

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION 1
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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Thursday, November 20, 2025

Start: 10:12 A.M.

Recess: 1:00 P.M.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor
Hearing Room 3

B E F O R E: Hon. Lincoln Restler, Chair
Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
David M. Carr
James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Frank Morano
Lynn C. Schulman
Inna Vernikov

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Brad Lander,
New York City Comptroller

Jason W. Forrester,
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Reserve Affairs, Manpower and Personnel—
Representing National Security Leaders for
America

Loree Sutton, MD,
Brigadier General (Ret.), Founding Commissioner
for the NYC Department of Veterans' Services;
Member of the National Security Leaders for
America (NSL4A)

Michael Matos,
Founder and President of Five Borough Veterans

Katie Bishop,
Five Borough Veterans

Quinn Raymond,
Policy Analyst for Protect Democracy

Deborah Lee,
Attorney-in-Charge for The Legal Aid Society's
Immigration Law Unit (LAS)

David Moss,
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
Legal Defense Fund (LDF)

Susan Lerner,
Executive Director for Common Cause New York

Hannah Stauss,
Organizer with 50501NYC and Strong Economy for
All and Co-Leader at Hands Off New York

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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

Alexandra Rizio,
Supervising Immigration Attorney at Make the Road

Sophia-Helene Mees de Tricht,
United States Veteran Representing Common Defense

Carolina Moreno,
Community Advocate at Mixteca

Vlad Tlali,
Senior Policy Strategist at the New York
Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

Rex Chen,
Supervising Counsel for Immigrant Rights,
LatinoJusticePRLDEF

Robert Huggins, III
Representing Himself

Christopher Leon Johnson,
Representing Himself

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
2 FEDERAL LEGISLATION 4

3 SERGEANT KING: This is a microphone check
4 for the Committee on Governmental Operations, State &
5 Federal Legislation. Today's date is November 20,
6 2025, being recorded by Tavell King in Hearing Room
7 3.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: (MISSING AUDIO) Please
9 silence all cell phones and electronic devices to
10 minimize disruptions throughout the hearing.

11 If you wish to testify, please see the
12 Sergeant at Arms in the hallway to fill out a witness
13 slip.

14 Please do not approach the dais at any
15 time during today's proceedings. We thank you for
16 your kind cooperation.

17 Chair, we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.
19 Good morning, my name is Lincoln Restler, and I have
20 the privilege of chairing the Committee on
21 Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation.
22 I would like to recognize and thank our distinguished
23 Public Advocate for joining us today. And I believe
24 we have Council Member Paladino on Zoom as well as
25 folks make their way in this morning. We've got a
very contentious hearing on some Airbnb-related

1
2 legislation across the way over at City Hall that I
3 think is capturing a lot of my colleagues' attention.

4 Every day, we hear more and more
5 disturbing reports of federal ICE agents descending
6 onto New York City, raiding vendors on Canal Street,
7 ripping loved ones from their families at 26 Federal
8 Plaza, and destabilizing communities all across our
9 city. Just in the past week, ICE has reportedly
10 disappeared a single mother of an 8-month-old in
11 Bensonhurst, and I believe the Public Advocate was on
12 the scene shortly after that occurred. ICE descended
13 on an afterschool soccer program in Sunset Park, and
14 they snatched up neighbors in Bushwick.

15 ICE is mobilizing in New York City, and
16 it is getting worse fast. Trump's border czar, Tom
17 Homan, said just this past week, in no uncertain
18 terms, that the Trump administration will, quote,
19 "Increase the enforcement presence in New York City"
20 because we are a sanctuary city.

21 Across the country, from Los Angeles to
22 Chicago, from Washington, D.C. to Memphis, from
23 Portland to Charlotte, the escalation of federal
24 outreach has been profoundly disturbing and a sure
25 sign of what is to come here in New York City. It's

1 no secret that come January, Donald Trump is itching
2 to deploy the National Guard and disappear more of
3 our immigrant neighbors from the streets of our city.
4 We know this is coming. The question is what we will
5 do to prepare effectively and protect our
6 communities.
7

8 We've convened this hearing today to
9 discuss how New York City can get organized and be
10 prepared to fight back against the Trump
11 administration. But instead of being here today to
12 discuss the future New Yorkers are facing, Mayor
13 Adams is in Uzbekistan.

14 Despite putting their names on a few
15 lawsuits, Eric Adams and Randy Mastro remain so
16 terrified of Donald Trump that they refuse to defend
17 the immigrant New Yorkers who make up the backbone of
18 our city. Two out of five New Yorkers are foreign-
19 born. This is the third time, *the third time* that
20 this committee has held a hearing on the dire impacts
21 that the federal government's actions are having on
22 New York City. The third time, the Adams
23 administration has refused to show up.

24 The message is clear—Eric Adams and his
25 administration are not on our side. Every single

1 member of the Adams administration should be ashamed
2 to look at the empty chairs here today and this
3 mayor's kowtowing to Donald Trump.
4

5 The Adams administration has refused to
6 create a plan to organize communities against this
7 looming threat, but we cannot allow their abdication
8 of responsibility to catch us flat-footed. As we look
9 ahead, we need to prepare the most robust legal
10 strategies to protect New Yorkers from Trump and his
11 goons.

12 We have been discussing with local
13 elected officials across the country what we can do
14 to get ready. In Chicago, Mayor Johnson signed an
15 executive order preventing ICE from using city
16 property or unwilling private businesses as staging
17 locations for their raids. And Chicago Public Schools
18 established a 24-hour student safety center to
19 support students impacted by ICE actions. In Los
20 Angeles, Mayor Karen Bass is coordinating
21 philanthropic donations to support immigrant families
22 facing the sudden loss of income.

23 It's eminently evident that we must
24 create robust communication channels to ensure rapid
25 information sharing about real-time threats that we

1
2 are facing. We must invest in the community groups
3 that are implementing localized plans to protect our
4 neighbors. Already, our Immigration Chair, Council
5 Member Alexa Avilés, has led impressive outreach on
6 commercial corridors to ensure small businesses know
7 their rights and how to protect their workers. This
8 is exactly the kind of work we should replicate
9 citywide.

10 The City Council is doing everything we
11 can to invest safely in our communities, from making
12 sure our constituents know their rights to increasing
13 funding for immigrant legal services. But the Trump
14 administration is making every effort to undermine
15 the work we and our counterparts nationally are
16 doing, cutting off federal funding, sending untrained
17 and aggