change. It's not something that we could do  
18 voluntarily under the current law.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So right now, it's  
20 only-- so you're saying the bill that's being  
21 discussed in Albany is just for the unfounded cases.

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, there's a  
23 few things that, as I understand it, that DOI's  
24 looking at. One is around access in our juvenile  
25 detention facilities. There's some important

1 considerations around the privacy of young people,  
2 but we provide a plethora of information. Everything  
3 that happens, DOI receives. They-- under the current  
4 law, they need OCFS approval for us to hand over  
5 certain things. We've been in conversations very  
6 regularly with the OCFS Commissioner and the DOI  
7 Commissioner about that process, and we've seen OCFS  
8 make a lot of adjustments in that process to make  
9 sure DOI has everything it needs to do its job. That  
10 is my commitment. On the child welfare side, as I  
11 understand it, the key thing is that DOI would be  
12 able to get-- because they get everything else now.  
13 They get active in-- cases that are active when  
14 there's a critical incident, and they get all of the  
15 indicated history. My perspective on this is that we  
16 have to just make sure that family information on  
17 unfounded, they should be able to know whether we did  
18 our job. But family information should be protected.  
19 So, I think like the juvenile justice side, I think  
20 there should be some consideration of role for OCFS.  
21 It shouldn't be ACS' role to decide what goes there  
22 and what doesn't. That is DOI's job to investigate  
23 and to make sure that we're doing work and there's no  
24 malfeasance in this work, and so this conversation  
25

2 about the best way to balance privacy for families  
3 and give them what they need is one that we're  
4 actively engaged in.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And there's been  
6 reporting on New York One about discrepancy around  
7 the average caseload. So, the folks-- I think ACS  
8 says typically caseload is about nine to 10 cases.  
9 They've been reporting that it can be as high as 15  
10 to 20.

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Our average  
12 caseload is 7.9. We look every week at the-- by  
13 borough, by zone-- at the number of case planners  
14 that have anyone over 12. It is about 98 percent  
15 today have caseloads below 12. So, not only is the  
16 average low. We are constantly looking at that. I  
17 don't know where that discrepancy could be coming  
18 from, but it is-- those are the accurate numbers.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is 7.9 about  
20 average? Has it been higher, lower?

21 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, we're  
22 coming off two years ago it was 9.9. When I first go  
23 to ACS in 2005, it was 20. So, there's been a  
24 consistent concerted effort by each administration,  
25 particularly this one, to make sure that there is the



active staff that are needed. I will say that there was a -- at the end of the last administration, there was a hiring freeze during COVID. So, when we came on, the caseloads began to rise early in 2022. OMB has been very supportive of us. We expanded the classes to about 150 new CPS. We have classes four times a year, and that allowed us to catch up and get the caseload back down.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: is that the area where you have the most vacancies

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: we have actually-- we have 115 vacancies that we can fill, so the a vacancy rates is quite low there. We have about a nine percent vacancy rate across the board, but again, the model budget was based on even more reports that we used to get. We're slightly down in the investigations, so we're constantly-- the key is the caseload

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Which area is the hardest to hire for are you finding?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are constantly working to expand our Family Court Legal Services classes. We've done a good job there. It's more seasonal given their graduation times, etcetera.

2 We are constantly hiring for special offices are have  
3 made great gains there. I think the key for us is  
4 really around retention, particularly for our Youth  
5 Development Specialists in detention. That work to  
6 make sure that they're heard, that they're supported,  
7 that they have the staff that-- and all of the  
8 resources that they need. It's something that we're  
9 very focused on. Hiring has not been the major  
10 challenge. We have been able -- our HR Department's  
11 been extraordinary. They do hiring halls. They're  
12 out constantly, and so we're just looking to make  
13 sure that the experience at ACS in every one of our  
14 programs is one where people want to have a full  
15 career.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is OMB to still  
17 holding you to the two-for-one mandate?

18 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Under certain  
19 titles, but not for the front lien titles. The  
20 front-line titles we have are exempt and we've--

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] How  
22 many-- Okay. So, all the frontline titles are exempt  
23 from that.

24 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Uh-hm.  
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, I'm going  
3 to hand it over-- back over to Chair Stevens. Thank  
4 you.

5 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
6 Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm back. I just  
8 have a couple more questions before we get out of  
9 here. The first question, you probably may not have  
10 all the answers now, but you can definitely get it  
11 over to committee staff after. Can you provide a  
12 current breakdown of the total vouchers in ACS system  
13 for ages zero to four, aggregated by age, program  
14 type, including center-based, family child centers,  
15 and informal care for zero to four, seat type within  
16 those programs including infant, toddler, 3K and Pre-  
17 k, mandated versus non-mandated, and the voucher  
18 rate?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have all of  
20 it.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, you have all of  
22 it?

23 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: And we're going  
24 to--

25

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] Okay.  
3 Yeah, okay, great. So just send us that. What would  
4 be the impact to the City's Early Childhood Education  
5 system capacity if there is the current gap in  
6 funding level for ACS vouchers remains for Fiscal  
7 2026?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We're hopeful,  
9 as I said earlier to continue to be able to provide  
10 continuity of care for the vast majority of families.  
11 And so, we need continued federal, state and city  
12 investment to do that. And so, I think as we've  
13 discussed earlier continuing the advocacy around that  
14 is key, but at the moment, we're going to continue to  
15 recertify families.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the total  
17 childcare block CCBG funding that ACS recognized in  
18 the Fiscal 2025 budget? How much is currently  
19 recognized in the Fiscal 2026 budget?

20 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So far in  
21 Fiscal Year 25 there's been \$613 million in CCBG  
22 added to the budget. That's a total of \$993 so far  
23 on top of the initial base budget. For 26, we have  
24 the CTL funding of \$104 thus far and a federal \$380  
25 as the base budget.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's our  
3 understanding that ACS transfers CCBG funding to DOE  
4 for some Early Childhood Education seats. How much  
5 does ACS transfer to DOE each year, and how is this  
6 amount determined?

7 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: It's in the  
8 range of around \$150 million. This is-- it's not  
9 really transferring money as much as where the DOE  
10 programs qualify for CCBG. We add that to our claim,  
11 and so, zero to two, extended day, those kinds of  
12 things are eligible for the childcare block grant,  
13 and we will-- we add that to our claim and seek  
14 federal dollars for that.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We see \$125 million  
16 in CCBG funding recognized in DOE budget for Fiscal  
17 2026. If that funding is not available next year,  
18 what is the impact?

19 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are going to  
20 work with our DOE partners, New York City Public  
21 Schools partners, to make sure they can maintain  
22 their contracted system.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If CCBG funding is  
24 not available the following school year, what is the  
25 impact?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I mean, if we  
3 lose CCBG funding at any major level, it'd be a  
4 tremendous impact, but we're going to fight to make  
5 sure we access-- continue to access federal dollars  
6 and continue to encourage state investment.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How are we planning  
8 for that?

9 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Some of the  
10 ways that we've been discussing. To make sure that  
11 we're clear with the state about the needs and make  
12 sure that we're continuously assessing the cash  
13 assistance side of this which is mandated, and to  
14 really make sure that we're clear about the value of  
15 these programs.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'd like to  
17 recognize Council Member Rita Joseph who just joined  
18 us. The Executive Plan includes a net reduction of  
19 \$789 million in city and state funding for Fiscal  
20 2025 and increases \$159 in Fiscal 26 in relation to  
21 ACS' role in asylum-seeker response efforts. The  
22 plan also included a funding swap where city funding  
23 is replaced with state funding with \$4.8 million in  
24 Fiscal 2025 and \$1.1 million in Fiscal 2026. Why is  
25

there a net reduction in funding in Fiscal 2025?

What programs or services does this relate to?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, between language access, some ACS staff that were volunteering as part of the effort to support new New Yorkers and a program with JFS around resettlement, we are-- we're getting less of that resource this year, given a change in conditions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why is additional funding added in Fiscal 2026? What programs or services does it support?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Which funding, Chair?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm still talking about the asylum-seeker funding adjustments.

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, it will continue to support some of the resettlement work that ACS took on as well as some of the additional language access that'll continue to be needed.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the source of the state funding that was swapped for city funding? What programs or services does it support?

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: I believe the  
3 state funding came through OTDA to support the  
4 resettlement program.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does ACS still  
6 administer interpretation services at asylum-seeker  
7 centers?

8 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We do today,  
9 yes, but that is going to sunset.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you know when?

11 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: As-- when the  
12 asylum center closes.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How does ACS staff  
14 are assigned to assist in city asylum response  
15 efforts?

16 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We've had some  
17 staff who have legal expertise or language expertise,  
18 and obviously, some of this is contracted. And so  
19 for the staff, it's been on a volunteer basis.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is ACS role in  
21 legal services to asylum-seekers?

22 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We have  
23 provided some of the contracting to make sure that  
24 the language access is supportive. It runs out of  
25 our Deputy Commissioner Gendell's shop and she's been



working with our immigration team to make sure that not only language access for ACS families is available, but that we lend support to the asylum-seeker work.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just want to welcome, take a break to welcome Student Council class from MS67 in Queens in Council Member Paladino's office. Thank you for joining us, guys.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Hi, guys. Welcome.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Chair Stevens?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In the Preliminary Plan added funding from a combination of city and state, the federal funding resources across the year of plans for youth programs in Fiscal 2025, \$7.2 million was added, \$22.3 million in Fiscal 2026, \$4.7 million in 2027, and \$4.8 million for Fiscal 2028, and \$44.9 million in Fiscal 2029, and this is for the Youth Safety and Success initiative new needs. How many-- how has the rollout of this expansion been going?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We are just getting started, because it's Fiscal Year 26 dollars, but we've been doing a lot of planning around Career

Choice. We've begun to work with the ACES team so that they're ready for the expansion. So, we've been doing a lot of planning. We'll be getting out this week the budgets to the foster care agencies for Fiscal Year 26 so that they understand their Fair Futures allocations and many other investments that we're making. We expect to be on-track to serve an additional \$2,800+ youth across these boroughs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Has ACS seen an increase in demand due to the expansion of this preventative program? If so, which programs and by how much?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: So, where we assessed the demand was for programming that is very community-based, that is word-of-mouth between young people, that does lot of group work with young people and is very engaging, and so that's why we made this significant investment in the ACES program that'll go from 160 youth primarily in the Bronx and northern Manhattan to citywide for 600 youth. We think this is key to making sure that we're serving young people and we're trying to keep as many out of secure detention as possible.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those are all the  
3 questions I have, Chair Brannan.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I just have two  
5 follow-ups. So, just so we can make sure we're  
6 advocating correctly on our side. In order to get  
7 the full-- going back to the vouchers. In order to  
8 get the full \$350 million from the state, what does  
9 the city need to contribute?

10 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: \$350 million.  
11 So, we have--

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] So, we  
13 need to match their \$350, right?

14 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: We do. It's a  
15 little-- so the maintenance effort, the original  
16 maintenance of effort was \$53 for the current Fiscal  
17 Year 25. Every dollar over the maintenance of effort  
18 of \$53 million is matchable. And so, right now,  
19 we're doing the analysis of how much City Tax Levy  
20 for this federal fiscal year, whether to draw down  
21 any of it, because we're already over that  
22 maintenance of effort. There's an additional next  
23 year. Next federal Fiscal Year 26 there's a \$328.  
24 Again, though, everything over the \$53 million  
25 original maintenance of effort is eligible for the

match. So, essentially, if we draw down some of that funding this year, the match, and put in the \$328 next year, which we intend to do, we should be able to drawn down the entire match. This match is one-time as we understand it, and so we have to do advocacy around years ahead as well.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, the FY26 budget includes about a \$195 million of city funding. How much of that counts towards the City's required state match?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Everything over 53. Once we hit the \$328 threshold. They're separate, but they're-- so, you can't get a dollar unless you spend \$328, but that \$275 million of that \$328 is eligible for the match because it's over the original maintenance of effort.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Who came up with this facocta [sic] process? The state?

COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Yes. Took a second to figure out which is why we don't have every single piece of the analysis done.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah. Okay. thank you guys very much.

2 COMMISSIONER DANNHAUSER: Thank you,  
3 Chairs.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, we'll take  
5 a little break and then we're going to hear from  
6 DYCD.

7 [break]

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Everybody settle down  
9 and find a seat. Everybody settle down and find a  
10 seat.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. [gavel]  
12 Good afternoon. Welcome to the second hearing of Day  
13 six of FY26 budget hearings. Council Member Brannan,  
14 I Chair the Committee on Finance. We will now hear  
15 from the Department of Youth and Community  
16 Development. I'm pleased to be joined again by my  
17 colleague and Chair of the Committee on Childre and  
18 Youth, Council Member Althea Stevens. We've been  
19 joined by Council Members Joseph, Brewer and Avilés.  
20 Welcome, Commissioner Howard, and your team. Thank  
21 you for joining us today to answer our questions. On  
22 May 1<sup>st</sup>, the administration released their Executive  
23 Financial Plan for FY26 to 29 with a proposed FY26  
24 budget of \$115.1 billion. DYCD proposed a FY26  
25 budget of \$1.3 billion which represents a little over

one percent of the administration's total FY26 Executive Budget. This is an increase of \$77.8 million or 6.3 percent from the \$1.2 billion that was originally budgeted in the FY26 Preliminary Plan earlier this year. The increase mostly is the result of maintaining foundations for the City's youth, communities and families, Afterschool for All, additional beds for young homeless adults, a fatherhood initiative, and baselining workforce programming. As of March 20, 2025, DYCD had 63 vacancies relative to their FY25 budgeted headcount. My questions today will focus mainly on an overview of the FY26 Executive Budget, obviously, federal risks, vacancies, and headcount in light of the funding halts from the state. We look forward to understanding how the administration intends to respond and fill such gaps. We have the resources to restore and invest in key services like childcare this year while still protecting against risks and underbudgeted costs, and I look forward to hearing from DYCD on these topics. I now want to turn to my Co-Chair for this hearing, Council Member Stevens, for her opening statement.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon and  
3 welcome to Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget hearing for  
4 Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm  
5 Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of the Committee  
6 on Children and Youth Services. This afternoon we  
7 will be hearing from the DYCD Commissioner and his  
8 team. Thank you for joining us today. We come  
9 together to discuss the DYCD Fiscal 2026 Executive  
10 Budget expenses which stands at \$1.3 billion,  
11 budgeted headcount of 634 positions supported by  
12 \$60.5 million in personnel services and a total of  
13 \$1.2 billion in other than personnel services. This  
14 fiscal budget is \$88.4 million less than the Fiscal  
15 2025 Adopted Budget. DYCD's Fiscal 2026 budget  
16 increased by \$77.8 million or 6.3 percent from the  
17 \$1.2 billion budgeted in Fiscal 2026 Preliminary  
18 Finance Plan. The increase is the result of a number  
19 of actions taken, the most significant of which are  
20 the increase of \$10 million for adult literacy  
21 program, \$21.3 million for afterschool expenses, and  
22 we will discuss further about how the funding only  
23 includes seats for the Summer Youth Employment  
24 Program, SYEP, and \$11 million for Metro cards.  
25 Let's not forget the challenges recently discussed in

over oversight hearing in examining late payments to human service providers. DYCD is managing 1,639 contracts with a staff of 160 [inaudible] contract obligations to the providers. How can the proposed services be provided for our youth when the providers are tasked with how to stay afloat due to years of unpaid contracts. In the City Council Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget response, the Council identified several areas of concern relating to development of safeguards, education, independence, and all the opportunities for our New York youth. The budget response included five priorities related to DYCD with a total value of \$184.1 million. I'm disappointed to see that none of the funding was added to the Executive Budget for the thousands of children and working families my colleagues and I each represent. The services are consistently fighting for at these hearings: Compass, RHY, SYEP, and adult literacy are essential to their daily lives. The time has come for us to do more than just for our best for the success for our youth and young adults to invest in programs that will make the difference for youth to work over the summer, a safe haven to stay, a place to learn and to be equipped



with the skills they can become more productive citizens and transitions into place called home and a safe place for recreation. As we approach the summer, I would love to hear DYCD's plan on how they will address the many safety concerns in our communities, and how will they use the provider services to support young people with things like jobs, opening up the community centers, and supporting young people. As we come closer to Fiscal 2026 Adopted Budget, the Council is working to ensure that the City's budget is fair, transparent and accountable to New Yorkers. As Chair of the Committee on Children and Youth, I will continue to advocate for the accountability and accuracy to ensure that the budget represents the needs and interests of the young people that the programs for the youth and adults are equipped with serving everyone. I would like to also-- I will also be touching on our much-awaited anticipation of a concept [inaudible] and an RFP for the Compass program and look forward to discussing this expansion plan that was announced a few weeks ago. Everyone here today, Fiscal 2026 Adopted Budget hearing is a responsibility with the objective of best serving the

2 youth of New York City. It is our expectation that  
3 DYCD be responsive to the questions and concerns of  
4 Council Members. It is my hope that the Fiscal 2026  
5 Adopted Budget meet the goals set forth by Council.  
6 We want to ensure that every youth and young adult  
7 program is provided with the necessities to meet the  
8 everyday challenges our youth face. I would like to  
9 take this opportunity to thank all of my staff back  
10 at the A-team in District 16: Sandra Grey [sp?], our  
11 Fiscal Analyst to the Committee, Ali Aliya [sp?],  
12 Unit Head, Christine Yamit [sp?], Committee Counsel--  
13 Counsel to the Committee, and Elizabeth Artz [sp?],  
14 Policy Analyst to the Committee. And at this time, I  
15 will pass it back over to Chair Brannan.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. I also  
17 want to take a second to thank the Council Finance  
18 Division. We're now in week two of our budget  
19 hearings-- especially Aliya Ali [sp?], Sandra Grey  
20 [sp?], Amani Mayo [sp?], Albert Vann [sp?] for  
21 today's hearing. I'm now going to turn it over to  
22 Brian Sarfo [sp?], the Committee Counsel to swear it  
23 in and we can start.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Do  
25 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and

nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Commissioner Howard? First Deputy Cheng? Deputy Halbridge? Deputy Haskell? Officer Lewis? And Deputy Commissioner Ard [sp?]. Are there other team- - got it. So, Deputy Commissioner Bobbitt? Deputy Commissioner Ratray? Deputy Commissioner Mulligan? And Assistant Commissioner Keenan? You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why you in the cheap seats? You want to come to the front?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You may begin. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and Stevens and members of the Finance and Children and Youth Committee. I am DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Alan Cheng, Deputy Commissioner for Administration Jeremy Halbridge, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services Susan Haskell, and Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Christopher Lewis. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget. The Mayor's Executive Budget significantly increases investment in programs that fulfil DYCD's

mission to elevate the effects of poverty and provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish. DYCD's budget stands at a record \$1.3 billion, 91 percent in City Tax Levy fund, about six percent in federal funds, about three percent in state funding, and less than one percent in intra-city funds. Since we met in March to discuss the Preliminary Budget, Mayor Adams has announced an unprecedented investment in young people. The COMPASS afterschool program we started off 20 years ago with an initial investment of \$47 million will grow to a record \$755 million, programs serving about 132,000 youth by Fiscal Year 2028. With this investment, 184,000 youth will be served throughout our afterschool portfolio. DYCD anticipates releasing a concept paper shortly with the release of a long-awaited request for proposal or RFP in the fall. This expansion plan begins with an immediate \$21 million investment in FY26 that will bring 5,000 additional K-5 seats for the upcoming fall semester. That funding will grow to \$102 million in Fiscal Year 2027 and \$136 million by 2028. The plan will also raise provider rates starting in Fiscal Year 2027 with the new RFP awards to stabilize the nonprofit

organizations leading these programs and to better support the workforce that serves New York City children. The Mayor also announced \$11 million in Fiscal Year 2026 to provide metro cards to this summer for Summer Youth-- through our Summer Youth Employment Program. SYEP is on track to enroll 100,000 young people for the fourth consecutive summer. We appreciate the Council consistently strong support of the program, and we are pleased that to-date 27 Council Members have agreed to host SYEP workers. Thank you, Chair Stevens, for your advocacy on that. Finally, the Executive Budget includes an additional \$10 million for adult literacy initiative, bringing the total to \$22.2 million. These enhancements build upon the other new investments that were announced earlier and included in the Preliminary Budget. The budget includes \$6 million to add 100 slots to beds to runaway and homeless youth, to serve homeless youth, and bringing that total to 913. This is a big win, and thanks and much appreciation again for Chair Stevens and the Council for your advocacy, and above all, thanks to the young people who also advocated it as well. We expect to roll out the new beds over the course of

next fiscal year. The budget will double the size of the Fatherhood initiative to reach 3,000 fathers.

The program helps fathers reconnect and build strong relationships with their children, through

counseling, conflict resolution training, mediation,

and mentoring. This is in addition to the new

workforce program, the Community Resource for

Employment and Development which we call CRED,

expanding DYCD's portfolio of workforce programs up

to age 40. CRED will provide [inaudible] and support

services, occupational training, and paid work

opportunity on day one to underserved New Yorkers.

programming has begun, and there are eight CRED

program operating currently. Programs have enrolled

over 315 participants to date. DYCD plans to serve

up to 500 participants in Fiscal Year 2025 with a

goal of expanding to 1,000 in Fiscal 2026 and up to

2,000 per year by Fiscal Year 2028. We are in the

home-stretch of planning Summer Rising which is

funded to serve 110,000 elementary and middle school

youth this summer. The program will begin on July

2<sup>nd</sup>, will connect our youth with fun hands-on

enrichment experiences to strengthen skills, develop

interests, cultivate curiosity. Some examples of the

programming that will be offered includes drama, yoga, community service, visual arts, sports, and cooperative games. In keeping with our Summer Safety Plan investment to keep young people engaged and safe in the summer, we intend to extend the hours of community programming. We will share more information specifically on those plans and details in the future. While we move ahead with our plans for Fiscal Year 2026, we will continue to monitor the potential for cuts to federal support to the City, and we'll work with OMB, the Law Department, and our partners in the nonprofit world, and of course, the City Council. Thank you once again for the opportunity to discuss the Executive Budget. We want to shout out DYCD staff who is watching and who helped prepare this, and also a shout out to Navita Bailey [sp?], our Steph Curry, who's injured-- who is watching. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Commissioner. We've also been joined by Council Member Louis. We are concerned, because essentially the current FY26 budget is equal to the FY 25 budget for DYCD. So, do you feel that the agency is adequately funded for the next fiscal year without

any proportional increases with regard to  
inflationary costs or increased demand?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely we do,  
and we're in constant communication with OMB if we  
see any gaps.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, but the cost  
of everything has gone up since FY25, right? So how  
are we going to make due with the same budget?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
Good afternoon. If I may? Chris Lewis, Deputy CFO  
of DYCD. The \$1.3 billion that you see in DYCD's  
budget is exclusive of discretionary and one-time  
adds that typically are added at the Adopt Plan. So,  
we're actually very proud of the investment that the  
Mayor and the administration and obviously whatever  
support the Council intends to provide we'll have  
ready for Fiscal Year 26.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. So, it looks  
like your vacancy rate is about 10.5 percent. Could  
you talk about what the challenges are relating to  
retention and recruitment of qualified staff against-  
- you know, that you're experience across all  
programs?



2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Sure, I  
3 can take that. Thank you for that question. Our  
4 vacancy as of March, as you pointed out, was at that  
5 level. Over the last couple of months we were able to  
6 make a little bit of a dent there. So we are at  
7 about 55 vacancies right now. So, a little bit less  
8 than what was in March. And a lot of those vacancies  
9 were in our areas that process contracting, the  
10 payments. There is a-- I would say not necessarily a  
11 difficulty in hiring for all of those positions. It  
12 was just matter of just getting a lot of those  
13 vacancies approved over the last few months, and we  
14 did get the majority of them approved just in the  
15 last month and a half or so.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How many staffers  
17 do you have that do contract processing?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: So,  
19 it's-- probably half of our agency does  
20 administrative work. So, whether it's directly or  
21 indirectly with contracts, you know, we have IT that  
22 obviously supports a lot of that work. So, I would  
23 count probably more than half of our agency headcount  
24 as supporting contracting. And then the other half  
25

is actually overseeing the programs which is also crucial to, you know, just contract management.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And OMB still has you on the two for one hiring freeze right?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: I think that is still the case across the City.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: It's not. So which positions at DYCD are not part of the two-for-one hiring freeze?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We did a lot of our admin ones approved recently, as I mentioned. So those were probably exempt as you mentioned.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: How long does it take typically to on-board someone?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: It varies. You know, some of these are noncompetitive so they're a little faster, and some of these are competitive titles where we have to abide by civil service lists and things like that, so those could take a little longer.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Which area has the highest number of vacancies?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Right  
3 now, probably I would say in our Finance Department.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And what do those  
5 folks do?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: They do  
7 budget approvals and they do payments.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So you have people  
9 who are processing the paperwork, but then the people  
10 who actually cut the checks, you have a lot of  
11 vacancies there?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: We do  
13 have a number of vacancies there right now. If  
14 you're talking about all of our vacancies, it's  
15 probably about I would say at least 30 percent of  
16 them are in that area.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 30 percent of your  
18 vacancies are in the Finance Department?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And why do you  
21 think that is?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Again, I  
23 think it's getting the PAR approvals, and then now  
24 working through civil service lists.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, how long does  
3 it take to get the prior approval?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: The PAR  
5 approvals all came in recently. So, right now, it's  
6 a matter of just getting people on board, getting  
7 them--

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [interposing] So,  
9 they all came recently, but how long were you waiting  
10 for them?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: They--  
12 probably we had-- for about six months or so we had  
13 some vacant-- a lot of vacancies there.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Six months seems  
15 like a long time.

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah,  
17 and then this constant movement. You know,  
18 obviously, folks leaving and then, you know,  
19 sometimes not able to keep up with or we're breaking  
20 even in terms of bringing people on board and people  
21 leaving the city service.

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And the competitive  
23 nature of the civil service process with other city  
24 agencies as well, and it was the private sector.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, moving to the  
3 federal concerns. With the loss of the Americore  
4 funding and the proposed loss of 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
5 Learning Community funding, has DYCD reviewed how  
6 federal funding cuts are going to impact the agency?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah. Not only have  
8 we reviewed it, but we've been in constant  
9 communication with the Law Department as well as with  
10 OMB. We understand that the elimination of some of  
11 the federal funding will be a dramatic impact, just  
12 not only in DYCD, but across the City and across the  
13 state as well. So, those communications and just  
14 monitoring is ongoing as we speak.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you speak a  
16 bit about the contingency plan that's in place if the  
17 Federal Government reduces or eliminates the  
18 Community Block Grant?

19 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I think the  
20 approach is not going to be as localized with city  
21 agencies. This approach is to galvanize as OMB is  
22 doing across city agencies and also in communications  
23 with the Law Department to see exactly what the  
24 impact is going to be or will be. So, again, you  
25 know, I know most of the commissioners said the same

thing and it's actually a fact that it's really not localized. It's really more impactful for both the city agencies and state agencies as well.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I'm going to turn it over to Chair Stevens. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, good afternoon.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: DYCD Executive Plan includes three new needs totaling \$67.8 million in Fiscal 2026, \$316.4 million in Fiscal 2027, and \$350.4 million in Fiscal 2028 and 29. Does the agency have any other new needs requested that OMB did not include in the Executive Plan? If so, can you detail to the committee what that request was?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and thank you for the question. We're very proud for the investment that the mayor was able to infuse into DYCD's budget as part of the Executive Plan. We don't take lightly the amount of effort and the amount of resources that are needed to deliver services to young people in need. This is an extensive add with the RHY, COMPASS, and Adult Literacy, Fatherhood, etcetera

2 programs that have been receiving funding as part of  
3 the Preliminary and Executive Budgets. We're always  
4 working with OMB to identify additional resources  
5 that can be used to help support our programs and are  
6 looking forward to any support and advocacy that the  
7 Council would like to provide us with.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, you did have--  
9 you don't have any new needs? That was the question.

10 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: We  
11 are constantly in conversations with OMB and  
12 indicating where are areas of need and additional  
13 support are beneficial, and we're continuing to work  
14 through that process as part of the Adopted Budget  
15 process.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. I mean,  
17 I will say this before I go on my rant. If you do  
18 have new needs, you probably should say it because we  
19 were getting all the new needs met, because  
20 apparently they have been investing here. It's about  
21 how it's been going. And so if there's a new need,  
22 you should just say it at this point. I tell y'all  
23 every hearing you should just say it, because we've  
24 been getting it. But how the roll-out has been going,  
25 that's what we're going to focus on today. Because

for three years I asked for more beds. We got the 100 beds. Look at that. We've asked for RFP. Look at that, we're getting it. Although we're getting it in the middle of the summer which is typically our busiest season. I mean, not only for the providers, but even on your side-- on the DYCD side, right? We already have contracts that are being backed up and all these things. Like, this is going to be a big undertaking, and so I am frustrated for everyone in this moment. So, I just want to baseline that, my frustrations of us going to a summer and having to roll out a concept paper to do RFP to get 100 beds online. Like, this is a lot. Not to mention, the violence increasing with our young people. It is a lot going on. And so as I'm excited that we're getting this expansion, I'm not excited about the rollout and I'm also not excited that, you know, the Council was very specific about how are we investing in our provides who need an increase who haven't gotten an increase, but are still expected to do an expansion to do-- read a concept paper, and then respond to RFP and they can't even pay their staff adequately. So, that is going to be a lot of my questions for the next couple of minutes, because I



am just extremely frustrated at how we're kind of ignoring what the providers are asking and needing, and not showing up for them. So, the Executive Plan includes an additional \$21.3 million in Fiscal 2026, \$297.5 million in Fiscal 2027, and millions of outliers to support of 20,000 seats by Fiscal 2028. Although the Council is pleased to see the administration prioritize the additional seats for elementary school students, it does not address the expansion for middle school students which we also are seeing increase in our juvenile justice systems for. So, I also want to just point that out. And leaving vulnerable youth without the support they need during critical development stages. Additionally, it fails to address the underlying need to increase rates for providers in Fiscal 2026. In the Council's budget response, the Council called upon the administration to provide the necessary funding to increase the current COMPASS contract in Fiscal 2027 to rates of 4,900 for COMPASS elementary and 4,150 for SONYC middle school students. The Department's COMPASS provider's contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the

program. Why were these costs of contract rates increase not included in the Executive Plan?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: First and foremost, \$331 million over the course of three years--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] I already gave y'all points for that, so we don't need to keep bringing that up.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I hear you. But also--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] They get the points.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: What I do want to say, Chair Stevens, is the North Star is always going to be universal afterschool, and I think that's one of the things that we need to highlight. That even if you look at the investment which is significant across the three-year period, the overall goal is to get to universal afterschool, and the Mayor has mentioned that over and over again, and I think we're on the right course. Now, in terms of the rate increase that's going to happen, it is going to happen in FY27-- 26-- 27. It's going to happen in FY27 with an additional investment of 5,000 slots in FY28. So I just see this as all good news. Just

trying to understand exactly when we do our stakeholder engagement with our providers-- and we've been doing it. This is not a situation that we're just rolling out in the next three. You know, we thought about it in the next three months or two weeks, etcetera. This is over a course of 10+ years that we've been engaged with our providers just talking about how those afterschool programming look like. And I'm just so happy to know that we are in a good place right now.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that was the question. Because like, I get-- I'm giving the credit around-- there has been significant growth and youth development in my tenure here. All the things that I asked for, we have been getting, but that's not what we're talking about right now. This year, the providers were very clear that they needed an increase in order to continue this work, and that is being ignored with the assumption that like oh, well, we're going to give it to you next fiscal. What are they supposed to tell their workers for the next couple of months? Because that's the problem, we're significantly underfunding a contract, and at the same time asking for them to expand at the same time

at a rate that we know is underfunded. So, like, yes, have the points for the expansion. Great job for the increase in two years, but how do people who have to run these programs right now, what is the expectation?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, again, you know, the 5,000 investment that are happening in FY26, we feel that is going to address a lot of the gaps. I mean, you know as well I know, you've been in this field. You're an expert in this field. You know that we have waiting lists that are across the board that needs to be addressed. I think that this investment can address those waiting lists, can address those issues out there, those gaps. Is the rate an issue? Well, that's something that we continue to talk about, right? The providers have reached out to us. We've had conversations with them. We've had conversations with them. We've had conversations with OMB, but again, you talked about the complexities of, you know, with a short period of time doing a concept paper with RFP. DYCD's geared to deal with that, right? This is what we do and this is what we do as a subject expertise. However, understanding now, we also know that we're relying on

our nonprofit providers. We've been relying on our nonprofit providers for some time now, because they do great work. That being said, the investment for the 5,000 slots, I see it as a win. It is a deposit, but I see the bigger win with the \$331 million in the sector.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And again, I want to say that-- is the work going to get done? Is everybody going to roll up their sleeves for the next couple of months to get the concept paper out? Are the providers going to respond to it and do all the things? Yes, but that doesn't mean that we should. And so I want to be clear about that. Like, that-- just because you can do something doesn't mean that we should have not been more prepared, and honestly, this is something that could have been rolled out in January that would have given everyone much more time and the rollout could have been a lot cleaner. And so, I'm still going to push back on that. Like, this is the busiest time for not only the provider, but DYCD. And so to have this being rolled out at the same time that we're rolling out camp, you know,-- ONS is going to be on the streets. We have all these other things that's going to be going on, and this is

the busiest time of the year that this when this is being rolled out. And it could have just been done in January. That's all I'm saying. I'm not going to not say it, because it's unacceptable that this is the expectation that we're going to put on people that-- because you can do it, we should. That doesn't mean that it's right. And so, I'm going to advocate for that, because it's unacceptable. I am not here to talk political stuff, and the reality is if we would have did this in January, you guys could had the time for the rollout, had adequate feedback, and we could have been advocating and talking about other things. The other question I have even around just staying on the rates. COMPASS elementary provides are paid two different contract rates. How are COMPASS elementary afterschool providers expected to provide these services with this next fiscal as we're expanding with these two different contract rates?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

Thank you for the question. The intent for the 5,000 slot infusion in FY26 is to reimburse those that are willing to take on and be able to perform the services on those additional slots at their

functional rate which is inclusive of COLA, ICR, way [sic], other recent funding enhancements that the portfolios receive. So, you're correct that these contracts were let out at varying rates over the course of several years and several solicitations, but in terms of the actual implementation and rollout of these additional slots, the plan is to hold these contractors stable in the level of resources that they were receiving per slot.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How will it-- how much will it cost to increase the rate for all elementary providers currently at the lower rate of 2,800 to the higher rate to 32? Is DYCD commit to right-sizing the rate of Fiscal 2026 to create pay parity between the elementary school providers?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LEWIS: Thank you very much for your question. We don't have that number, but we are absolutely willing to talk with you and with our oversights about what that could be. That, you know, it's not that rate to what Assistant Commissioner Lewis said. All the providers are at different rates due to Way, ICR, and COLA. So it wouldn't be 2,800. It would be the more functionally higher rate that they currently have, but that's

something we can look into and get back to you after this hearing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Look at that. I'm going to put check next to that. So, I'll call you after the hearing. Great. The plan includes funding support total of 20,000 seats by Fiscal 2028 with \$21.3 million and five million new seats coming online in Fiscal 2026 to expand elementary slots. Please provide clarification on the breakdown of funding in the outyears. Can you commit to including a significant investment in SONYC middle school programs like COMPASS Elementary? Those programs have not seen new investments or an RFP in 10 years and are struggling to remain fiscal stability with current rates.

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

Thank you, Chair Stevens. The new need that we received for the COMPASS RFP that's upcoming is set to allow us to afford higher rates for both our elementary and middle school portfolio across the entire portfolio. Those rates are going to be stabilized across the contract term with the increase in slots being 10,000 in addition to the 5,000 that are being included in FY26. The additional 10,000



would be beginning as the start of the RFP begins which his from today an increase of 15,000 slots, and then an additional 5,000 slots will be added in FY28. Again, all of those slots that begin as of FY27 would be at the new rates afforded by the concept paper and RFP.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so part of that question was also around like the SONYC Middle School program and talking about investments in programs there as well, and I just want to highlight just a real quick moment of-- the middle school in-- I remember when, you know, our former mayor talked about the expansion of the middle school program because this population was not being serviced, and it was a huge gap, and so we had this whole thing around this expansion of middle school. But I do feel like we're losing our way around making sure that we're supporting middle school students in the correct way, and thinking about-- and I say this because now having ACS and looking at the juvenile detention numbers and the ages, this is the population of kids that we are not serving correctly, because these are the ones who are higher numbers ending up in our secure detention centers. And so

not only do we need to be thinking about investments in middle school programming and the SONYC, but we need to be thinking about investments overall totally, because even in the SYEP component it's very frustrating because they don't get to work and they get \$700 for the summer which makes no sense at this point, because \$700 I understand why they would not go to this program. And then even with the middle school-- and we're talking about Summer Rising, they have been clear. They have showed us with their attendance that they don't want to be there because that is not what they want to do. And so not only do we need to be thinking about just investments, honestly, I think we're at a point and a pivotal point where we need to be reimagining this population's programming, because we are failing these kids when I'm looking at the number of young people who are increasing in juvenile justice secure detention centers. And so this is something that I'm really passionate about, and I really want us to really think this through as we're thinking about new programs. What matrix in DYCD is used to determine the number of seats for each provider? Has DYCD done

an analysis to determine what providers have capacity to take on additional slots or seats?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Chair Stevens, that analytical and that data is actually happening now in concert with conversations and discussions with our sister agency, our New York City Public Schools, and also with MOCS and also with Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: When do you think you'll have more of, like I guess, an assessment of like where these seats will be located and things like that?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, the goal is to make sure that we get the concept paper out before the end of this month. Starting those conversations. As we try to develop exactly what the heat map is, because the goal is to put these investments, especially the 5,000 in communities of high need. We will love to share once we've gone to vetting all of the, you know, schools and the communities. We'd love too share that with you and the members of the Council so you can weigh-in and we can get your vision on exactly what that looks like.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm sure my  
3 colleagues all have suggestions, especially when  
4 there's programs that have sunsetted [sic], that's  
5 not under DYCD in certain communities. So,  
6 definitely we should continue to have conversations  
7 and continue to talk about that. What-- will those  
8 funds provide additional slots and new standalone  
9 programs, or will additional slots be added to  
10 existing programs?

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, the goal, of  
12 course, is to the investment of new programming for  
13 the 5,000 slots to increase when-- in neighborhoods  
14 that do not have programming existing. That's the  
15 goal.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And what-- and just  
17 for clarity, will you guys be looking at in  
18 neighborhoods where it's not-- where there's no DYCD  
19 programming, or are you also looking at programs  
20 like, you know-- there was a bunch of state programs  
21 that was cancelled. Are you guys trying to do like an  
22 overlap of that?

23 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: It's-- everything's  
24 on the table.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will DYCD begin  
3 reaching out to providers to see if they were able  
4 take on new slots and programs? What's the  
5 contingency plan if providers reject taking on new  
6 slots due to the current price participant rate?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, the contingency  
8 plan is continue to engage providers, I mean, across  
9 the-- our network. Our providers have been very,  
10 very clear, of course. [inaudible] the struggles  
11 that they're having with not only staffing levels,  
12 but in addition to that, you know, the rate. So, our  
13 engagement that's been happening, not to the point  
14 where we've localized it and say here is where we see  
15 investment. Again, those conversations are happening  
16 with the school, with our New York City Public  
17 Schools and DYCD.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, have you guys  
19 even talked about a plan if all providers was like,  
20 "No, we standing on it. We don't get a rate  
21 increase, we're not taking these new 5,000 slots."

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Our providers have  
23 been-- our providers, and I like to call them our  
24 partners. They've been tremendous and understanding.

They're all about youth and youth programming, just like we-- just like you are. So--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] I know, but you know, they might have a breaking point, especially because they're not getting paid.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: And they may, and I think there's communications are going to continue, and you know, and in robust, but I think our partners are looking at the bigger picture. The bigger picture is the \$331 million. You also mentioned something about our middle school kids. I think what the mayor created and suggested, and we're going to roll out a blue-ribbon commission that's going to look at, you know, the whole part-- the whole programming around afterschool programming, looking at exactly what universal afterschool look like, not only in the elementary, but also in the middle school slots as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want-- and I have to say this on record, because I think that for me, even the word universal actually pisses me off, because I think that we have to also focus on not just saying that we're going to get to universal, but how do we build the infrastructure so we can get

there and it can be effective. And so I think that people use that word in terms of like, it's a sound bite and it sounds good, but it really frustrates me because for me it's like how are we stabilizing this system to get to a place where providers can actually pay their staff, where we have facilities that are up and running and that are functional. We have all these contracts where -- and I'm going to get to Cornerstones and Beacons. We have those programs that are underfunded and that are not having any investments. We have all these programs, and so I feel like when you even look at a program like 3K, part of the issue was we wanted to get to universal opposed to actually building the infrastructure out so it could be stable. And so I would rather us have real conversation of like how are we stabilizing the system opposed to just saying universal? And I get it. People don't understand that. Universal sounds nice. It sounds good when we're making a press conference. But for me, I want to talk about how do we stabilize the sector and ensure that people can have quality equitable programs, not just saying we have universal, because every time we say universal, it's been a mess. And so, I would love for us to

just-- and that's just me. It just-- and this is me just going on a tangent because for me we should be stabilizing the system. What does the workforce look like? Every provider has talked about struggling finding staff. No one's talking about investments in DOH that we're going to need to get SAC [sic] license and get these people clear. Like, none of that is being talked about in a real authentic way in order for us to get there. And so again, we going to give the points to the administration for investing in these programs, and we also have to talk about how do we stabilize it, because we can say we're going to get to universal and it all collapse because we haven't done the work.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, you've been a champion with us in RHY. You've been a champion with us in SYEP. You've been a champion with us in COMPASS afterschool programming, champion in Fatherhood initiative. I 100 percent agree that you're going to be a champion here. Now, if we want to use another word, Afterschool for Everyone.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I want to talk about stabilizing the sector. Because we are--



2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] But  
3 you were pissed off at the other word. I'm giving you  
4 another word--

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] I'm  
6 pissed--

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Afterschool for  
8 Everyone.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Please do not start  
10 with me, because that's not what I said. And if  
11 that's all you heard, that's going to make me angry.  
12 Because I am saying the sector needs to be  
13 stabilized, and so it sounds nice to say universal,  
14 but we have to talk about what does it look like to  
15 get to universal.

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We agree.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's the meat and  
18 potatoes. The universal is cute. We not there.  
19 We're just not there.

20 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I agree. We agree.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: With the increased  
22 costs of material, salaries, and other expenses, do  
23 you feel the funding is significant to allow  
24 providers to increase the number of seats?  
25

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Can you repeat  
3 that?

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Basically, do you  
5 feel like currently with-- because with this  
6 expansion, do you think it's adequate for them to  
7 expand with the first 5,000?

8 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I think the 5,000  
9 deposit and investment is critical to address some of  
10 the gaps that we see in a quick execution.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In the City Council  
12 Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget response, the Council  
13 called on the administration to add \$154.3 million  
14 expense funding for programs related to comprehensive  
15 afterschool system. Why were those funds not  
16 included in the Executive Budget?

17 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
18 I'm sorry, Chair Stevens, I'm not familiar with that  
19 specific ask. Can you--

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] The  
21 budget response? The Council asked for additional  
22 funding for COMPASS providers. Like, why was that  
23 not included in the Executive Plan?

24 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
25 So, again, our goal and intention for funding for the

2 COMPASS afterschool program resources is to build  
3 that through the RFP and the concept paper of which  
4 we did add \$195 million to the system to be able to  
5 achieve that goal. We understand the concerns, and  
6 obviously agree, and that's why the administration  
7 has deemed it necessary to increase the resources for  
8 the COMPASS.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm going to move  
10 on to Beacons and Cornerstones, because you know, as  
11 we're talking about expansion, I think that it's  
12 important we talk about these other programs that  
13 are-- that does very similar work. Beacons and  
14 Cornerstone contracts have not been produced in 10  
15 years. What is the timeline to release a concept  
16 paper and RFP for those programs?

17 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We are engaged in  
18 conversations with OMB on exactly what that looks  
19 like. We know that Beacon and Cornerstone is up next  
20 in terms of what a rollout looks like, what an  
21 investment looks like, but those conversations are  
22 happening and those conversations are happening in  
23 real time.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you have like  
25 any idea a timeline, like in the next year? I mean,

granted, there's a lot going on. But you told me before that y'all can do a lot. And I push back on this even in the sense of-- and want to make sure that we're highlighting this, because these are programs that do similar work, and if we're expanding one piece, this is why we create inequity in the field. And so we don't want an exodus from all of our Beacon providers to now go to COMPASS, because this is what often happens when we get these new RFPs. There's an exodus from one program and now they're like, we don't have no staff, and everybody's over here. And so how are we looking at the bigger picture to ensure that the whole sector is okay, because I can see that happening that as we're rolling this out literally people are going to be like, no, I'll just go over here to COMPASS, because that even happens in our Summer Rising programs and we see that. So, how do we think about looking at this in an equitable space?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, one of the great things about the OCOMPASS, it gives us an opportunity to level set. It gives us also an opportunity to bring in new providers to the system, and I think that's great. So, when the RFP comes

1 out, I'm excited about the opportunity of seeing  
2 providers who traditionally for the past 10+ years  
3 who wasn't in this space actually get to this space.  
4 you mentioned the licensing and the clearance.  
5 Again, that's why Department of Health and Mental  
6 Hygiene is at the table to help us with that and  
7 having conversations with the public schools in terms  
8 of, you know, space and availability. I think those  
9 conversations about Cornerstones and Beacons, I think  
10 they don't happen in a vacuum. Those are the  
11 conversations that are happening consistently where  
12 not only Susan Haskell and her team, but our  
13 providers as well. So, we feel that there's going to  
14 be a significant amount of new nonprofit  
15 organizations that are going to enter into this space  
16 and we welcome that.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Again, I think we  
19 have to make sure that we're-- and this is always my  
20 thing. Like, how are we looking at the whole  
21 picture. And so, for this, I can definitely see  
22 people leaving the Cornerstones and Beacons because  
23 of the inequities. And so, this is something we have  
24 to make sure we're looking at. And since the  
25 original contract issued requirements for the

Cornerstone providers have expanded, including increasing operational hours. How have providers been compensated for those additional staffing needs?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

Thank you, Chair Stevens. We've tried to ensure that given the circumstances around our contracting and budget process that we've done everything we can to ensure that the sector is stabilized and afforded the necessary cash flow to provide services to the sector. With these particular program areas in particular, you flagged and noted the areas that serve Summer Rising, so COMPASS and Beacons, we've made sure to ensure that they have cashflow to support up to 80 percent of their awards to try to maintain and keep them as stable as we possibly can in the circumstance as we're working through to implement additional funds to the system.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many providers-

-

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE:

[interposing] Chair Stevens, if I may?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Sorry, just to add on. In addition to that there's also the

COLA, ICR, and Way that we mentioned before that is directly related to ensuring that the programs have the staff, money for staffing that they need to ensure they can provide the programming.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. Again, I think we definitely have to keep having conversations around even the staffing issues, because I remember when the middle school expansion and they had-- they had got their contracts extended, and this was when I was actually provider. I lost half my staff to the middle school providers, because their contract was more, and then it became increasingly hard for me to even hire, because it was like well, why would I stay here when I can go make five dollars more over here. And so, this is a real issue, and I think sometimes we forget about that, and then now you have even people in the same agency leaving to go to other programs, and then now you have even people in the same agency leaving to go to other programs, and so now directors are mad at other directors because they just can't have it increase. And so, I think this is definitely something we have to keep our eye on, and even as the program is growing, because we will have new providers. So, then that means people will be

1 leaving to go to other agencies. And so, this is  
2 definitely something that I foresee as being an  
3 issue, and so definitely want to have ongoing  
4 conversations and figuring out how do we support  
5 providers in this, because we can't pretend like this  
6 is not going to be a real thing. Because I remember  
7 that vividly. I remember coming back in September  
8 and I lost half my staff, and we had to figure it  
9 out. So, just want to be clear about that. How many  
10 providers are there for Cornerstone programs?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Hi, Chair  
13 Stevens. I don't have the number of providers with  
14 me right now. We have 100 Cornerstones now, but I  
15 can get that data to you in a minute.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Alright. Thank you  
17 so much. I'm just looking all over the place. I'm  
18 going to jump into the Office of Neighborhood Safety.  
19 I don't know why you sitting there. I told you to sit  
20 at the table. How does DYCD determine the funding  
21 levels for the ONS initiative in neighborhoods with  
22 high rates for gun violence and systematic  
23 disinvestments?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Thank  
25 you, Chair Stevens, for the question. As you know, we



got the Office of Neighborhood Safety at the beginning of FY24, and we have been actively working with our partners at MOCS, MOCJ, OMB to ensure that we have the level of services necessary. We assigned contracts. We renewed the contracts, but working with Darryl and his team and our oversights to ensure that we have the funding as necessary where the services should be.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the status of the expanded Cure Violence program in the 47<sup>th</sup> precinct, Edenwald Houses, and how much funding has been budgeted to this site?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens. Can you elaborate a little on the expanded program? I'm not-- we have a catchment in the 47<sup>th</sup> precinct that they do work within-- which is Brag [sp?]. Good Shepherd is Brag. They do work in Edenwald Houses as well, but I'm not familiar with an expansion.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, it wasn't expanded, it's just the same catchment area. They didn't-- they weren't expanded?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: That's correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Has there  
3 been conversations with OMB to restore funding for  
4 the legal services in ONS?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Thank you  
6 for the question. That was a PEG. As you know, as  
7 part of the administration, all had to participate  
8 and ensure that we could meet the moment of the needs  
9 of the administration. What we did do, though, is to  
10 try to ensure that with anything we did not reduce  
11 critical services, that we tried to keep it the same.  
12 We are constantly talking with OMB.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, was the legal  
14 service not considered critical?

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, legal service  
16 is considered critical, and at the Preliminary Budget  
17 I had committed to having those conversations with  
18 OMB and seeing exactly what that looks like. We've  
19 been working with legal services. They've been doing  
20 a phenomenal job in making sure that our young people  
21 get legal representation. So, those are  
22 conversations that will be happening as I committed  
23 to at the Preliminary Budget with OMB.

24 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: CMS organizations  
25 rely on CJU legal services to meet community needs

and support their mission to eradicate gun violence.

So, is DYCD-- I know you said your conversations, but do you guys see that as a critical part of this work and have you guys seen any, I guess, like any medical effects of this PEG, because you know, that was a critical part of the work that they were doing before?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Chair

Stevens, we testified at the Preliminary hearing that the services provided by Legal Aid are critical to some of the work that our CMS providers are doing, everything from the representation that they provide to young adults, referrals, hotlines, workshops-- we had close to at this point over 4,000 young adults in workshops. Those are critical services that support the work our CMS providers are doing on the ground. To the Commissioner's point earlier, we are going to have further discussions with OMB on restorations, potential restorations or what supports we could provide.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. And tap me in into those conversations. I would love to be of support. As we continue to see actual threats in reduction in federal funding, have there been any

conversations with OMB to increase funding for ONS programs?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, again, those are-- they're ongoing conversations as we look across our portfolio, and we understand that the investment that happened on the federal level has been completely cut off. We've been talking with our CMS groups, not only on advocacy, but also in terms of exactly how do we best support them in terms of access to additional funding through our capacity building. We also encourage them and been working with them to fund raise as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I saw a couple on having some galas and things like that, so I was excited to see that they're trying to gear up to do some other things on their own. What is the current headcount for ONS?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: On the programmatic side, so not the support staff at the agency, but programmatically we have 21 staff covering ONS services.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What impact if any does DYCD foresee in the 26-- if the 26 current open positions are not filled by the end of Fiscal 20--

never mind. What performance matrix does DYCD use to assess the effectiveness of violence interruption program like Cure Violence?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, Chair Stevens, we look at the number of-- so one of eh things that they do is canvassing. So, they have catchments throughout the city that they canvas. So, their presence is important. They connect with young people. We look at the numbers of de-escalations that are occurring. The number of mediations. These mediations are on-the-ground intel they receive. Like, two young people have a beef and they're getting there quickly to sort of disrupt that. They're talking to one side, talking to both sides, and assuring that nothing's coming out of that. There's no shooting. There's no further retaliation. In addition to that, of course, you know, we have the shooting responses that also occur unfortunately after a shooting, and even in those cases of a shooting response, imagine a shooting happens. Those CMS teams are on the ground connecting with the perpetrator and the victim and both of their sides, so the family members, the friends, again, to ensure that there's no retaliation and that hopefully they

can bring that down. In addition, they have a caseload. So, CMS providers have a caseload that they meet with weekly. These are young adults who, if you will, are of the highest risk, more than likely to pick up a gun, that they're connecting with weekly to ensure that one, they're not picking that gun up. Two, that they're getting referrals to other services that CMS provided might directly provide or back to the DYCD ecosystem. That now that they're connected to DYCD, they can tap into the other services that we provide as a whole as well.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah, I just want to-- to Deputy Commissioner Rattray's point. I just want to read some of the key metrics, and I just want to, you know, just shout out to not only you, Chair Stevens, but also Council Member Louis, because she engaged us as well in terms of being able to capture some of the metrics. So, we do have some FY24 key metrics, and you know, in terms of the Cure Violence provider's canvas. They've canvased in FY24 65,059 hours. Providers conducted 9,000 de-escalations, 6,717 mediations, 7,218 referrals to wraparound service, and to Deputy Commissioner's Rattray's point, 368 shooting responses in FY24. Providers

2 held 1,808 community events and engaged 1,080,686  
3 community members. There were an average of 1,601  
4 participants on caseload across providers each  
5 quarter. These are phenomenal numbers, and as we're  
6 looking at FY25 from the first six months in terms of  
7 the caseload for-- it's 1,353. The number of Cure  
8 Violence mediation and de-escalations in response to  
9 community incident 8,564, and the number of Cure Very  
10 responses, shooting responses-- and again, this is  
11 just six months into FY25-- 358. So, our CMS groups,  
12 our Cure Violence partners out there are doing  
13 amazing work out there as part of-- well, the safety  
14 initiative.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We are having a  
16 hearing on this coming up in June, so I have a whole  
17 bunch of questions and concerns, and one of my I  
18 guess major concerns is about a week ago I lost one  
19 of the kids that I worked with when I was provider,  
20 and I was out there for three days. There was cops.  
21 That was it. There was nobody else out there. There  
22 was no CMS groups. There was no therapeutic buses  
23 that I see when we're at the rallies, none of the  
24 things, and so for me that's a concern and a red flag  
25 and thinking about what is the actual plan. And even

when talking with the Police Commissioner, she's like, I'm going to be responsive. If there's gun violence, I'm going to put cops out there. And my question and pushback is going to be how are we on the same side meeting that at the same time, right? If there-- if that's what's happening, those are the things we need to be doing. So, we can't just have a whole bunch of cops out on the street. We need to also be thinking about how are we also flooding the street with our providers to make sure that these young people have services. They were out there grieving. I was out there with-- like I said, for three days. Did not see anyone in sight. I was out there for hours. And so, for me, it just doesn't make sense, and so we have to have a real comprehensive plan of what this looks like, of how we're not just coming out there doing shooting response. Where are the grief counselors that are being funded in these moments? Again, I know they have therapeutic buses. Why the therapeutic buses aren't out there? There was at least 50-60 people out there, and that's where we should be responding at, and so I really want us to be thinking about what this plan is, and even thinking about like the Bronx



specifically. We have seen an increase in gun violence. What additional resources are going to be allocated to the borough, because we're seeing such high numbers in shooting. And like I said, I talked to the Police Commissioner. She said, "I'm sending cops." She said, "Where there are dots, there will be cops." I can't even be mad at her. And so my response is, if there's dots-- if there's dots, that means there's cops. So where are the CMS groups? Where is ONS in this? Because we need to have that same energy when it comes to the resources.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I just want to make it clear on the record, we're in partnership, DYCD with NYPD, and I can assure you that the shooting response, ONS responded and not only did ONS respond, but also our CMS groups responded as well. In terms of victims services and resources, I can just-- I can submit a report to you to show you exactly what kind of services was provided not only to the family but also to the community as well. So, we are very, very key in terms of rolling out both trauma and mental health services, hospital response, and a whole plethora of victim services to providers, to communities and parents across this city. But I

will get back to you and let you know intentionally exactly what work was being done.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, we need a real intentional plan, and again, like I said, if there's going to be cops on every corner, then we need CMS workers on those corners. Because the other piece is-- and this is what I say in every Public Safety hearing-- we have to repair that relationship with the community, and CMS right now can be that gap in between that's helping to support that, and if you need more services and support, then that's the conversation we need to have so we can be advocating for that. But I'm honestly scared for the summer. I mean, I know you guys saw even in the Bronx we had a 14-year-old girl who was shot. I mean, 16-year-old girl shot by 14-year-old boy. Like, this is a problem, guys. And again, not going to point out. This is middle school, right? These are this age, and so I'm really concerned about how are we making sure that these responses are what is necessary, right? Like, I know that they're doing the work. I know that they're out there, but what does it look like? Is it where it's supposed to be? How are we-- you know, how are we being intentional?

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we were out at  
3 that unfortunate incident. We've been connecting with  
4 the family. We've been connecting with the  
5 community. We've been connecting with public  
6 schools. We also connected on the block talking with  
7 community residents. It was a tragedy, unfortunate  
8 incident on all levels, but again, ONS was out there  
9 with Cure Violence groups and we were providing the  
10 services. We're not responders, as you know, to  
11 active shooting. We provide preventive,--

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing]  
13 Absolutely.

14 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: victim services,  
15 and other levels of services to address those traumas  
16 that are happening in the community. But again, I  
17 can definitely give you a detailed report on exactly  
18 the touchpoints and things that we're doing, and not  
19 only doing, but continuously do with the families and  
20 the victims.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, absolutely, and  
22 I think we also have to go outside, that like it  
23 needs to be a community response, because it's  
24 really-- even they're saying now that Parks wants to  
25 close the park that it happened at. I'm like, so

1 then where are they going to go? Like, that it  
2 typically the response if there's an incident, like  
3 well, let's shut it down, and they just move and  
4 they're not getting the supports. Opposed to saying  
5 this incident happened here, let's flood it with  
6 resources. Let's send not only CMS, let's send some  
7 groups out there that'll be working with the kids and  
8 talking with them. Like, it just-- it does not-- it  
9 seems reactionary in the wrong way. And I seen you  
10 had your button-- finger on the button for a while  
11 there.

12  
13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Always on  
14 the button. Chair Stevens, no, just two things.  
15 One, I do want to speak offline to get more details  
16 around the incident where you spend three days out  
17 with the community that folks were responding to. I  
18 want to figure out what the gap in-- was with that  
19 and just the details on that. How-- and how long ago  
20 it was.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: A week.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Alright, so  
23 we should definitely talk. To the Commissioner's  
24 point earlier, we are-- summer planning for CMS  
25 doesn't start now. It started months ago, because

they're setting up for warm months when the weather gets warmer where folks are out later. We are having conversations now with our CMS providers, our Cornerstone providers. As you know, Cornerstone programs are open seven days a week to 11:00 p.m. throughout the entire summer. So, we're looking at, to your point, a few seconds ago around how do we make this a community effort. We are having those conversations to bring those providers together with the CMS groups so there are services and other resources that they can tap into, direct young people and young adults, too, and even be a part of that space, those safe space.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. And we definitely going to have to talk offline because like I even think we're at a place where the Cornerstones is a great place, but they're not-- the kids are not going in. So, how are we going on the corner to find them or how we're going into the parks to find them, because that is where we're at. We have to go out and get the kid, because they're not coming in, and so I definitely want us to be thinking about what the plan-- and again, I know this is something you guys have been planning for you're--

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY:

3 [interposing] No, no, no, not on the planning, but  
4 all CMS groups have been integrated into our  
5 Cornerstone--

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] No, I  
7 know.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: [inaudible]  
9 Beacon programs as well.

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will give you  
11 your points for that, because you've done that since  
12 they've been under you guys. You've not only--  
13 you've connected them to the RHY folks. You  
14 connected them to the Cornerstones and also provided  
15 them space, but I think that like we need to even be  
16 doing more. How are we pulling these kids in?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Agree.

18 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The next question--  
19 CMS contracts is due to expire at the end of Fiscal  
20 2026. Is DYCD in conversation to renew the contracts  
21 for CMS, or will there be an extension?

22 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we're  
23 definitely in conversation with OMB to see exactly  
24 what that looks like. As you know, our process is  
25 concept paper first and then RFP. Love to see

1 exactly, you know, the exchange that's going to  
2 happen across our network, because as you know, those  
3 catchment areas, those change, right? Because crime  
4 travels in various different ways. So, that  
5 engagement that needs to happen in a concept paper  
6 needs to happen and it needs to happen in real time.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah. Sometimes  
9 those catchment areas get so weird, because we know  
10 like, people are always beefing with everybody, and  
11 it changes so frequently. One minute, you know, it's  
12 like it's all in this one area, but it moves 10  
13 blocks out. So, you know, I think also even when  
14 we're thinking about the concept paper, we need to  
15 also be thinking about how we can be a little bit  
16 more fluent with that, and I understand the purpose  
17 in the beginning, but now is just like, okay, we  
18 should also be thinking about how do we kind of  
19 rectify that. How many providers are there for CMS?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Currently  
21 doing the Cure Violence work there are 19 providers  
22 throughout the City.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will there be any  
24 changes in the number of providers? Are you looking  
25

to expand, or? When you're doing-- like as you're thinking about the concept paper and the RFP.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Again, that's data we have to look at in terms of what NYPD data is, what our data is showing us as well, and you know, I'm sure that based upon what we're seeing so far, as you already know, crime has traveled to other precinct areas.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just real quick, my favorite program, Saturday Night Lights. Can you tell me the overall attendance rates of these programs, and do you have a percentage?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: I just realized, the last time you asked that question I gave you the enrollment number. I'm going to give you the enrollment number again. Like we're over 6,000 young people enrolled. Let me get back to you with the average attendance. I don't have that--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] You know I'm going to ask the question, because I asked it before. It's a standard question. See what I'm saying? I told you [inaudible].

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: We are seeing a lot of bright spots throughout the SNL,



right? Young-- you know, over-- like, right now, their enrollment every Saturday is 30 young people. We have plenty of sites that have more than 30 young people attending. Of course, you know, we modified the program when we received it. We serve meals at the program now. There's leagues happening throughout SNL. It's vibrant. I would love to offer a site visit with you one Saturday to a SNL site.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I will take you up on your offer, although I sneak and peek my head in multiple sites all the time, because I'm little bit of psycho. And since you didn't have the number, please make sure you have it at the CMS hearing. Thank you. I'm going to pass it over to colleagues, and then we can come back. I have a whole bunch more questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. We have questions from Avilés followed by Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much, Chairs. Good afternoon, I think. I'm going to start with adult literacy and hopefully jump to COMPASS very quickly. So, the Executive Plan includes \$10 million of new funding for Fiscal 26 for the Adult Literacy Program. Are these additional

funds provided to increase funding for the RFP in  
Fiscal 26, or is this funding a restoration of  
Council-funded programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Thank you  
for your question, Council Member. That money is the  
administration's addition to--

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: [interposing] Can  
you speak up a little bit?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Can you  
hear me now?

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Alright.  
Thank you for the question. That money is  
historically one-time money from the administration.  
It is intended for slots. So, we're excited about  
the administration's addition to our budget, and  
we'll be applying them to the RFP-based contracts.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, that's going  
to increase funding for the RFP for 2026.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Are you  
considering issuing a new adult RFP for those  
resources?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: No, not  
3 at this time. Our expectation is that we'll be  
4 reaching out to our providers and seeing where--  
5 first, where these slots should go and then which  
6 providers can take on these additional slots.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And is there any  
8 expectation of any distinction of work differences or  
9 it's just going to fall under the former RFP pretty  
10 squarely?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Yes,  
12 it'll be under what the call the current RFP.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. And do  
14 you anticipate you're going to be increasing a  
15 number-- the number of providers for Fiscal 26?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: At this  
17 time, I don't believe we will. We'll be looking to  
18 the current side of providers to expand, but there  
19 are-- you know, depending on the uptake, there is a  
20 potential, but the expectation is that it'll be with  
21 the existing providers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. If you did  
23 add providers, would they be chosen based on the  
24 NTA's?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: That's a  
3 good question. They would be based on the NTA's in  
4 our existing portfolio of contracts and slots.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. Did you--  
6 did DYCD request the \$10 million to be baselined to  
7 the administration?

8 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
9 Good afternoon. The \$10 million is a reflection of  
10 what would typically be the negotiations that are  
11 happening-- that happen every year at the adopted  
12 plan between the administration and the City Council.  
13 This add, this \$10 million add being allotted to us  
14 as part of the Executive Plan is a good faith effort  
15 to demonstrate early what the administration's  
16 commitment is to providing additional funding to the  
17 Adult Literacy portfolio.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right, because  
19 they cut it last year.

20 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
21 Excuse me?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: They cut the  
23 funding last year.

24

25

2 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: I  
3 believe our colleagues at prior hearings clarified  
4 that there was not a cut to funds.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Oh, right, right.  
6 It was moved. It's unsure. Right. I got it. I  
7 remember. Just really-- if I may? Thank you,  
8 Chairs. If I may, in terms of the COMPASS program,  
9 we are-- my district is under some serious duress  
10 with the federal cuts, particularly the Americore  
11 Program and potentially the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program  
12 which would affect over 800 students and 11  
13 afterschool summer programming academics enrichment  
14 in Sunset Park in particular. So, we are very  
15 stressed currently right now around what's going to  
16 happen to the services and the community as a result  
17 of these direct funding cuts, particularly the Center  
18 for Family Life is one of our major providers, as  
19 we've talked about in years passed. So, in  
20 particular, for the COMPASS additional funding for  
21 those additional seats-- I know for the past four  
22 years we've been talking with one particular school,  
23 PS516 in our community who desperately needs  
24 afterschool programs, but understanding that there  
25 was no new RFP. There were no new seats. They have

1       been sitting in this queue. With the current funding  
2       cuts of Americore and potentially 21<sup>st</sup> would  
3       obliterate their afterschool programming. So, I  
4       guess what I'm urging is that PS516 be looked at very  
5       closely and be considered a priority given what is  
6       currently happening. But I would love to know  
7       outside of my personal plug for that school, is how  
8       the agency is going to be looking at the criteria. I  
9       know there's a lot more need than the 5,000 seats,  
10      but what criteria will you be establishing, and when  
11      will you be making those selections around the  
12      COMPASS program and funding?

14               COMMISSIONER HOWARD: One hundred percent  
15      agree with you. The concern out in the communities,  
16      not only in your area, but you know, in other areas  
17      as well. And I think that without going into the  
18      real weeds of it, we're looking at communities with  
19      the highest need, localizing exactly what that looks  
20      like. Having our partners in New York City Public  
21      Schools at the table to be able to look at not only  
22      the 5,000 slots roll out, but also looking at the  
23      investment with the 15 and the other five in FY25.  
24      As soon as we can get to a good place with everyone  
25      in agreement, we would love to sit down with you and

your team to show you exactly where we are so we can get your feedback as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. So, do you have an anticipation around timeframe for when the applications will be out and when selections will be made? Because 26 is five minutes away?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, again, I will go for the concept papers to get it out before the end of the month. And then have those level of engagement in terms of the concept paper and the RFP during the summer months.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay. And I guess lastly, to the Chair's line of questioning around the increases-- and of course, we are delighted to see further investment in young people across the city and the services that support them and their families. I just didn't understand the answer that you provided. So, it sounds like to me we-- it seems to be a fact that the current-- let's keep it on COMPASS. The current COMPASS cost per student is well below the actual cost that the providers have. Do you agree that that is actually the case currently, that the costs that we are paying are below the actual cost for the services rendered?

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I-- what I can  
3 agree to is the fact of a must-needed reboot of the  
4 whole afterschool program. What I can agree to is  
5 the fact that there's a historic investment of \$331  
6 million over the three years. And what makes me feel  
7 very much excited about the possibility is the  
8 engagement-- it is happening in real-time with  
9 providers as they're sharing on multiple levels and  
10 as both Jeremy and Chris has shared, you know, the  
11 different tier systems in the contracts, you know,  
12 makes it really challenging, but again, it's nothing  
13 that DYCD has not been through before. And I'm also  
14 excited about the fact that we will eventually have a  
15 blue ribbon commission that's going to look at  
16 afterschool for everybody.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. I guess,  
18 Commissioner, I understand. You, again, did not  
19 answer the question. But I guess the thing that I'm  
20 struggling with here is we are all excited about the  
21 investment, but what we have is a current problem,  
22 right? We have providers that are offering a very  
23 critical service to our young people that are not  
24 being paid the full amount of the cost of those  
25 services which means they end up subsidizing those



2 contracts with all kinds of other resources, mostly  
3 private and donations for an individual New Yorkers.  
4 So, if we agree that they are currently underwater  
5 why is it going to take the agency-- it's a little  
6 bit about gaslighting. We are under water now, but  
7 we're celebrating the future investment. Where--  
8 why are we not providing the oxygen and the adequate  
9 amount of resources to bring those up to speed today,  
10 not next year, not the next three years. So, I guess  
11 it's by gap that I'm not understanding your  
12 excitement around.

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Well, I'm sorry.  
14 I'm typically a more excitable person. But I-- we  
15 hear the pain with the providers. We sit down and we  
16 talk with them as well. I understand and my team  
17 understands what the providers are going through.  
18 Again, I have-- you know, when we look at exactly how  
19 we right-size, you know, our typical process. And  
20 where we were in the past, 10+ years of not having a  
21 robust program model. And where we're going, again,  
22 I can't help to control my enthusiasm about it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: You should  
24 [inaudible]. Do you know what the gap is between the  
25 current funded services and what they actually cost?

2 Do you know what the delta is? I'm curious. I'm  
3 sure you do, Commissioner.

4 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I'm excited about  
5 \$331 million that are happening across the program  
6 area.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Fair point.  
8 We're not allowed-- we're not allowed to be realistic  
9 in this room.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I appreciate you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: We understand.  
12 There's a real delta there, Commissioner, and it's  
13 unfair and a little bit gaslighting to the community  
14 of providers who really are trying their best in this  
15 circumstance to talk about how--

16 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] I'm  
17 excited about city--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: excited you are  
19 in the future when they're not getting paid today.  
20 So,--

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] I'm  
22 excited about sitting down--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: thank you so  
24 much, Commissioner.

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: with you and  
3 working with you through those gaps.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Just  
5 real quick-- and as we're on providers I just wanted  
6 to point out I know that over 50 providers signed the  
7 letter to the mayor just urging around pay rates,  
8 because I know when I asked the question before it  
9 wasn't-- they said it wasn't clear. But the Council  
10 called for \$154.3 million to address the funding  
11 rates disparities. And so, I just want us to just  
12 kind of like make sure that we're acknowledging that  
13 providers have signaled to the administration that  
14 the funding rates are in inadequate and they are not  
15 really -- they're struggling at this point. And so I  
16 just wanted to make sure we had that on record,  
17 because a letter was given to the administration. I  
18 think it was like a week or so ago, and it was over  
19 54 providers saying that, and so now even with this  
20 expansion we're not acknowledging what they're  
21 telling us, that they can't provide this service  
22 because it's so critical. So, I just wanted to make  
23 sure that was on record and we had that. But I will  
24 turn it over to Chair Louis.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chairs,  
3 and good to see you, Commissioner and your team. I  
4 have three and a half quick questions. So, I'll just  
5 shoot them out and then we can talk about them. The  
6 first one is on rented space for community-based  
7 organizations. Many CBOs operating DYCD programs  
8 such as Cornerstone and COMPASS rely on space with  
9 facilities operated by other government agencies such  
10 as NYCHA community centers. When these centers or  
11 sites undergo capital projects that disrupt  
12 programming, what specific mechanisms does DYCD have  
13 in place to support intergovernmental coordination  
14 and minimize impact on those CBOs and their  
15 participants? Will any of the 46 new positions  
16 included in DYCD's headcount expansion be dedicated  
17 to helping CBOs navigate interagency facility  
18 challenges or coordinate with agencies like NYCHA,  
19 DOE, DCAS when disruptions occur? When site-based  
20 programming is disrupted due to renovations or  
21 emergency closures, does DYCD have the funding set  
22 aside to support temporary relocations or alternative  
23 space acquisitions, particularly for critical  
24 programs such as COMPASS and cornerstone? Last  
25 question, and this is on contracting. DYCD relies on

YMS management as a fiscal agent for organizations with contracts under \$25,000. Is DYCD auditing YMS frequently to ensure they're communicating clearly with their CBOs? And what escalation mechanisms does DYCD have that exists if the CBO cannot support-- cannot get support from YMS?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Thank you, Council Member Louis. I'm going to also tap in Deputy Commissioner Haskell, but to my knowledge, I don't think-- and again, I'll tap her in as well-- that any of our providers who are running our Cornerstone programs are paying a lease rent. So, that's number one.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: So, that's-- the question is what's the coordination between DYCD and those particular locations?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Any-- we have regular meetings with NYCHA, operational meetings to discuss issues that are happening around our community centers and our program, both programmatic review, and also intentional we review around maintenance that are happening, any disturbances that are happening because it impacts programming. We look at our public schools or available space to be

able to transfer programs there temporarily until those maintenance or those repairs get resolved.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay. That's not happening in District 45. So,--

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] I would love to hear about, you know, intentionally what you're seeing or what you're hearing.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Because again, we work with NYCHA to make sure that those things are resolved. Please send that to me.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Of course. And will any of the 46 new positions include DYCD's headcount expansion like dedicated to supporting this? I know what you're saying right now, but I'm saying with the new positions in FY26, what does that look like?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I'll have Alan-

-

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah, just to clarify, the new positions that are currently in the budget are not related to the expansion of the afterschool programs. They're actually tied to the

expansion of RHY beds, as well as the Fatherhood Program.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: So, would it include Cornerstone and COMPASS?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CHENG: Yeah, no.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: And regarding, excuse me, the YMS Management and fiscal agent for the organizations, how are we addressing that?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: Yes, DYCD has had a long-standing relationship with YMS Management Associates. They provide a key fiscal agent function for those of our nonprofit partners who don't have a-- who don't have the resources to be able to provide it on their own. To your question about whether or not DYCD is performing audits, DYCD, because they are a contracted vendor of ours, we perform annual performance evaluations on their contract to ensure that they're providing services to spec and to our expectations. And then separately the question about trouble-shooting when there are disputes between the provider, as always-- and this isn't specific to YMS only, but as always, we have our DYCD Budget and Finance Help Desk that we would

love for providers to continue to utilize whenever there are circumstances that need resolution involving their finances [inaudible].

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: So, I'll send that over to your agency as well, because--

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] You can send that to me directly.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: there's some complications there.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Send it to me directly.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I will do that. And I just wanted to quickly just piggyback off of what Chair Stevens was sharing. I had six shootings in 11 days in my district, and with that, the response back I got from Cure Violence was, "We don't work on Mondays." So, the people that are responding is like my office and some local groups. So, I think that's something you all should look at, because the first response was NYPD. The last response was NYPD. Even though the group told me they responded, I was there all night. I know that they did not respond. But they told me, "We also don't work Mondays, so we'll be out there on Tuesday." I often hear that



all the time. So, I think it would be great if you all could work this out with Chair Stevens and any other members that are interested to see what that looks like in FY26 when it comes to additional funding for Mondays. Because when we hear that back from groups, not only is it disheartening, it's just - and I get it, your agency works for NYPD so they're going to respond. They're going to stay on the scene and create a strategy, but what is the next step after that? There's some groups that are not providing that service, and you all may not be aware of that, but that's what we're hearing.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I definitely want to know what that experience is, what you heard, because-- our Cure Violence groups respond to whatever act, if shooting is out there, regardless if it's Monday through Sunday. So, I would love to hear exactly who said that to you--

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: [interposing] Okay.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: because I would need to make sure that they understand what the contractual obligation is and the responsibility of what they're supposed to do in our community.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Got it. Thank  
3 you. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, it's me.  
5 Sorry. Council Member Joseph?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair  
7 Stevens. Just want to highlight a few things around  
8 young people. The conversation has to start as young  
9 as elementary school. So, by the time we get to  
10 middle school, we've already lost a lot of our young  
11 people, and a lot of our young people-- and that's  
12 not on you as well. New York City Public School has  
13 to play a part. When students are chronically  
14 absent, there has to be an outreach, and I've said  
15 that so many times. Attendance-- teachers need to be  
16 working with every single entity in that building to  
17 make sure we're providing all the resources for that  
18 young person and to find out why are you absent more  
19 than 10 days. And that should have automatically  
20 generated a 407. So, I don't know if there's a crack  
21 in the system somewhere that we're going to have to  
22 fix, because I can't take it when I'm losing young  
23 people on both sides. Once you picked up the gun,  
24 I've lost you. Once you've passed away, I've also  
25 lost you, right? So, we want to make sure that

that's all hands-on deck. You come in and meet New York City Public Schools halfway. So, of course-- go ahead, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, absolutely. I agree with you 100 percent. We work very closely with Project Pivot, and one of our successfully programs have been our YES program, our Youth Enrichment Services program, where we work with public schools to be in the 50 schools with the highest level of incidents. So, would love to show you exactly what list that is, read you into what our program model is to be able to resolve not only conflicts, but other issues that are happening in the school in partnership with public schools.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I agree. But I also had a issue with Project Pivot in my district, so I'm going to put it here, and I'm going to put it tomorrow when I have my Executive Budget hearing. It took too long for them to respond to Safe Passages in my district. I was the one with my jacket on outside working with NYPD to make sure we were moving kids along. But we don't want to just move them along, right? Move them along with an alternative. Young person moving along, but here's a program for

1       afterschool. Here's a summer job. Here's something.  
2       When we move them along, we have to have a plan. We  
3       can't just move them along to move them along. So,  
4       it has to be more comprehensive as we-- I'll sit with  
5       you. Chair Stevens know I'm always here to  
6       collaborate, because--

7                       COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing]  
8       Absolutely.

9                       COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: we have custody  
10       of all New York City kids, right Chair Stevens? So,  
11       we want to work in collaboration to make sure we're  
12       getting the young people their resources as much as  
13       possible. So, what-- how does DYCD coordinate with  
14       New York City Public Schools to ensure quality  
15       programming for our specialized population which  
16       includes our ENL students, students in temporary  
17       housing, foster youth, and students with disability  
18       during the afternoon programming?

19                      COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Deputy Commissioner  
20       Haskell can run over, but on multiple levels, not  
21       just Deputy Commissioner Haskell, but also Deputy  
22       Commissioner Valerie Mulligan with our Summer Youth  
23       Employment, and of course, Deputy Commissioner  
24

2 Rattray with CMS and SNL is part of our profile. But  
3 I'll-- we'll start with--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Thank you,  
5 Chair Joseph. We work really closely with Department  
6 of Education at all levels. In particular, you know,  
7 we have regular monthly and biweekly meetings with  
8 their central offices. Our team in Youth Services  
9 meet rurally with district leadership and Executive  
10 Directors. And with respect to special populations,  
11 I think, you know, we have a biweekly meeting with  
12 the Office of Special Education to talk about how to  
13 get supports into programs to support young people.  
14 We work with the Office for Students in Temporary  
15 Housing. I think that our partnership, the strength  
16 of our partnership is better than ever with New York  
17 City Public Schools, and yeah, if there's anything  
18 that comes to your attention where you feel like we  
19 need to be working more closely, please let us know  
20 because I think we're really very well connected now  
21 and that's being evidenced in the way we're serving  
22 young people.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Are you working  
24 with the students, the Office of Foster Care? There's  
25 also an Office of Foster Care with nine staffers

created under my leadership, because that student, that population was never seen or heard in this system. So, are you working with the Office of Foster Care as well?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I appreciate that question. It doesn't come to mind for me, but it doesn't mean my team isn't. We work very closely with ACS foster care to serve students, and we're working with a couple of groups within-- that may include that, which is like Every Child and Family is Known. We're part of that and Family Connectors, and so we might be reaching some of that personnel connections there, but I'll look into that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: That would be great. And you would have a comprehensive plan, the conversation would be a comprehensive plan for that-- for those unique population that I mentioned.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: A hundred percent, and just like what you described, like, in the Safe Passage situation. Like, do you know what resources are available? Here's a program, we'd love to connect you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Does these efforts feel sufficient in supporting CBOs who lead

the afternoon programming? Why and why not? Do the CBOs feel supported in the afternoon? Not the academic part in the morning, but in the afternoon part?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: You're talking about Summer Rising?

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Correct.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Yeah. I feel-- I mean every year this program gets better and better. The quality is improving every year. Our connection and our coordination with New York City Public Schools is improved. We have an escalation process for anybody on the ground at any site that's having challenges. We have a direct line to Office of Special Education at New York City Public Schools to get supports in action or training if that's the case. You know, DYCD also has supports. Our program managers can go out as well as our consultants.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Transportation, will transportation be provided for our young people who qualify for busing who wants to participate in the afternoon program? I know they have a rideshare. Rideshare require that adults are riding with them, but what does that look like for young people who

want to stay in the afternoon which is the fun part,  
right?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I mean, I  
think so. You already know, the busing schedule is  
around three o'clock and the rideshare is for young  
people who are entitled to transportation who want to  
stay can take rideshare.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: In that, do you  
know how many students do not join your afternoon  
programming because of transportation as a barrier?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I don't  
know the answer to that question, but I do know-- you  
know, rideshare is transportation, and so I think for  
a family, a young person who are committed to staying  
'til six o'clock, there is a resource there to  
support them.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: No, I'm asking do  
you have a number of students who do not come to the  
afternoon program because of lack of-- because  
there's no transportation?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I don't  
know.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: You don't have a  
number?



2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: No, I  
3 wouldn't have that number.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I would love to  
5 see what that number looks like, and because you  
6 don't track that issue. What is the plan and process  
7 if a student enrolled in Summer Rising and required  
8 to move to a shelter, is transportation provided?  
9 Remember, we have also students in temporary housing,  
10 and if they have to move from one shelter to the  
11 other, what are the transportation in place, or  
12 what's the plan in place for that student?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Absolutely.  
14 If they're eligible for transportation, that  
15 transportation will adapt to their new location,  
16 their home location.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How long does  
18 that take?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: That-- I--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: [interposing]  
21 You're going to get back to me, right?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I'm hoping  
23 that's immediate, the next day, but--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: [interposing] I  
25 hope so, too.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I will  
3 connect with our office and see if there's any gap  
4 there.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Okay, thank you,  
6 and we'll be on the road to come see you, Chair  
7 Stevens and I. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just really  
9 quickly-- can I-- could DYCD send over to the  
10 Committee a list of all of the COMPASS and SONYC  
11 providers hopefully in the next couple of weeks?

12 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I don't see that's  
13 a problem.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I have  
16 questions from Council Member Williams.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. I  
18 had a whole bunch of questions that I pre-prepared,  
19 but listening to your testimony I have like a whole  
20 new set of questions based off of some of your  
21 answers. So, I'll just start with Saturday Night  
22 Lights. I understand the intention behind it. I  
23 still maintain this idea that it is not a  
24 comprehensive program. I have two Saturday Night  
25 Lights programs in my district, one a little outside

of my district, and what I have learned, because I actually went and spoke to them, some people care and they do things that are really cool and creative. They have a structured sort of curriculum, and some Saturday Night Lights programs, the kids are just there, like, shooting hoops and the cops are like sitting on the side, not even really engaged. Sometimes a cop will engage if they want to, but there's no requirement. I even spoke to the Parks Department about this, because I was livid one time that I went and saw the program. And I'm like, this is such a waste of money, resources and time, and this is not really, like, helping that young person grow and development or do anything outside of like being in a gym and throwing basketball hoops by themselves with minimal interaction and engagement from both the Parks Department and the Police Department in the case of the one that's at Roy Wilkins. Now, I've heard that the Jamaica Y one is a little bit better. I've heard that there's another one at a school that has a coach that's really engaged, but the issue that I have is not necessarily intention behind Saturday Night Lights, but the fact that they're not created equal, and it doesn't seem

1 like there is any real oversight from the agency to  
2 ensure that the program-- all of the programs are  
3 just as effective. So, if you can share like what  
4 that oversight looks like. Are you sharing best  
5 practices or different models that are working in  
6 certain Satur-- because you said there are some that  
7 have great attendance and seem to be doing really  
8 well, but then there's a whole bunch of others that  
9 are not doing really good.

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we're  
12 definitely going to-- we definitely have staff that  
13 go out and do perform-- evaluations at each and every  
14 one of the sites. I believe if it wasn't the  
15 previous budgetary hearing, I know it was one of the  
16 budgetary hearings in which yourselves and Chair  
17 Stevens mentioned that you would like to see exactly  
18 an evaluation of what Saturday Night looked like,  
19 from where it was before, where it's at now. We do  
20 have-- and we have contracted with a contractor to do  
21 an independent assessment which we will be completing  
22 in the very, very near future and we'll read you in  
23 to exactly what some of the pain points are and some  
24 of the improvements that need to happen.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Looking  
3 forward to that report, because again, I think the  
4 intention is really good. I just would love to see  
5 if we're dumping a certain level of resources that  
6 we're being really thoughtful about the programming.  
7 Okay, so you mentioned-- this is now to the Office of  
8 Neighborhood Safety. You mentioned a lot of really  
9 good stats on the different things that the CMS  
10 groups have been doing, and I think these statistics  
11 are really good, but I'm more so interested in the  
12 benchmarks or any methods you're using to determine  
13 efficacy. Just because they did, you know, a  
14 thousand canvassing operations doesn't mean that  
15 they're effectively reducing gang and gun violence.  
16 Just because they did X amount of shooting responses  
17 that I personally hate-- I personally hate shooting  
18 responses, personally hate. I don't think-- and the  
19 problem is that in their contract they're required--  
20 the agencies requires them to do these silly things  
21 that don't reduce gun violence. So, just because you  
22 had X amount of shooting responses doesn't mean that  
23 you stopped gun and gang violence in your community.  
24 So, what methods or benchmarks are you-- or do you  
25 have to determine whether or not these CMS groups are

being effective in their work? Because just rattling off stats to me is not enough, because, you know, there needs to be more.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, not only do we have our ONS team out there working with our CMS groups, but we also have our indicators, our key indicators which is a benchmark that you just described. And what data--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
What are the indicators? And I just want to say-- maybe I should say this disclaimer. Like, I have a complex relationship. I was on a board for a local CMS group and so I love them. I just think there needs to be a more central focus. Other cities and states, the way that they deal with their CMS groups is completely different. I understand New York City is a huge city, and so inherently the system might look a little bit different, but it's silo, disjointed. One group has great mental health services. Another group-- you know, you go to Man Up, they do great with workforce. You go to Life Camp. They're great with mental health. But how do you essentially like cross-share these great things that they're doing? It's just there's no

coordination. So, yes? What are the community indicators? Like, how do you determine whether or not they're effective? Because again, I don't think being able to say that they did X amount of shooting responses and they canvased X amount of neighborhoods is enough to determine whether or not they are effectively reducing gang and gun violence in our community.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we look at the data. The data tells the story. And what I--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
Yeah, but with data, right? You have data, and then often times you benchmark that data with some type of methodology behind the data to determine whether or not it's meeting a goal. Like, just rattling off numbers is just not enough to determine whether or not a program is effective.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I'm not just rattling off numbers. these come from evidence-based approaches to the data, you know--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
What is the evidence-based approach that you use. That's what I'm trying to get to.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: that we been--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]

3 I want to understand the back end of the methodology  
4 that you actually use to evaluate these programs, and  
5 I never get that. Even when ONS was in MOCJ, we had  
6 to FOIL. I always talk about this. We had to FOIL  
7 documents to even look at their contracts. The  
8 agencies wouldn't share any information. So, how am I  
9 supposed to advocate or even be able to evaluate what  
10 you're doing if I don't even know what their  
11 standards are, what you are holding them accountable  
12 for.

13 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: I would be happy to  
14 sit down with you and your team to go over the  
15 methodology that we use, and the--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
17 Okay. I can move on from that question.

18 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [inaudible] okay?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I know we have  
20 a hearing coming up on that.

21 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Absolutely.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Can you share  
23 more details? You talked about your partnering with  
24 the NYPD. I've never seen effective partnership  
25 across the CMS system with the Department. You have



one CO that's amazing and is invested in CMS, and so maybe that partnership is really good in that catchment area. you have another-- and then they swap COs every three years. So, you have another CO that doesn't care about CMS and that partnership is not there. They also do not coordinate. When they do the big gang takedowns, the Department never ever coordinates with CMS, and a lot of the kids that get locked up were in the CMS program. So I would just love to know a little bit more about your partnership with CMS, because I have not seen effective partnership across the system. It is, like, haphazard.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, Council Member Dr. Williams, thank you for that. So, we-- to the Commissioner's point earlier, we have a very close relationship with NYPD whether it's their presence within our Cornerstones seven days a week to 11:00 p.m., whether it's--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing] I want to know specifically about the relationship--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY:  
[interposing] I'm getting--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: with ONS with  
3 the CMS groups.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: to it  
5 quickly.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Not  
7 Cornerstone.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Getting to  
9 it quickly. Whether it's SNL where they show up  
10 every Saturday at sites or whether it's with our CMS  
11 groups where at roll call they are-- our CMS groups  
12 attend roll calls at time for their-- ensure that  
13 they're meeting--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
15 But that is not a systematized. There's no-- there's  
16 nothing that says that a CMS group has to attend roll  
17 call. I'll move on again.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: What--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]  
20 Because I'm just telling you in terms of, like, a  
21 true partnership with the Police Department, there is  
22 not a-- it is haphazard. There are certain pockets  
23 where there's really good relationships, but as a  
24 system, it's not-- there's no relationship.  
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Council  
3 Member Dr. Williams, to be fair, I would say there  
4 are many best practices happening out there. The  
5 majority of CMS providers are doing those best  
6 practices. Showing up at roll call, creating those  
7 relationships with local officers-- we know sometimes  
8 they switch out, and we support them to rebuild those  
9 relationships where needed.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I'll move  
11 on.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: And--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Because I'm  
14 like way over my time. I actually want to follow up  
15 on something that Council Member Louis mentioned  
16 around YMS and so, is there a mechanism in place to  
17 review YMS, vis a vis DYCD in the form of reviews?  
18 So you give reviews on organizations, is there a way  
19 to do a client review? So, are you actually talking  
20 to the nonprofits that have to interact with YMS to  
21 determine whether or not they are effectively doing  
22 their job?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Thank you  
24 very much for your question. You know, as my  
25 colleague said, we have our Help Desk which is a key

point. We also have, which was mentioned at a prior hearing, our Chief Nonprofit Officer where--

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing] So the answer is no. You guys are not actually talking to clients or effectively reviewing YMS.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Well, I don't think that's entirely accurately.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I can move on again. Do you know what kind of accounting system YMS operates off of? Looks like you don't, but I can tell you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: We will look into that and get back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, so it's a cash system which is totally in contrast to like general accounting procedures that are like national standards, and what happens is they're working with these nonprofits that you-- that are kind of locked in to working with YMS, and then when they have to do audits, they have to essentially redo their books because YMS only does their accounting on a cash basis which is completely contrast to general accounting procedures.

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We will take a look  
3 at it. Thank you very much.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. I would  
5 love to continue to follow up with Council Member  
6 Louis on YMS, because I think there needs to be more  
7 oversight, and there's a ton of problems that I do  
8 not think DYCD is effectively addressing with the  
9 nonprofits. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We hear you. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I'm back.  
13 I'm going to switch over to Advance [sic] and Earn  
14 [sic]. The Executive Plan includes a technical  
15 adjustment of \$8.8 million of Fiscal 2026. This  
16 adjustment appears to be an annual budget transfer  
17 from the Office of Economic Opportunity. Why is this  
18 funding not included in DYCD budget at adoption?

19 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
20 I'm sorry, can you repeat that question. I apologize.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: The Executive Plan  
22 includes a technical adjustment of \$8.8 million in  
23 Fiscal Year 2026, and this is for Advance and Earn.  
24 This adjustment appears to be an annual transfer from  
25

the Office of Economic Opportunity. Why is this not included in DYCD's budget at adoption?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

Thank you, Chair Stevens. The-- this has been an annual action in terms of how the Office of Economic Opportunity funds our Advance and Earn programs and also our young men's initiative as well. This funding comes in during the adopt plan and that affords us a bit more time relative to the adopt plan. Excuse me, comes to the Exec Plan, it affords us a bit more time relative to the adopt plan to be able to effectively plan and implement services for the upcoming fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many slots is the funding for?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I got you. Thank you for that question. So, for Advance and Earn, we have 1,380 slots funded with that funding in addition to a couple--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] You said 180?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: 1,380 slots per year, and we deliver those slots in two

cohorts. So, there's a fall cohort and a spring cohort. So, half in the fall, half in the spring.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What boroughs and districts do those programs operate?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We are in all five districts. I can get you-- I mean, those are citywide contracts, right? So they're able to recruit from any one of the boroughs, but I am happy to get you the list of provides and programs and trainings that they offer offline.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And since you're up here, Val, let's just keep it going. [inaudible] you know. I mean, I know you heard my rant earlier about the middle school and the lack of programming. So, you know, and I've been saying this for the last three years, and so I'm going to say it out loud again, because when I say stuff apparently in these hearings, people be listening and stuff be happening. So, I'm going to say it. We have to reimagine workforce development. SYEP was great in the 70s when it started, but like, we have advanced past that. Kids at 16 are not getting jobs at the grocery stores and the Foot Lockers like we were when I was growing up, and so we have to get to a place where if

kids want jobs that we are figuring out how to give it to them. And you know, we have all these different buckets, but we need to really be thinking about a more comprehensive plan. I know in DOE they have like, you know, LTW and Train and Earn, and you know, we have SYEP and Work, Run, Grow and Advance and Earn, but the reality is we need to be looking at this as a holistic thing and making sure that in all these different buckets that kids are able to have access. But I'm going to focus on SYEP for right now, because that's all we really have that is open to all young people. But I really want us to really buckle down to really think about what does reimagining this look like, because this-- when I'm talking to young people, they're telling me, "I want a job. Ms., could you find me a job? Ms., could you give me a job?" Not an internship, not a stipend. They're like, "Ms., I want a job." And so we have to listen and be reactive to that. So, again, I'm saying it. I need us to reimagine, reimagine, reimagine the workforce for young people. Will SYEP program be affected by the decreased federal funding this year? Will it be affected?



2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: No, we're  
3 not expecting any impact at this time.

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the largest  
5 target number for SYEP participants in Fiscal 2026.  
6 Is there room for growth for expansion of 100 youth  
7 who received employment last year?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Sorry, can  
9 you repeat that?

10 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is there-- are we  
11 looking to grow past the 100,000 young people we  
12 employed last year? And also, are there target areas  
13 in which we're trying to expand in, in the buckets  
14 that we typically [inaudible] for SYEP.

15 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, I think when it  
16 comes to Summer Youth Employment we would love to one  
17 day get to a point where every young person who wants  
18 a job can get a job. There is, you know,  
19 conversation that's happening about that. That  
20 happen to be our north star. As Deputy Commissioner  
21 Mulligan will tell you, you know, the partnership,  
22 this has happened across the board in bringing more  
23 tech and also other Fortune 500 and organizations  
24 into that space with Summer Youth Employment has been  
25 happening across the board, especially the investment

in our special initiative programs that deals with young people being recruited out of the precincts with the highest level of gun violence, Fair Future, and also NYCHA and young people in our disability community as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is DYCD planning to do RFP for SYEP to enhance the program in qualified provide-- in qualifications for providers?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: That is conversations that are happening internally and conversations that we will be having with OMB.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, because we have this expansion three years ago and we have not really expanded providers. So, even when we're thinking about how do we get, you know, different organizations and agencies and things like that to come on board, we might need to think about expanding it, because 75 isn't a lot to be managing this. They've been doing a good job. That's not what I'm saying, but again, I think that we need to get a place where we're working smart. Has there been any conversations with the administration on increasing hourly rates for SYEP participants?

2 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

3 I'm sorry, could you repeat the question? I  
4 apologize.

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You're not paying  
6 attention today, huh? You need a hearing aid, too?  
7 Because I know I can't hear. Has there been any  
8 conversation with administration to increase hourly  
9 rates for the participants?

10 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:

11 Yes, we have ongoing conversations with our OMB  
12 partners to see if there's opportunities to provide  
13 additional funding for wages across our programs.  
14 Most recently we've implemented wage rate increases  
15 for some of our Outer School, Outer Youth [sic]  
16 programs such as CRED and Advance and Earn.

17 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't worry, I  
18 have questions for CRED. Don't worry. Don't you  
19 worry. And I know that the model for middle school,  
20 that's something that was implemented before but is  
21 there-- has there been conversations on changing the  
22 model back so that those young people could actually  
23 get work experience and not, you know, basically do  
24 this, you know, model-based programming that they've  
25 been doing?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So, I hear  
3 that feedback. What I will say is that we really do  
4 like the project-based learning opportunities--

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] Who  
6 likes it? You like or the kids like it?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: for 14 and  
8 15-year-olds.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because I don't  
10 care what adults like, because that's not what I'm  
11 hearing.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I hear  
13 you. We do get really positive feedback from our  
14 young people. I could share some of the survey data.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, no, no, because  
16 I could hear the positive-- I could tell you the  
17 feedback that I get. I have-- like, when I-- so--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I hear you  
19 on--

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] Those  
21 kids do not-- I have not heard one young person be  
22 like, "I love to sit here and do this project-based  
23 learning." They say they feel like they're in  
24 school. They already don't want to be there, and  
25 they're-- and it's \$750. So, we can-- obviously, we

can find some kids to be like, alright, I like it. It's better than nothing. But that is not the feedback that I get. Even the ones who say they like it, they're like, "Well, why we only get \$750. I rather actually learn some experiences." So, it's okay for us to be like, it ain't working.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I get that. I just-- we do see really high participation rates. I would love to share with you. We survey all of the young people in that program every year, so I'd love to show you what we get from the survey data, and we could talk about where there are gaps. But for sure we like that program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, we like it, but I don't-- but that's not what they want.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I got you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: SYEP metro cards-- the Executive Plan includes an additional \$11 million for city funding in Fiscal 2026. And so, I know that this is a program that we all love and we like, but are we looking at this to adjust something around this because we do have the Omni and I know myself and Rita really we were working hard around the Omni stuff? And so just thinking about how are we looking

to adjust that and taking that into consideration?  
Are we still at a place where we need the full \$11 million, and could you just give me some insight around that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN:

Absolutely. So, we're actively surveying the providers right now and have also been for months before in anticipation of receiving this funding, working with our partners at public schools to really understand which students would need access to a card. So, once we get all of our data back from the survey of providers, we're going to assess how many cards each provider needs based on what they think of the population that they have, and we'll distribute them that way. So, we'll see how that shakes out in terms of what the financial need is, and also to say we are anticipating, especially because we got the funding earlier, that we'll be able to work with the MTA to get Omni cards this year instead of metro cards. So, we're really excited to finally be able to make that switch.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many youth would receive metro cards with the additional funding?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So, the  
3 intention is always that any young person who needs  
4 one, meaning any young person who doesn't have a card  
5 from public schools would have access to one if they  
6 want. So that's our ultimate goal.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, but how many?  
8 Do we have a number with that \$11 million, how many  
9 will receive it with that? Like, do we have a  
10 breakdown of that number? So, all 100,000 would be  
11 able to get it, and that's in-- because I'm asking  
12 because we know that there's always kids even before  
13 the Omni that had school metro cards, and so I'm just  
14 trying to get an accurate number of like how many  
15 young people we've been serving with these-- this \$11  
16 million.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: I do have  
18 the prior year numbers I can get you offline of how  
19 many we served.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We do  
22 expect that to be a little bit different this year,  
23 because this is the first year that those Omni cards  
24 will be able to be used by the students over the  
25 summer. So, we do expect the take-up rate to be

different this year. We're just not sure what it's going to be yet.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you anticipate the entire \$11 million will be used in Fiscal 2026?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: We don't know.

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: Yeah, we can't answer at this point, as Deputy Commissioner Mulligan outlined. There are a lot of changing factors on how this is going to be rolled out, but again, the key objective and target here is that these cards will be available to every SYEP participant that needs it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What changes will the agency be making due to the sunseting of metro cars by MTA? I know you said this year, because you're getting it earlier doing Omni. Are there any other changes that needs to take place?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: No, I think the shift to the Omni cards is going to make it much administratively easier for us. We know it's a big ask for the providers. They had to have several metro cards per young person and track them, while the Omni card is going to make it much easier for us



to be able to implement them, but really that's the big shift, you know, from moving from metro cards to Omni cards.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm going to move on to Making Wave contract transfer. The Executive Budget included an additional \$720,000 [sic] baseline funding starting in Fiscal 2026. How is this additional funding for this program being used?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This is you, too? This-- unbelievable.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: This is me, too. So, Chair Stevens, Making Waves is one, an amazing program that's been around. This is actually the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the existence of the program. We work closely with DOHMH and with New York City Public Schools. The program teaches young people throughout the summer months how to swim. So, we have young people going from zero experience swimming to level one, level two, level three. Over the course of the 10 years, we've served over 13,000 young people which the majority of these 13,000 have been under the age of nine. The budget goes towards the provider who actually implements the swim lessons throughout the summer. They're called MVP Swimmers, which stands

for Making Very Proficient Swimmers. There's another component. Just lastly, there's another component to this which is throughout-- from January to June they're actually trying to certify young adults to become lifeguards.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is this contract transferred to DYCD to manage Making Waves program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: So, yes. In the past, we've been one of the three partners implementing and the transfer over to us this fiscal year starting July 1<sup>st</sup> is for us to help manage. Managing-- yeah, help manage the contract and the coordination.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And you guys have always managed the contracts and coordination?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: DOHMH took a larger role in the coordination of it, but we, our role of course is bringing our young people, ensuring that the scheduling is right, connecting with New York City Public Schools on which pools are open, and then doing that schedule and coordination. So, we-- while they were the lead in managing, we did a huge part in that as well.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And so is it  
3 different this year? Are you guys going to be taking  
4 more of a lead role?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yes, dn the  
6 contract now sits with us starting July 1. So,  
7 before, the contract sat with DOHMH. It now sits with  
8 us directly.

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, that's what  
10 we were confused about. I was like, what's  
11 happening? Okay. Y'all got a lot going on.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: All for the  
13 betterment of young people, young adults and  
14 families.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why was the  
16 decision made to no longer partner with this program  
17 with the Department of Health? Like, so why was the  
18 decision made to make you guys the primary contract  
19 holder of this now?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Great  
21 question. I would say over time we realized that,  
22 again, we were doing a lot of the work, because a lot  
23 of the work is connecting our providers. A lot of  
24 the work is connecting our providers where we have  
25 the pools that are open to those programs and

scheduling. So, we were doing the bulk of the work, so it made sense for it to transfer over to us.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Who are the other providers-- so it's DOHMH and who else?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: New York City Public Schools.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh, DOE. What is the staffing like for this program? What is the staffing patterns for this program? [inaudible] DYCD now for this program?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: At DYCD or at the local level?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, what's the-- well, let's start at DYCD, because I'm still learning about this program. So, like, what is your staffing? Do you have enough staff to manage this contract, and like what is your responsibilities around it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RATTRAY: Yep. So, our Strategic Partnerships Team has been, again, coordinating this for the past 10 years now. So, yeah, we have adequate staff to support it. We work closely with our Youth Operations Team at DYCD as well to coordinate this.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I have lots of  
3 questions. I'm going to leave it at that for now.  
4 Okay, because we have a lot of public testimony. So,  
5 I'm going to-- lightning round. Alright, so short  
6 answers. I'm going to move on to runaway and  
7 homeless youth, RHY. In the City Fiscal 2026  
8 Preliminary Budget response the Council called on the  
9 administration to add \$29.8 million in expenses  
10 funding for programs related to LGBTQIA+ youth, adult  
11 housing related services, runaway and homeless youth  
12 contract extensions, RHY peer navigators, and RHY  
13 housing navigators. The Executive Plan does not  
14 address these concerns, including no additional city  
15 funding for RHY. To what extent has DYCD advocated  
16 to the administration for additional resources  
17 regarding the RHY budget response items?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
19 Thank you for the question, Chair Stevens. Just  
20 first want to again highlight through the tremendous  
21 advocacy and efforts by the administration and the  
22 agency, we added these additional 100 beds to--

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] I'm  
24 aware. I've been advocating for three years.  
25 Nobody's been louder than me.

2 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: And  
3 we'd love to give you the credit that's [inaudible]

4 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't need the  
5 credit. I just want to keep-- listen, I-- just keep  
6 going. I told you it's the lightning round. Let's  
7 go.

8 DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: We  
9 continue to advocate for additional needs for the RHY  
10 program and hope to-- hope these continue-- these  
11 conversations continue in anticipation for the  
12 Adopted Plan.

13 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, I mean,  
14 this is another one where providers are looking for  
15 right-sizing of per-person rate. It's not enough.  
16 How many peer navigators are currently servicing the  
17 drop-in centers?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: That was  
19 a one-time funding in FY23. That is not funded at  
20 this time.

21 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know. That's why  
22 I asked. I'm aware. I'm the person that keeps  
23 yelling about it. It's another thing I yell about.  
24 So I'm going to-- you know, we need to make sure that  
25 we're funding these peer navigators. We know that

it's something that is effective and has shown real results and you know, when we're thinking about data-driven results, this is something that we know the data shows that it helps in those results. So, we need to continue to push for that. RHY providers cost continue to rise, their contract payments have remained stagnant, and many providers are struggling to remain solvent. What is the status of contract extensions and the very need to right-size the RHY programs?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Thank you for the question. They are part of our FY26 continuation plan. So, we are working feverishly to make sure they're registered for July 1<sup>st</sup>. The-- as the Commissioner mentioned earlier, they are part of the conversations that we're having to potentially RFP that in the future.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Listen, this is another area where I have the providers screaming at my door on regular basis of how they cannot sustain, and so you know, we have to make sure this is the provider. This is a very vulnerable population and also one that does not get attention, because I feel the City doesn't like to talk about a homeless

population of kids, but we have them. They're here, and we need to continue to fight for them. So, I will continue to scream at the top of my lungs to make sure that they're getting the services that they deserve, because you know, even when we had a housing plan at one point they didn't even include that in there. And so understanding that young people feel invisible in this population, and that's not okay with me. So, we really have to make sure we make this a priority. How often does DYCD conduct site visits or audits of RHY providers, and what are the most common compliance issues?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: Thank you for that question. RHY program managers are out frequently. They do several site visits each year to the drop-in centers, to the residential programs. Most frequent issues are probably-- let me take a look at the recent evaluation monitoring tools and see if there's some trends in evaluations in that area. Nothing is popping to the forefront in mind.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. In order to meet specific needs of the LGBTQIA+ youth in our budget response to the Council calls for addition of \$10 million for baseline funding beginning in Fiscal



2026 to assist LGBTQI+ youth and young adults moving from the streets to permanent housing. Why is this funding not included in the Executive Plan?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: As you noted on your previous question, we are working with OMB to identify what additional funding could be utilized to support the RHY program, and we continue having conversations with the support of the Council as well.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What funding does DYCD have dedicated to enhance LGBTQ+I youth services?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: Honestly, just our existing budget is what we're working on in ensuring that the providers have the money that they need to provide the services of our contractual obligations.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Summer Rising-- many providers have reported that they have still not been paid in full for last summer programming. What is the anticipated timeline to pay out FY2024 services?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS:  
Thanks for the question. I'll just start by

reiterating that DYCD has released all of its FY25 Summer Rising awards and those funds are available for our providers to budget and submit invoices for payment on. Additionally, we have in effort to push forward cash flow, have been moving to work with these providers to issue advances to get those fund-- the amount of that funding in cash to the provider community up to about 80 percent for our COMPASS and Beacon portfolios. That being said, we're always interested to hear when our providers are faced with any like cash flow crises or concerns. We're always asking for them to please reach out and work with them to make sure that we can do what we can to issue additional funds to mitigate those challenges.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What strategies are being implemented to pay providers faster in 2025, going into the summer?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: That's a great question. Something we talked about at the hearing a few weeks ago.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALBRIDGE: One of the first ones we talked about is the headcount that we received, we're bringing people on as quickly as

possible. We're working with our counterparts at MOCS and MONS to ensure that we have the resources and the focus that we need. Internally, we have weekly meetings about our FY26 timeliness registration plan which our oversights in sister agencies are doing as well, but the goal is to ensure the contracts are registered on time and that advances are out which we talked about as well. Advances will go out to all registered contracts, budgets for registered contracts as in FY26.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Based on the DOE's Summer Rising impact analyzing released in March, there was no academic gains from those school student. Even for middle school participants who attended Summer Rising program for 20 days or more, there were no strategic, significant impact on math scores. Furthermore, when compared to other students in the City, middle school Summer Rising participants who attended Summer Rising programming for 20 days actually faired worse in reading scores than their compromising [sic] groups. Based on this analysis, has DYCD considered utilizing a separate summer program model for middle school students? Why or why not?

2 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we enjoy and we  
3 work very well with New York City Public School on  
4 Summer Rising. So, at this time, we just again--

5 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] You  
6 said enjoy?

7 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We do enjoy, yeah.  
8 Continuing to work collaboratively--

9 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] I  
10 would say the providers beg to differ.

11 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: You know, Summer  
12 Rising has grown since its iteration, and we look  
13 just to the future on how to make it even better than  
14 it actually is now.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'm just going to  
16 go back to my original statement. We-- especially  
17 this middle school population, we really got to-- we  
18 just got to reconsider some stuff and think outside  
19 the box, because I think that like it's just a  
20 different population. It's a different time. A  
21 different model just needs to be used, not only for  
22 Summer Rising, but for SYEP, all of it. This is a  
23 population that we're losing. And again, and I  
24 haven't said this in a while-- if we're not investing  
25 in young people on the front end, we will on the back

end. We know that jails are built off the reading scores of third graders, and so at this point, we also need to look at this middle school population because a lot of them are in secure detention. We had a hearing before this. We have over 300 young people right now in secure detention, right now, like as we're sitting here, and so we've already failed 300 young people. Because that's how I see it. And I say we as all of us, and so I think that we need to really think about this population in a very different way and really just kind of reimagining programming altogether around it. Has enrollment for the current year Summer Rising program began? If so, are the current enrollment number-- what are the current enrollment numbers and what is the target enrollment for the Summer Rising program this year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: We're shooting for 110,000 again. We have 110,000 funded seats. We received a total of 154,000 applications. We offered in the first round 114,000 seats and that process will continue leading up to the start of Summer Rising and throughout the summer.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: One of the biggest, I guess, complaints and feedback that we have was

implementation of additional-- of trying to get additional outdoor activities for Summer Rising programs. Is that something that you guys have been encouraging in the model this year?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Yeah, I think we've been working with New York City Public Schools on a different model, and they've been very encouraging. I think that the young people going to see something very much dramatically different this year.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Without additional outyear funding, what will the impact of Summer Rising be?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: I'm not sure. Can you reframe the question, please. We are committed to serving 110,000 young people in Summer Rising in the baseline. There's no drop-off that we're anticipating.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: In the outyears?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Even DOE side is funded in outyears?

DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER LEWIS: I can't speak for DOE side, but DYCD is funded for

Summer Rising in the baseline and anticipates serving 110,000 youth.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will there be an impact for additional trips and cultural activities this summer?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: You mean impact, what do you mean?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Will there-- because you said that you guys been working and you're going to see a different model. So, is there anticipation for additional trips and visiting cultural activities this summer?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we-- both New York City Public School and DYCD acknowledge that we need to have more enrichment programs, so I guess our goal is to be sure that that is happening with public schools.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I mean, but most of the trips and cultural things happen during your time not DOE's. So--

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: [interposing] Right. So, and those conversations--

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] Is  
3 that something that you guys are looking to do and if  
4 so, what does that look like?

5 COMMISSIONER HOWARD: So, we've taken  
6 that, you know, your concerns of the committee  
7 members, and again, having those conversations with  
8 New York City Public School. It's happening in real-  
9 time, and I believe that the young people are going  
10 to see a very different experience this summer.

11 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I think those--  
12 oh, no. CRED, CRED-- I know this was something that  
13 you brought up in your testimony, and I just wanted  
14 to briefly ask a few questions around it, because I  
15 know this is a program that's expanding. What  
16 boroughs will CRED be in?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: So, like  
18 our out-of-school programs, CRED programs are  
19 citywide. They're able to serve young people up to  
20 40 years old. I have to get out of the habit of  
21 saying young people.

22 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: 40-year-olds can be  
23 young.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: New  
25 Yorkers up to 40 years old across all five boroughs.



Right now we have eight programs. I believe there's one in each borough at least, and as we expand we're going to make sure that there's geographic diversity as we add programs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Interesting.

Because I know we had some issues. I know around like DOP, they were-- they weren't expanding a program and they were saying that CRED was the replacement of that, and I know that the extension has-- they've now-- or will be extending their workforce program. Could we clear up any discrepancies around that. Are these the same programs? I know they were saying this was a duplicate of services. This is why they were eliminating that program. I just would like to get some clarity around that.

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: We've been having conversation with Department of Probation. I've had a conversation with Commissioner Holmes [sp?] as well. I think there's additional conversations that are going to be happening very, very soon. I think one of the things that I would like to see, Commissioner Holmes would like to see, in terms of their workforce plus, their Work Plus program, is some data, and I'm pretty sure you would want to see some program data

as well on exactly what the program has accomplished over the course-- if it's time. I know that we're data-driven. Commissioner Holmes is data-driven. So, we're going to look at those program evaluation is and see exactly what those-- you know, what those touchpoints are, you know? CRED is an employment program that we looked at and we reviewed and as Deputy Commissioner Mulligan said, you know, we wanted to make sure we closed the gaps, and those gaps was young people 25 to 40. But Commissioner Holmes and I are in lock-step in reviewing exactly what that program looks like and how do we continue to support that program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to be clear, they're not the same program, correct?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: No, they're not. They have different scopes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Oh. Okay. I just wanted to be clear. And also I want to be clear that if these are your programs and folks want data, then they should create the metrics, no?

COMMISSIONER HOWARD: Again, I haven't seen any data. Commissioner Holmes and I have been

in conversations on what that data looks like. When we receive it, and I would love to share it with you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Now, I just wanted to just clarify because I know there's been some misconceptions, because even if there was duplicate of services, I don't think we're at a place where we should be cutting services, especially when we're seeing numbers rising, and so-- and I said this even at a rally. So, what if it was? Those are two different populations, and I don't-- you're not serving the same people, and so I just wanted to be-- make sure we had that to clear that up. What type of evaluations or metrics will you be using to evaluate CRED moving forward?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN: Sure. So, of course, first and foremost we're looking at enrollment which is the phase of the program that we're in right now. We have 317 enrolled to-date across the eight programs, but in addition to that we're looking very specifically. We built out a whole data system to make sure that we can track data in CRED. So, we're going to be looking at how many of the participants gain credentials in the sectors that they're being trained at, how many get

internships that are paid, and then of course, how many are placed in jobs once they exit the program.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Looks like you guys have some metrics, so maybe you can share how you're tracking the information with DOP so that they can then do the same thing, because that seems pretty simple enough. At this time, that is all the questions that I have.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much. Okay, we're going to take a short break, and then we're going to hear from the public.

[break]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going to start [gavel] the public portion of our hearing, and if you hear your name called, please come up. We'll start with Aniah Artis, Mistou Kanabeto, Jasmine Reed, Jenny Dembrow, Yeslie Maldonado, and Jackson Salgado.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just like to give a pre-requisite. I always let young people go over time, but I will not be extending that to adults. So please, take heed. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You guys want to  
3 start, my right, your left? Just say your name and  
4 you can begin.

5 MISTOU KANABETO: So, hi everyone. My  
6 name is Mistou Kanabeto. You can call me Mistou for  
7 short. So, I'm from Benin, West Africa. It's a  
8 country in West Africa, like I said, and we lived  
9 next to Nigeria, and our main first language is  
10 French over there. Covenant House have helped me  
11 throughout my three years with them and have been a  
12 youth ambassador with them for three years now. As an  
13 immigrant, when I first got to the U.S. I didn't have  
14 any guidance or resource, and living alone in a new  
15 country, and trying to survive with less than minimum  
16 wage was hard-- the hardest thing I could ever think  
17 of. I couldn't even afford my room, the rent with my  
18 room, and I end up being homeless for a while. I  
19 didn't know about shelters when I first got here  
20 until I went to the police station that was next to  
21 the place I was renting, and with this desperation  
22 they connected me with Covenant House. Covenant  
23 House gave me hope and the chance to dream again.  
24 That might sound small for some people, but for me  
25 and many others with similar background like me, it's

a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They have helped me towards my goals which is to become an art teacher. Through the job readiness program I got help writing my resume, learning how to dress for interviews, and understanding how interviews works. Earlier this year, I earned my GED diploma which is something I'm really proud of. Now, I can dream about going to college one day and working towards my teacher's license. Shelters like Covenant House give you more than just a bed. They give us tools, support, and to reach out to [inaudible] whether it's going to school, [inaudible], mental health, or finding stabilities. These are basic human needs. I hope that any other young person who doesn't have the resource they need can get the help that-- just like I got the help to Covenant House which is why I am here today asking the Council to ensure that the current [inaudible] extension come with appropriate funding adjustment for Covenant House and other runaways and homeless youth providers to reflect what the cost-- what it cost [inaudible] to run programs and allow youth like me to have a safe place to sleep tonight. Especially, I ask for the best rate of-- the best rate on the current DYCD contract to be

increased to \$70,000 for beds. I also ask the city to fund the compounding COLA increase three percent each year so that the staff who work at this organization [inaudible] are supported in the way they deserve. Thank you for hearing me.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

VANI: Good afternoon. My name is Vani [sp?]. I'm 19 years old and I'm originally from Queens, New York, but I currently live at Covenant Houses which is a crisis shelter in Midtown. I come from a low-income dysfunctional family where instability became a norm. I needed the space, support and opportunity to move forward with my life and pursue the goals I've set for myself. After hearing my situation, a case management from another resource center referred me to Covenant House where I was able to get a bed that same night. What stood out to me immediately was the structure of Covenant House. I needed discipline and a push in the right direction, and from the moment I arrived I was surrounded by people who genuinely cared and wanted to help me reach my goals. Right now my biggest dream is to have stable housing. Professionally, I hope to become a journalist. I've participated in

multiple afterschool film-making programs and have directed several of my own short documentaries. I also take courses at New York Film Academy where I've earned several certificates for my work so far. My plan is to pursue a master's degree in journalism and business. I currently attend Borough of Manhattan Community College as a business major and work at a film studio called Hook Arts [sic] Media where I've had the opportunity to direct and produce a documentary on the intersectionality within youth homelessness. To me, success means stability, whether it's having a roof over my head or a steady job, success is about being able to live without the constant fear of ending up back on the streets. So, today I'm asking the Council to recognize what it truly takes to keep programs like Covenant House and other runaway and homeless youth providers running strong. These services aren't just programs. They're lifelines for youth like me. They mean having a safe, stable place to sleep, grow and rebuilt. To ensure that these organizations can continue doing this essential work, I urge the City to raise the bed rate on current DYCD contracts to \$70,000 per bed to match the real cost of care and



support, and I ask the city to fund the Promise three percent compounding COLA increases each year so that the staff at these organizations are valued and fairly compensated. Thank you for taking the time to listen.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

RAQUEA HEMINGWAY: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and the members of the Youth Services Committee. My name is Raquea Hemingway. I'm actually standing in for Jasmine Reed. I am a Senior Director at Figure Skating in Harlem where we empower young women from Harlem and the Bronx through the unique combination of education and leadership, development in the artistry discipline of figure skating. We are incredibly grateful for the Council's support through the STAR CGI initiative, but today I am here to ask for equity both for Figure Skating in Harlem and for all organizations doing this critical work. We are currently funded at \$79,000 while similar organizations receive as much as \$179,000. We respectfully are requesting parity so we can meet the rising demands and expand our impact. Figure Skating in Harlem currently serves over 350 girls each year, providing not only athletic training, but also

academic support, leadership development, and mental health resources. Our program gives young women the tools they need to thrive both on and off the ice. We have a testimony from one of our students. She says, "Figure Skating in Harlem has taught me to speak my mind, speak my truth, and let people know what I feel. Being on a synchronized competitive team has taught me to overcome challenges and build relationships. We didn't bring home first place medals, but we brought home perseverance, confidence, and most importantly, we have fun doing our best. Figure Skating in Harlem has shown me that my voice matters, that I can do hard things, and that I matter. This is the kind of transformation your investment makes possible. We are also asking the Council to consider increasing the overall STARS funding. Given the critical and growing--

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: [interposing] Ten seconds.

RAQUEA HEMINGWAY: need for programs like ours. Thank you, Chair Stevens.

JENNY DEMBROW: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth, and Chair Brannan and members of the Finance

Committee. My name is Jenny Dembrow and I'm the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club. I've been with the organization since its founding in 1996 when there were three boys' clubs. For nearly 30 years, thousands of young women, gender-expansive youth and their families have benefitted from our free programming services and initiatives. We launched our Center for Wellbeing and Happiness in 2022 with the core belief that the wellbeing of our young people is intimately connected to the wellbeing of their family and community. We reach youth from 27 zip codes, nurturing safe spaces where young people can dream big, find their passions and connect to peers and careers through free year-round programming and mentoring. Through our New Girl City Leadership Initiative and the STAR CGI Coalition, sponsored by the Women's Caucus, we are building a diverse pipeline of advocates, activists, and policymakers for the future. Our youth have been particularly impacted by the tumult of recent years. Growing income inequality keeps hundreds of thousands of New York City children living in poverty. Over 100,000 public school students live in temporary housing, and an estimated 38 percent of New York City

teens report symptoms of depression. Community-based youth programs are essential to addressing the youth mental health and affordability crisis in New York City. Despite the growing need, DYCD sunsetted COMPASS Explore, and with a change in the deliverables for the DYCD Adolescent Literacy Program we had to forgo the grant. Currently, we are navigating a challenging financial reality and stand at a critical inflection point. Beyond government funding cuts which include federal funds to our food pantry, we are also experiencing a steep decline in philanthropic support. These challenges pose a direct and imminent risk to our ability to provide the vital services and programming so many youth rely on more than ever. We have had to lay off 17 employees and cut back on our program offerings. We are requesting \$2.5 million from the City Council in FY26 to support the stabilization of the organization. General operating support from the City Council is critical in securing our legacy as a transformative force in youth development in New York City and expanding our impact for future generations.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead. Just make sure your mic-- there you go.

2 JACKSON ULLOA-SALGADO: Hello. I am  
3 Jackson Ulloa, a student at PS516, and participating  
4 in Center for Family Life afterschool program. I am  
5 asking you to please save CFL afterschool as PS516  
6 because it means so much to me and a lot of other  
7 students who attend CFL. We do so many fun  
8 activities together as a unit, and sometime we even  
9 have a whole program activities like our spring show  
10 [sic]. Having CFL gives my mom and many other moms  
11 and dads an opportunity to work while making sure we  
12 are safe and being taken care by ourself. This is my  
13 third year attending afterschool with CFL and I have  
14 learned many things there-- here. Not only have I  
15 learned how to play different sports like soccer and  
16 basketball, but I have also learned how to work  
17 together with my unit and be accepting of different  
18 people. My favorite thing about CFL is making a lot  
19 of new friends and creating bonds with staff members.  
20 I also like being able to play my favorite sports  
21 without having to pay money to join any team. CFL  
22 means a lot to me, so please consider helping us save  
23 CFL at PS516.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very  
25 much.

2 YESLIE MALDONADO: Good afternoon, New  
3 York City Council. My name is Yeslie Maldonado and I  
4 am a proud community member of Sunset Park, Brooklyn,  
5 a parent of a student at PS516 afterschool program  
6 run by the Center for Family Life and also a former  
7 participant of the CFL afterschool program during my  
8 own childhood. I'm writing to express my strong and  
9 heartfelt support for PS516 and the Center for Family  
10 Life and their effort to secure 200 of the 5,000  
11 expanded COMPASS grant seats proposed in the mayor's  
12 budget and to urge consideration for any additional  
13 emergency funding that could help sustain this  
14 critical program. Like many other parents in our  
15 community, I rely on this program to be able to work  
16 and provide for my family. I work in the nonprofit  
17 sector helping adults across New York City find  
18 meaningful careers. Without this afterschool  
19 program, not only would my own family be directly  
20 impacted, but so would the many job seekers who  
21 depend on my support as they navigate their  
22 employment journeys. This program is not just  
23 childcare. It's a safe, nurturing space where  
24 children grow through creativity teamwork and a sense  
25 of belonging. As a daughter of immigrant parents and

someone raised in a low-income household, programs like CFL were my only outlet to express myself creatively through dance, singing and community. They gave me a voice, and today I am proud that my children can share that same experience, surrounded by a team that truly cares about every child's wellbeing. As federal budget cuts continue to disproportionately impact low-income communities of color, I urge the City to invest in our youth by protecting and funding their afterschool programs. Please prioritize our community and the allocation of COMPASS seats and explore every avenue of funding available to keep this program running. All children deserve it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, all very much. Okay, our next panel is going to be Cassi Cheung, Jamel [sic] or Jirazel Munoz, Sandra Santamaria [sp?], Jhodesa Reimer, Jaeyoung Ha [sp?].

JIRAZEL MUNOZ: Thank you, Chair Stevens and the City Council, for your support for children and youth across New York City. My name is Jirazel Munoz and I'm a licensed social worker and COMPASS Director at the Center for Family Life in Sunset

Park, Brooklyn at PS971. I am here calling for the City to fully fund year-round afterschool in Fiscal Year 26, not just Fiscal Year 27 when the new COMPASS contract goes into effect. By funding COMPASS programs at the rates DYCD has laid out through FY26, programs are at risk of closing. Having spent the last decade working at five different schools across the Sunset Park neighborhood, I can assure you that families depend on these free programs for economic stability. In Sunset Park, not only does COMPASS support our hard-working immigrant families for afterschool five days a week, it also serves families across-- it also serves families access to additional two and a half week of childcare, 10 hours per day for the 13 school closure days and holidays that COMPASS programs operate. In fact, principals often use free afterschool and vacation programming as a selling point to prospective families in their kindergarten tours. With federal funding cuts from AmeriCorps being suddenly terminated and under the threat of termination, providers across the City like CFL who have used those funding sources to plug the gaps that the inadequate COMPASS leaves, we will not be able to staff the programs or meet the contractual



mandate. The COMPASS program model requires that all children receive a prescribed number of hours per week and structure activity such as STEM, literacy, and physical fitness. However, without AmeriCorps to supplement the insufficient COMPASS rates, CFL and many providers like us will be prohibited from hiring qualified education specialists which is a role required by COMPASS, or the caliber of activity specialists who can provide rigorous high-quality instruction and teach the activities that COMPASS requires and that they evaluate us on. In fact, the current rate just barely allows us to meet the required one to ten staff to participant ratio with high school and college-age staff paid less than \$20 per hour. Thank you so much.

CASSI CHEUNG: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens. Thank you for listening to the community about some practical reasons why we need more money for afterschool programs that serve children like me. My name is Cassi and I'm eight years old. I come from PS971 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I come from the third grade, and I'm representing the Center for Family Life. I've spent three school years and three summers [inaudible] PS971. One reason why afterschool

needs more money is because my parents work hard. My dad works in a glass processing warehouse. My mom works in an auto body shop and my brothers, well, they just being teenagers playing loud video games. I don't want to get involved with that. If afterschool didn't exist, then my family wouldn't have enough money to pay bills and buy food, because my dad gets paid per hour and my mom gets paid per day. If they had to take care of me afterschool, then we would lose a lot of our money. Have you ever wondered what kids like me do in afterschool? CFL turns a boring weekday afternoon into a fun experience that teaches us kids how to take care of ourselves when we grow up. Our teachers help us learn to cook, try out new languages, dance, and make art. They also teach us how to clean up after ourselves when we finish our projects. That way we have the knowledge for later in life. Please take these reasons into consideration and give afterschool more money so that kids in New York City can learn how to behave in adulthood and have a fun childhood along the way.

TRANSLATOR: I'll be translating for her.

ANA MARIA: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. Her name is  
3 Ana Maria. She's a parent at PS516 afterschool  
4 program, and she is asking that we help and not  
5 closing the afterschool program as it helps a lot of  
6 families.

7 ANA MARIA: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: This program is important  
9 for her and for other families because she is able to  
10 work while she ensures that her children are safe and  
11 building enriching activities and she's able to go to  
12 work without having the pressure of knowing that her  
13 children are not safe.

14 ANA MARIA: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: She's stating that this  
16 program is especially important not only during  
17 afterschool hours, but also during DOE closures  
18 because not-- just because DOE closes, that doesn't  
19 mean that parents have to stop working. That  
20 actually means they have to work more, and so it is  
21 very important for them to have childcare during the  
22 days that DOE is closed.

23 ANA MARIA: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: She's asking the City to  
25 please fund these programs in the same way that we're

funding other programs and other entities as these programs are crucial to forming new adults and making sure that our city has the adequate funds for child--for children.

JAEYOUNG HA: Okay. I thank Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support towards children and youth across New York City. My name is Jaeyoung Ha and I am currently a senior at Sunset Park High School where I joined the Center of Family Life afterschool program for the first time this year. I am calling on the city to invest in afterschool for high school students, a population that deserves quality programs at this crucial point in their lives. During my freshman to junior year at first high school I was shy and hesitant to even step foot in the cafeteria after the school day ended. When my senior year came, I realized that time was limited for me and I wanted to make my last year count. After meeting one of the CFL staff during the school day and my advisory [sic], I decided to join Theater, too, and I never looked back after that. As an active filmmaker, animator [sic] [inaudible] and a full-time student who was also applying college, I had plenty of hobbies that I could do independently

2 in my free time as a senior in high school. The  
3 temptation to enjoy my lovely time at home is always  
4 there, but being in an afterschool environment pushes  
5 me to pursue those same interests while forming  
6 connections with my peers and getting the support of  
7 staff who are knowledgeable and dedicated to helping  
8 students like me achieve our goals. Past 3:00 p.m.  
9 is the time when students really identify who they  
10 are and what they want to do in the future. Without  
11 the dedicated time and support I was given to explore  
12 these interests, I may not have the confidence to  
13 pursue them as a career. I am proud to share that at  
14 the end of fall I plan to attend Brooklyn College for  
15 film-making and theater, and I am very appreciative  
16 of the CFLs that were invested in me during this  
17 journey. I urge you to not forget about high school  
18 students when making decisions about afterschool  
19 funding. High school isn't the end, it's the  
20 beginning. Students like me-- students not--  
21 students like me not only deserve quality programs,  
22 we need them, even if we don't realize it until our  
23 senior year. Thank you.

24 JHODESSA REIMER: Thank you, Chair  
25 Stevens and the City Council-- thank you, Chair

Stevens and the City Council, for your support for children and youth across New York City. My name is Jhodessa Reimer and I'm a Division Director for school-based programs at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, and I would especially like to thank you for recognizing the true cost of afterschool and for including increased rates for COMPASS programming in the City Council budget response. With the announcement of a new COMPASS elementary contract for FY27, I'm also calling on the City to issue a new COMPASS SONYC contract. Our city's middle school students deserve a model tailored to their unique stage of development, not one based on the needs of elementary school-aged children as the current SONYC model stands. DYCD should bring providers who have been successfully serving middle school students for decades, and there are many of us, to the table to give our input in the redesign of the SONYC model. Additionally, it is imperative that DYCD create a new funding opportunity to replace COMPASS Explorer as Jaeyoung just expressed better than I could ever. Let's not forget about high school students. I also want to highlight a Sunset Park community in urgent need. Of the 5,000 new elementary afterschool seats

that will be added to the school year 25/26, we respectfully request that PS516, a Title I school, be allocated just 200 seats. You've heard from two parents and a student from that school today. This school has been tirelessly advocating for a DYCD-funded afterschool program since 2013, and with the termination of the AmeriCorps program and the uncertain future of the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Communities program, that school is at risk of losing its only public funding. Finally, we are grateful that DYCD has announced 50 percent advances, and we urge DYCD to ensure these advances include Summer Rising. These contracts begin at the start of the fiscal year right as providers are stretching to expand our programs to meet the demands for enrollment, and funds are needed immediately so we can put our focus fully on best serving children. Thank you again for your continued leadership and for championing the children of New York City.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Ira Yankwitt, Kate Connolly, Anthony Posada, Aaron-- I think-- Sanders, Reynolds-- I don't know if this-- Nyamekye Reynolds-- I said that wrong-- and Andrew Sta. Ana.

2 NYAMEKYE REYNOLDS: Good afternoon, Chair  
3 Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and  
4 Youth. My name is Nyamekye Reynolds. Nyamekye, nice  
5 to meet you. That's how you remember my name. I'm  
6 testifying on behalf of You Gotta Believe, and You  
7 Gotta Believe's mission is to work towards the day  
8 when no teenager or young adult will age out of the  
9 foster care system without someone who is  
10 unconditionally committed to them for life. My role  
11 as a senior youth advocate is to advocate on behalf  
12 of all of my brothers and sisters, former and  
13 presently, in the foster care system for what is  
14 rightfully theirs, and that is family. Family is  
15 their right. If it wasn't for my adoptive mom or my  
16 morally-adopted dad, I don't know where I would have  
17 been, and our youth and young adults need that when  
18 they are no longer cute and no longer fun to be  
19 around. We're grateful for New York City Council  
20 ongoing support for the past 10 years, the only  
21 public funding our agency received. We're requesting  
22 an increase of funding to assist us in creating more  
23 forever families and seeing to it that those forever  
24 families stick. YGB is requesting funding for our  
25 Nobody Ages Out program to empower youth to heal from



the trauma that we've endured, to create trust so that young people can be open to the idea of family again. In addition to the long-term services so that families brought together can stay together for a lifetime providing meaningful leadership, developing their work ethic, and so that they can-- we can build their resumes and focus on their futures. YGB will continue its efforts in supporting older youth in foster care, and we hope that the City Council will do the same.

ANTHONY POSADA: Thank you, Chair Stevens and the Committee on Children and Youth, for holding this hearing. My name is Anthony Posada. I'm a Supervising Attorney with the Legal Aid Society's Community Justice Unit, and I am here today because the ongoing \$1.5 million cut to the critical legal services that we provide to the CMS is threatening the model of success in preventing and reducing gun violence in our most underserved communities. When our City made a commitment to co-produce public safety with community-led groups, it also took on a responsibility to ensure that the ecosystem in which those groups operate is sustainable and not piecemeal. By not restoring our funding, we are

abandoning communities that need us the most. Legal Services are an integral component to gun violence prevention, because when our community members are facing evictions, ICE raids, arrests, and warrants, so they need our immediate support. Otherwise, they become more vulnerable to violence. Most of our community members, especially the youth that we serve across the City do not know what their rights are. This means that they are more likely to have those rights violated. Our 24/7 hour hotline assists community members who are need and this saves lives. This fiscal year alone we have taken over 141 hotline calls. There's a person in crisis behind every single one of those calls that was able to navigate the criminal legal system with zealous representation to ensure that their constitutional rights were protected. While the CMS keeps growing and expanding bringing safety into our communities, our services are being reduced. This means that this cut is a cut to the communities that need us the most. We just heard from DYCD testify that our services are critical and vital to CMS, but at the same time we did not hear a concrete plan or a commitment to ensure that our funding will be restored. Restoring

our funding is about investing in prevention and education and in justice for the communities that need us the most. Let us be true to the responsibility that comes with investing in community-led public safety by not disrupting the model that has proven to reduce gun violence in our communities. We urge you to help us restore our funding. Thank you.

IRA YANKWITT: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens. My name is Ira Yankwitt. I'm the Executive Director of the Literary Assistance Center and a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy. And I'm actually going to go off-script, because I want to devote my testimony to addressing a concern I have with DYCD's testimony earlier today. I came here today to call on the administration to double the baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million, and to also call on the Council to maintain its discretionary funding for both the adult literacy pilot and adult literacy initiative at \$16.5 million. Earlier today, we heard DYCD announce that they are including an additional \$10 million for adult literacy expansion funding in their budget which

corresponds to previous years expansion funding that was cut in FY25, but curiously they referred to that funding as initiative funding which is historically the term used to describe the Council discretionary funding. My concern here is this, if DYCD sees itself as picking up that \$10 million in initiative funding that the Council added last year, but only to use that for one-year expansion funding, it makes those programs and that funding very vulnerable next year when we are presumably going to have a new mayor. Meanwhile, if that means that the Council does not continue its initiative, we lose the flexibility and the discretion that we really enjoyed and appreciated through our partnership from the Council. So, I come back to where I started. The ask is for DYCD not just to add that \$10 million, but to baseline it for the RFP-funded programs, but for the Council to also continue to maintain its \$16.5 million in total discretionary funding between the pilot and the initiative. Thank you very much.

ANDREW STA. ANA: Thank you, Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan, and the Committees on Children and Youth and Finance, for holding this budget hearing. My name is Andrew Sta. Ana and I'm

the Deputy Director of Research and Policy at the Asian American Federation which represents over 70 nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. Raising a child in New York City has always been incredibly difficult. It takes more than a village. It includes parents, aunties, uncles, grandparents, godparents, supportive communities, trusted community-based organizations, and for government agencies like ACS and DYCD be responsive. This pattern of using a village to raise a community of children has been-- existed for generations and is especially for Asian New Yorkers. Asian New Yorkers comprise a significant portion of the city's population and are the fastest-growing, and contrary to the model minority stereotype that oversimplifies our community as hugely successful. One in three live in low-income households. We have high rates of limited English proficiency and high percentage of family members that are living without citizenship or immigration status. Today, in our current economic, political and legal environment, we want to raise the urgent needs of children in mixed-status families. Notably, the demand for linguistically and culturally competent legal services and community services is

important. Asian New Yorkers are living in fear, unable or reluctant to engage in city services, access public benefits, contact emergency services, attend school, travel by a public transit, or seek medical care. What's more, anti-immigrant and anti-Asian rhetoric actions have made impacts on mental health and fears of violence even worse. Indeed, in ordinary times, many Asian New Yorkers have many challenges accessing city services due to limited language access and culturally-competent services. It's not a secret that many Asian New Yorkers, like many other communities have viewed agencies like ACS, courts, and law enforcement with deep skepticism. In an environment with concerns about unlawful ICE enforcement and cooperation amongst other government agencies, the circumstances have become more dire. Community-based organizations have been crucial in bridging the support for these services. So, I'll include more detailed comments in my written testimony, but I ask you, urge you to serve and uplift the community-based organizations serving this community. Thank you.

AARON SANDERS: Thank you, Chair Stevens and Chair Brannan, for the opportunity to testify for

the Executive Budget. My name is Aaron Sanders and I'm the Deputy Director of Government and Community Relations at Grant Street Settlement. Grand Street is a 109-year-old multi-service settlement house. We serve over 18,000 New Yorkers through vital Early Childhood, youth, and older adult programs infused with impactful benefits on the lower eastside, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Today, we commend the City of New York for investing \$331 million in new funding for afterschool across the next three years. This investment includes a gradual expansion of 20,000 new slots and future rate increases through a RFP projected for fiscal year 27. This investment indicates a true commitment to supporting our youth. However, additional investments are needed to stabilize the afterschool system. Under this proposal, the only investment in Fiscal Year 26 would be funding for 5,000 new elementary slots at the provider's current rate. Currently, there's no commitment to raising rates for SONYC middle school programs. As the City has announced a plan for a new RFP in Fiscal Year 27 with increased rates, the City must begin the phase-in process for higher rates now, committing to half-way increase of base rates for

COMPASS elementary to about \$4,900 and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4,150 for Fiscal Year 26. Effectively, the City's goal should be to fund elementary and middle school programs in the Fiscal Year 27 procurement process. These rates are informed by a November 2023 report by the Untied Neighborhood Houses that detail the actual cost of running an afterschool program. As a nonprofit entity with over a century of experience supporting youth, we partner with several community schools to support this physical, emotional, and social development of children, and to reduce neighborhood gun violence. As an afterschool provider, we know firsthand the cost of running an afterschool program, and we know that currently the rates are unsustainable. Given the fiscal constraints and years of disinvestment, we encourage the City to make additional investments in afterschool programming. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

KATE CONNOLLY: Hello and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kate Connolly and I'm a Senior Policy Analyst for United Neighborhood Houses, an umbrella organization that represents settlement houses across New York State,



including Grand Street Settlement and Center for Family Life who you heard from today. We will submit a more detailed written testimony, but I'd like to mention just a few pieces that are really important to us. Regarding the childcare voucher issue-- as you know and as you discussed today, meeting this funding shortfall is crucial to ensure that families do not lose access to the childcare they rely on. The Council should press for clarity and action and urge the City to prioritize families by guaranteeing that every child who needs care will not be left behind while also working with the state to develop a long-term funding solution to this issue. Additionally, and as Aaron highlighted, the afterschool system is in crisis. COMPASS elementary and SONYC middle school providers cannot be sustained on the current rates. If you just think about what things cost 10 years ago and what they cost now, there's a huge difference. It's not rocket science. But programs have really suffered. Staff recruitment and retention have struggled from stagnated wages. OTPS costs have shrunk program resources and now threatens to federal funding streams like AmeriCorps and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers are

further destabilizing this system. We understand and appreciate the recognition of how important afterschool programs are that we heard in the mayor's announcement. We do think that eventually it would be great for every child to have access to afterschool programming, and right now, the system does not support that. It does not even support the programs that we currently have. We really think that the first step and the real win would be to increase rates for current and existing afterschool programs, including these 5,000 new slots to make sure that programs can sustain and be stabilized in future years, right? We cannot add on to a program that is already struggling. It's already crumbling. We need to stabilize it and make sure that it is going to be okay for the next decade. Lastly, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention payment delays. We've all heard this a million times. It's a consistent issue across many contracts, but Summer Rising is particularly difficult. Unlike what DYCD said today, providers have not been able to draw down on funds for last summer's programming and they're about to start hiring for new programming. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay,  
3 our next panel is Ella Downs, Raquea Hemingway,  
4 Sebastien Vante or Vant [sic], Dr. Marsha Jean-  
5 Charles [sp?], Nadia Swanson, Nikita Boyce.

6 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I butchered all the  
7 names. I'm happy you're back.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, you can  
9 begin. Sure. Thank you.

10 ELLA GRACE DOWNS: Good afternoon, Chair  
11 Stevens and members of the joint committee. My name  
12 is Ella Grace Downs and I'm the Policy Manager at  
13 Girls for Gender Equity, GGE. GGE is a Brooklyn-  
14 based organization focusing on youth leadership,  
15 policy advocacy, and culture shift to achieve racial  
16 and gender justice. We offer this testimony today  
17 because the funding we receive is imperative to the  
18 development and growth of Black girls and gender-  
19 expansive youth of color across NYC. We request  
20 continued support from City Council for our FY26  
21 youth programming in the amount of \$350K from YWI,  
22 \$200K from DOVE, \$100K from STARS, and \$250K from ATI  
23 so that GGE may continue to address the needs of  
24 young people across all five boroughs and expand its  
25 reach during this critical period. The time to

invest in our youth is now. Youth are experiencing a mental health crisis. Alongside increased loneliness and isolation in our highly-digital world, young people, in particular girls and Black and Latin youth are not receiving social support they need. National polls recently revealed today's young people are navigating increased financial hardship, create social bonds, and declining trust in institutions. This is where GGE steps in. Our programs are safe space for the youth of New York City. When interviewing participants about what they love most about GGE, they said things like, "It's knowing that I'm always being cared for and welcomed into a loving space. GGE teaches us to be leaders and how to care for ourselves and our community, and I get to learn about what's happening in the world and to be able to change it." Our programs include the Young Women's Advisory Council, YWAC, our Sisters in Strength Survivor's Program, and a partnership with the Sports Training and Role-models for Success, STARS, Coalition, as well as youth education work to end school pushout and promote alternatives to incarceration. Though through these requested appropriations, Council can reaffirm its commitment

to Black girls and gender-expansive youth of color by supporting our life-saving programs, especially at this dire time when defenders [sic] are shying away from investments toward racial justice and diversity. When New York City invests in its young people, it invests in its future.

SEBASTIEN VANTE : Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and members of the Committee. My name is Sebastien Vante and I'm the Associate Vice President of Street Work Programs at Safe Horizon. Safe Horizon is the nation's largest nonprofit victim service agency. Each year, we support over 250,000 New Yorkers, including young people who are homeless, survivors of trafficking, and those navigating deep trauma. Since 2021, nearly 600 youth and young adults have exited homelessness and moved into apartments with the help of DYCD-funded housing navigators and a housing voucher. At Street Work alone, we've supported over 200 young people in securing vouchers, and 198 have already moved into their own homes. Of those, our two housing navigators found and connected clients to close to 200 apartments. That's not hypothetical. That's real housing for real youth. These positions work.

They were created for a reason because young people needed a guided hand to navigate the complexity of applying for vouchers, finding units, negotiating with landlords, and ultimately getting keys to a home. Since their creation we've seen a 200 percent increase in youth exiting shelters into permanent housing. So, I ask, why are we now begging to keep what works? These are not bloated programs. These are lean, effective, and essential roles to defund them now is to undo progress and leave hundreds of young people stranded, holding vouchers they cannot use. Defunding housing navigators and cutting the financial empowerment roles that help stabilize youth once housed is not just short-sided, it's dangerous. It pushes our youth back toward chronic homelessness. It costs the City more in the long-run, and most importantly, denies young people the dignity of a real future. We urge the Council to restore baseline funding for housing navigators and financial empowerment positions, to invest the \$16.4 million needed to strengthen the RHY system and to continue to fund what already-- what is already working. Youth need housing. They need CityFHEPS and they

need navigators to guide them out of homelessness for good. Thank you.

MARSHA JEAN-CHARLES: Good afternoon, members of the Committees on Finance and Children and Youth. My name is Marsha Jean-Charles, and I work at the Brotherhood Sister Sol. Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Stevens, for the opportunity to testify today. For over 30 years, the Brotherhood Sister Sol or Bro Sis, has been at the forefront of social justice educating, organizing, and training to challenge inequity and champion opportunity for all. All youth deserve high-quality, holistic, positively transformative education experiences. If we believe in equity and want to create the futures all New Yorkers deserve, we must build within our school systems of accountability, restorative justice and behavioral management that do not include the NYPD and holistically support student success. Faced with mental health crisis or the crisis of loneliness and homelessness, poly-crisis if you will, many people before me have already explained, now more than ever our youth need city officials to do more. The City Council should prioritize the following in budget negotiation. Expand school-based Restorative Justice

and social/emotional support, including investing \$80 million in hiring school-based Restorative Justice coordinators in 500 schools. Protect and baseline critical programs currently funded with expiring city dollars, including \$12 million for Restorative Justice, \$5 million for mental health continuum, and \$5 million for immigrant families, communications and outreach. Redirect money away from school policing and surveillance, and protect the safety of immigrant students and parents. Furthermore, we need continued investment in our young people both in schools and in the broader community. Funding like the Young Women's Initiative, Summer Youth Employment Programming, and more need to continue and expand. To advance and protect our city and this next generation, we must provide them with the academic social and life skills necessary to be engaged and innovative world citizens. We need you all to do more. Thank you.

NIKITA BOYCE: Good afternoon. my name is Nikita Boyce, and I'm the Budget Policy Coordinator at CACF, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. Thank you to the Finance Committee and Chair Stevens for your time. CACF



leads the 18 Percent and Growing Campaign, a critical and diverse citywide campaign uniting over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations to fight for fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable AAPI community members. The 18 Percent and Growing Campaign is advocating for expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to \$7.5 million, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to \$7.5 million, and the Access Health Initiative to \$4.5 million among other key citywide initiatives and investments. AAPI children and families are in need of vital services to help them navigate life in the city and build futures for themselves. Citywide initiatives such as AAPI CSI provide community-informed social services and programming to address widespread historic inequities that have separated our most vulnerable from social welfare and opportunity. The organizations under this initiative provide programs that center youth development and leadership building, tailored to inspire the next generation of community leaders, and it's not the only initiative doing this. The Young Women's Leadership Development initiative Youth Peer Support pilot and the Children Under Five initiatives all

contribute to making raising a family in this city easier. For FY26, CACF and the 18 Percent and Growing Coalition is advocating for an enhancement of \$7.5 million to support critical programming including mental health support, youth programs, racial literacy, hate crimes prevention, gender-based violence and intervention and prevention, and other culturally-responsive services needed to build long-term care and healing for AAPI New Yorkers. We urge you to uplift our priorities and expand them to \$7.5 million for AAPI CSI, CCNSF, and Access Health. And in my last few seconds, I'd also like to advocate for all of the advocates in here for you all to put some money into some new chairs. Please and thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. We agree. Okay, next panel, Scott Daly, Michael Max Knobbe, Caitlyn Passaretti, Gregory Brender, Shanita Bowen, and sorry, last one is Micharey Almanzar. Scott, you want to begin?

SCOTT DALY: Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify and submit testimony to this committee. NYJTL-- my name is Scott Daly. I'm the Senior Director of the New York Junior Tennis and

Learning. For the last 50 years we've been a partner here with the City, and we provide free tennis and education for kids throughout the City. We receive our funding under the Physical Education Fitness Initiative. We have, and I'll get to that in a moment later on. What do we do? Free tennis in all 51 council districts throughout the year. We're in-- we've provided for kids five to 18 years of age-- excuse me-- five to 18 years of age. We have District 75 kids that we provide to-- special populations. We provide free scholar-- SAT and SHAT, prep classes. We bring our programs into the schools. We train gym teachers on how to provide tennis to kids who otherwise can't get out to the large tennis sites that we run. We're always looking for new expansions and where to go. You know, I could go on and on about the good of our program, but what sports gives to kids, we do it. We let kids be kids. We let them get out and play. We give them a safe haven. A couple of the numbers-- we've been talking about numbers. 10,000 unique kids last year. 70 percent of our participants are 10 years of age and younger, from five to-- 70 percent. That's the target group. 75 percent are Black, African-

American, Latino, or Asian. 80 percent are in the low-income based on the AMI of the City of New York. Our coaches come from our programs. The testimony I have submitted you'll see all the numbers and demographics. This year, we're seeing \$1 million under the Physical Education and Fitness Initiative. We need that increase of \$200,000. We're stuck at this number for the last 17 years. No one has to tell anyone here about the cost and what's gone up over the last 17 years. The funding will help us to continue. We pay our staff, our beginning staff \$18 an hour. We have to get new equipment. We need new locations. We can give additional hours. We can do more Saturday program. We will increase enrollment. City of New York and the City Council has been our partner and help us accommodate-- accomplish our mission. We believe that tennis can transform the lives of the poor. We could not do what we do without the continuing support of the Council. I want to thank you all for all you do for the kids of the City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

2 SHANITA BOWEN: Thank you, Chair Stevens  
3 and to all of City Council who support childcare,  
4 children, families, and the childcare workforce. I'm  
5 Shanita Bowen, Chief Operating Officer for ECE On the  
6 Move, serving Early Childhood Educators in  
7 residential settings throughout New York City and the  
8 families that they serve. We are largely Black and  
9 Brown women deeply committed to educating young  
10 children. In January and for years, we've boarded  
11 buses in Albany, calling for better compensation and  
12 greater access to care. When we heard about the  
13 voucher shortfall it impacted all of us. Parents and  
14 educators did their part. We advocated to the state  
15 to save existing and new vouchers. Now, we turn to  
16 the City to close the gap. We don't want to argue  
17 over who is to blame. Both the state and the city  
18 must respond to the needs of their communities. ECE  
19 On the Moe is on the front line. What do we tell  
20 families who just had children and need to return to  
21 work only to find that there's a wait list. What  
22 guidance do we have for providers to encourage them  
23 to stay open? when there are no new vouchers, that  
24 means that there are no new children and no income  
25 for that. This is the childcare crisis we're living

in, especially in New York City. We have thousands of misplaced open slots in the wrong districts and a worsening assistance shortfall. Early Childhood Education in New York City is already unstable. No one wants to be a part of a workforce that is not thriving. This is mismanagement. We need an overhaul now, and we need to ensure that not only recertification will happen, but that new applications will be processed for families that need it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Gregory Brender from the Daycare Council of New York. Thank you, Chair Brannan, Chair Stevens, both for the opportunity to testify, and also for all the fighting you've been doing for Early Childhood Education, both in the ACS portion and in Department of Education. So, I wanted to just also talk as Shanita did about the childcare vouchers. As you know, we learned about this problem from ACS in February and both advocates, members of the City Council, providers, all sprung into action, pushing Albany to make an investment which they have done with, as you know, strings attached. And we want to

make 6sure that the City makes the investment to ensure that both the families that are currently enrolled can continue to serve, but that more families as they come into the system are able to be served through childcare vouchers. We know this requires at least an investment of \$328 million and we'd urge the City to at least match the state's investment of \$350 million. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Hello. Thank you, Chair Stevens and the Children and Youth Committee and Chair Brannan and the Finance Committee. My name is Caitlyn Passaretti. I'm a Senior Advocacy Associate at Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, and I'm here to address the needs for afterschool, runaway and homeless youth, alternatives to incarceration, and childcare vouchers. Afterschool programs provide vital supports and care for our city's young people. You heard from a host of them today and at the rally this morning. We appreciate the mayor's announcement and the future investment to support these programs. However, we remain gravely concerned that the funding does not address the staffing crisis afterschool programs are

experiencing due to low wages. To ensure programs are robustly funded and providers are paid what they are owed, we must adjust the rates for COMPASS and SONYC. We urge the City to increase the base rates for COMPASS elementary to \$4,900 and for SONYC middle school programs to \$4,150 this year with the end goal of fully funding elementary and middle school programs and a new procurement in FY27. Regarding runaway and homeless youth which was not included in the Executive Budget, we are still grateful for those 100 beds funded in the last year's budget, but we need the City to increase the rates for providers which have not been updated since 2017 to \$70,000 per bed. We also heard from youth speaking on this issues earlier today as well. This investment will provide safe temporary housing for youth who otherwise would be without a stable option. We also urge you to restore and baseline the \$1.62 million for peer navigators and \$1.5 million for the housing specialists. Having a trusted support system for young people to offer advice, resources, and answers for young people is invaluable. Finally, I want to uplift the urgent need to invest in the City's childcare assistance program. The New York State



enacted budget allocates \$350 million to childcare vouchers in New York City and requires New York City to allocate at least \$328 million to draw down these state funds. We urge the city leaders to invest at least \$350 million in the childcare assistance program to enable the city to pull down the maximum amount of the state and federal funding that supports childcare vouchers for tens and thousands of low-income families. We urge the city leaders to work with OCFS to locate a permanent remedy for maintaining access to childcare vouchers and for families going forward. And finally, I will also make a plug. The ACS Commissioner worked with the mayor to submit a waiver of hardship for the Raise the Age voucher in order to pull down those funds so we could have more money for those young people. Thank you so much, and have a great afternoon.

MICHAEL MAX KNOBB: Thank you, Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan and all of the members of the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth and New York City Council Finance Committee for holding this hearing and for this opportunity. I'm Michael Max Knobbe, the Executive Director of BronxNet, the public service multi-media network of

the people of the Bronx providing public access to innovative media technology, media education, content that encourages civic engagement, community awareness, and citizen journalism with experiential learning, internships and workforce development opportunities for high school students, college students, and young adults. We are requesting support from the New York City Council in the amount of \$100,000. Of that request, \$90,000 would support experiential learning and workforce development for youth and the other \$10,000 would support the production of a special series of anti-violence forums entitled "Our Home, Our Haven," engaging youth, credible messengers and community leaders in Bronx forums for neighborhood peace on BronxNet Television. BronxNet has provided public services contributing to the uplifting of the Bronx community for over 30 years. We have a strong media workforce development internship program that has helped thousands of Bronx students build successful careers, including many in media, communications and related fields. Participants of our workforce development program work alongside professionals and gain hands-on experience in journalism, technical directing,

studio operations, producing, engineering, animation, and much more. This allocation would allow us to provide hundreds of youth with these same skills as well as training and virtual sets, augmented reality, immersive media technology made possible by our newest location in media studios in the south Bronx. Discretionary funding would also allow us to provide more experiential learning opportunities for high school, middle school and elementary school students in all aspects of media production. Experience has shown that hands-on media training that we provide encourages greater academic achievement, and the support we are seeking will help us provide vital workforce training and opportunities for our youth. Thank you, Chair Stevens, Chair Brannan, and thank you to all the Council Members part of this joint hearing for your important work for our people of this great city.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Next panel is Micharey Almanzar, Jose Velez, Jacarrah Sanders, Azael Gonzalez, Susan Graves, and Emma Hamdle. You want to start on the left? Thanks.

MICHAREY ALMANZAR: Good to go? Okay.  
Hi, my name is Micharey Almanzar and I am

representing the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation along with my some of staff and student which you'll hear soon more about our program. But NMIC is a multi-service agency. We're located in upper Manhattan and we service about 14,000 clients a year. Some of the services that we offer our clients is education, career support, finance, domestic violence prevention, mental health support, and more. So-- particularly, Youth Build is within our Education and Career Services Department, and Youth Build is a paid GED and tech skills program. So, a lot of our young adults come in because they were either court-involved, they became a parent, first generation, they moved from another country, they don't know how to access resources in this country so they come into our program so that we can provid them with the community resources as mentioned, and also help them in their education and career goals as well. So, I do want to thank the Council Members for helping us in our accomplishments so far. We've enrolled 30 participants this year, 10 of which are graduates and obtained their high school equivalency diploma, 25 obtained wraparound services including in mental health, food, housing, and five of those 10

have passed at least a sub-test within the GED, and we anticipate will pass by the end of the year or in the summer. I am asking for a renewal of our \$350,000 budget from last year to this upcoming year, Fiscal Year 26. In 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor cut Youth Build funding and workforce initiatives substantially which has hurt us on workforce opportunities for our young adults, and we want to make sure that we maintain whole and continue to support our young adults for the future as well. So, we look forward to our partnership with you guys, and yeah, continuing to allow our students to feel welcomed and supported. Thank you.

JOSE VELEZ: Good afternoon. I'm Jose Velez. [inaudible].

JACARAH SANDERS: Good afternoon. How y'all doing? My name is Jacarrah Sanders. I'm a Youth Build participant, and unlike them, I'm from down south. So, my whole experience here has been different than most. I'm grateful for my Youth Build team. They not only help me deal with educational aspects of things in life, but they also help me deal with life itself. I deal with anxiety. So, when I'm walking into a new environment, new anything,

1 honestly, it-- if I don't feel like I got it, it gets  
2 overwhelming. And with that being said, they helped  
3 me-- really helped me understand that I got it. They  
4 speak life into us. They help coach us through a lot  
5 of things, not just with finance, but right now we're  
6 learning how to search for houses. We're learning  
7 how to manage our money. They teach us how to work  
8 with individuals, each other, our peers, how to talk  
9 to each other when we get frustrated when we have  
10 differences, because we come from the same  
11 situations, but we don't come from the same  
12 situations. So, they help us understand that we're  
13 equal, and a whole lump sum of what I'm trying to say  
14 is, no matter where you come from, no matter, they  
15 teach you the same with the utmost respect like you  
16 would want to be treated, in a sense like a human. I  
17 appreciate that, because I done been in jail. I've  
18 done been a lot of places. So, a lot of people would  
19 judge you based off of that, and they don't judge us  
20 at all. They treat us how we want to be treated and  
21 they help us, push us to the future. They care about  
22 what we're doing when we leave, not just for the day,  
23 but what our next steps are, what we're going to do  
24 when we get our GED, how we're going to do that.

What else is it? They also really honestly talk to you about you, your personal stuff, your mental like she said. It's just-- it's a family-oriented thing for me. So, they treat me like I'm family, so I treat them like they my family. Right now, they're the best thing that happened to me since I done been in New York. They're giving me a sense of hope that humanity is still alive.

AZAEL GONZALEZ: Good afternoon. My name is Azael Roberto Gonzalez. You can call me Robert. Youth Build is a place that helps me focus my attention. I have dyslexia so I can't really work in a big class. I used to be in special ed, and it was this really small class, and this class is like-- we call it Buddha [sic] said, was like a family. You know, we have our pros and cons to being in this community as a whole. We all learn together. We thrive together. We, you know, we grow as people in this building and it just makes us feel like we're at home. Ms. Graves and Ms. A, we go and talk to whenever we have problems and have anything that is an issue in our life. I hope to get my GED at the end of this month or next month. I am planning to possibly work construction. I am thinking about doing

different things, and they help me actually find my path into being a labor worker and to see what I want to do for my future, mostly. And that's really about it. Thank you.

SUSAN GRAVES: Good afternoon. My name is Susan Graves. I'm a licensed social worker and I work with Youth Build over at NMIC, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation. So, of course, Youth Build helps our candidates. They're not clients. You know, they're not-- [inaudible] are candidates. You know, candidates is somebody who's hoping for something in the future. So, we help them by-- of course, we have small class size and individualized attention which is really key to our candidates not falling through the cracks. In a just world, there should be no cracks to fall through. I shouldn't have a job. None of us should have a job. We should just have a fair and just equitable society. So, we provide instruction every day on basics like Math and English, but also on things like public speaking, on civic engagement such as what we're doing today. This is a very valuable experience. Writing and study skills-- And so in short, it's really support for becoming a healthy,



engaged adult in today's world, and we're facing a lot of very unprecedented challenges during these times, especially after the pandemic which is disrupted through routines, the daily life, learning, growth, and outgrowth for an entire generation. So, our candidates deserve much, much more than we could ever hope to give, and I'm asking for your support in getting there. Thank you very much.

EMMA HANDLE: Thank you Finance Committee and Chair Stevens. My name is Emma. I'm a Master's of Social Work Intern with the Youth Build program at NMIC, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation. I grew up in Washington Heights and now I get the chance to serve my neighborhood and give back. I'm speaking to you today about the value of the Youth Build program. Our students are pursuing high school equivalency after traditional schools have failed them. And right now, in particular, we are serving students who dropped out of school during COVID. We are a social safety net for students with nowhere else to turn. Our students are court-involved, teen parents, houseless youth, orphaned, and face many other obstacles that they are working to overcome. Youth Build offers an invaluable alternative to

traditional schooling. Most notably, our small class sizes that allow for the individual attention our students need. We focus on classroom content, but also heavily on social and emotional learning. Every student has a social work caseworker, the opportunity to enroll in free regular therapy and career exploration tools. The students I work with have big dreams, from opening a chain of hair salons to becoming a software engineer, to becoming a union electrician. I'm asking today that you give Youth Build the tools to support these amazing students' big dreams. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead.

JOSE VELEZ: So, I didn't really come up with anything, but I did fall into a bit of a bad life, you know. It's because of my fault, but NMIC actually, you know, gave me that reassurance, you know? After COVID, you know-- I'm a young father myself, you know, so I'm just trying to redo my whole life, you know? NMIC is definitely something that needs to stay forever for sure. Like, Youth Build, excuse me, excuse me, Youth Build. I don't know, they just gave me the reassurance that I need, you know? I was already on that goal. Like, alright, I

need to do better. I need to stay out of the streets, you know. Do what I have to do, you know? And I came across Youth Build by accident, to be honest, by accident, and look at me. I'm going to get my GED and actually try to become a firefighter soon.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: That's awesome. Congratulations. That's great. Keep it up.

JOSE VELEZ: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And I would like to say, I love the Youth Build program and have been a strong advocate and supporter of this program, and I will continue to do so. So, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, our next panel is on Zoom. If we call your name-- first is Jibal Ahmed.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

JIBAL AHMED: Alright, good afternoon, everybody. Thank you, again, for having us. I really enjoy listening to all of you guys. Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the Children and Youth Committee for hosting the hearing to examine the mayor's Executive Budget related to DYCD and ACS. My name is Jibal Ahmed. I'm the Senior Program

Director at the Beacon MS [sic] 45 Community Center operated under Good Shepherd Services located in the Bronx. Our community center [inaudible] beacon of hope and opportunity for 35 years. My testimony will focus on the critical challenges we face in sustaining our programs due to the lack of competitive pay and incentives for our staff. At Beacon MS45, we strive to create a nurturing environment where young people are not only encouraged to succeed academically, but also supported socially and emotionally. Our programs prioritize holistic development, offering academic support, sports and fitness activities, leadership opportunities, and emotional guidance. Despite the incredible work being done, we face significant challenges in attracting, hiring, and retaining skilled and passionate professionals due to the low base pay and lack of incentives for our staff. The individuals who dedicate their time and energy to our programs are motivated by their desire to serve the community, but this dedication alone cannot sustain them in the face of financial insecurity. The reality is that low wages create a culture of instability and low commitment. Many talented staff

members are forced to leave for better paying opportunities elsewhere, leaving us with a revolving door of employees. This high turnover rate disrupts the continuity and quality of our programs, making it harder to provide consistent long-term support our youth deserves. Without addressing the issues of an adequate pay, we risk losing not only our most dedicated professionals, but also the trust and engagement of the young people and families who rely on us. Quality programming requires quality staff, and quality staff--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you for your testimony. Time has expired.

JIBAL AHMED: requires adequate compensation. I urge you to consider the critical role that centers like Beacon MS45 play in lives of children and their families and the broader community to invest in afterschool system. The sector cannot wait until an RFP is released. Investing in higher pay and better incentives for our staff is not just an investment on the individuals working on the front line, it is an investment in the future of our city.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Time has expired.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Rachel Gazdick?

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

4 MARK MERINO: Good afternoon everyone.

5 My name is Mark Merino, Board Director for the New  
6 York Edge in the Bronx and Manhattan. I'm speaking on  
7 behalf of Rachael Gazdick for the New York Edge, and  
8 I just-- here are my points. So thank you today for  
9 giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of New  
10 York Edge. As you know, we prioritize-- our  
11 priorities to focus on 26 citywide funding requests.  
12 We are currently seeking \$1.2 million under this  
13 Council's Afterschool Enrichment Initiative and  
14 \$250,000 under the Council's Social and Emotional  
15 Supports for Students initiative. Afterschool  
16 enrichment funding has enabled us to enrich and  
17 expand our school year and summer programs and has  
18 allowed us to develop and implement new, unique, and  
19 engaging programs. Our funding, however, has remained  
20 \$1 million for the past 15 years despite the fact  
21 that we have tripled in size and have significantly  
22 increased the number of children served. Increased  
23 funding will reflect our growth and will help  
24 mitigate some of the challenges we have occurred as  
25 result of city's Passport system and resulting

contract registration and payment delays.

Social/emotional supports for students funding will

enable us to support our current SEL program

providing high-quality, evidence-based social and

emotional learning assessments, curriculum and

resources for all our partner schools and our

students and their families. New York Edge is the

largest provider of afterschool and summer

programming, serving over 33,000 students across more

than 130 schools, and 37 of 51 City Council

districts, including four Beacon Centers, 21<sup>st</sup>

Century Schools, and four food pantries. We proudly

offer culturally-responsive programming rooted in

academic enrichment, sports, health and wellness,

visual and performing arts, STEM, leadership, college

and career readiness with social/emotional learning

intentionally woven throughout everything we do. New

York Edge, its students and its families are

extraordinarily grateful for the 33 years of support

from the New York City Council.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you for your

testimony. Time has expired.

MARK MERINO: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Ashley  
3 Chen?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

5 ASHLEY CHEN: thank you, Chairs Brannan,  
6 Stevens and members of the Children, Youth and  
7 Finance Committees for the opportunity to testify  
8 today. My name is Ashley Chen and I'm the Policy  
9 Analyst at the Chinese-American Planning Council,  
10 CPC. We serve 80,000 AAPI low-income and immigrant  
11 New Yorkers across the City every year. Last year,  
12 1,003 students participated in our educational  
13 programs and every single high school senior  
14 graduated. This isn't just a number. It's a proof  
15 of what community-based programs can accomplish. For  
16 low-income and first-generation students, these  
17 programs are more than about academic support.  
18 They're a critical bridge to personal growth,  
19 opportunity and economic mobility. We're encouraged  
20 to see the Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget allocate  
21 \$331 million to support 20,000 new afterschool  
22 student enrollees over the next three years, along  
23 with \$25 million for Promise NYC which would expand  
24 access to childcare for low-income families who are  
25 otherwise ineligible. We're also pleased to see



baseline funding for SYEP at \$11 million dedicated to SYEP metro cards. Afterschool and youth development programs do more than extend the school day. They empower students with the skills, confidence and networks needed to thrive not just in the classroom, but in their careers and communities. These programs help young people see themselves as future leaders and change-makers. We are urging that the final adopted budget continues to center young people, children, and working families in the process, and ensure meaningful investments into the future of our young New Yorkers, and ultimately the City. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Katrina Armstrong?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

KATRINA ARMSTEAD: It's Katrina Armstead. I'm a director of child/parent psychotherapy at JCCA's agency. JCCA proudly serves children and families through a variety of programs administered by ACS and DYCD. Some of these programs include wraparound services for transitional [inaudible] foster youth, city first readers, family foster care and residential foster care, community partnership

programs, and preventive programs. Today I would like to highlight our preventive programs. Our services support and strengthen families to prevent out-of-home placement and to reunite families after such placements. These programs include child/parent psychotherapy, solution-based casework contact, and family treatment rehabilitation. These services provide a life-changing impact on our family's wellbeing. One family that comes to mind consisted of autistic child and a mother with mental health challenges. Struggling with these challenges, the mother was unable to take her child to doctor's appointments. We connected the mother to adult health home caseworker who was assisting her to enrolling her child in school and has referred her to mental health services. While the mother was initially resistant, she eventually embraced the mental health supports. Since then, we have observed positive changes in her behavior and have relationship with her child thanks to linkages to the community resources. The challenges our preventive families face are all too familiar. Many families in New York City struggle with purchasing groceries, doing laundry, and purchasing clothes for their

children. Parents in these communities are often unemployed or on paid wages that do not keep up with the cost of living. Additionally, many of the families we serve are undocumented immigrants experiencing additional fear of anxiety in the current political climate. Such challenges hinder a child's academic performance and poses risk to their physical and mental health. While we aim to provide youth and families with transformative services, we often struggle to provide enough supports due to limited funding. As you know--

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you for your testimony. Time has expired.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Ethan Penha?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ETHAN PENHA: Good afternoon. My name is Ethan Penha and I'm a Public Health Policy student and researcher from the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and advocating for introduced bill 0702-2024 that will establish an emergency student food plan for public school student to access in remote learning settings. According to the Department of Education's school [inaudible] report and the Fiscal Year 2024, across the five boroughs

nearly 155 million breakfasts, lunch and afterschool snacks and suppers were served in schools. However, there currently isn't an emergency preparedness food plan implemented to safeguard student from pre-existing disparities and food-insecure conditions that they may live in if schools were to transition to remote learning. This could compromise their health and ability to pursue academic achievement. Last March, bills 0702-2024 was proposed by Public Advocate Williams as an opportunity to address this risk. It would involve a collaboration between the Committee of Fire and Emergency Management, the Office of Food Policy and the Department of Education to implement a plan to deliver meals to students if schools must transition to remote learning or close by order of the Governor, Mayor or Chancellor. The emergency preparation plan can help consider a variety of programs and funding mechanisms to sustain a plan where students can continue their school day from home without them or their families worrying that they will not have access to a meal. To ensure nutritious meals can effectively reach students in remote locations across the five boroughs, I'm calling for additional support and collaborative

efforts from this Council to prioritize the wellenss  
of school children and sustain their opportunities  
for academic success. I ask the Council to support  
passing this bill and funding a plan that engages and  
realized services across the public and private  
sector working with local vendors, pantries,  
community and faith-based organizations that student  
and their families may lean on, along with  
revitalizing partnerships with emergency delivery  
services that were utilized during the COVID-19  
pandemic. Thank you so much for your time and  
opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

Christopher Johnson, please. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Going once. Going  
twice? Christopher Johnson? Okay. If there's  
anyone else who would like to testify, please use the  
raise hand function. Okay. Okay, well, I think that  
concludes today's testimony.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, with that,  
this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date August 10, 2025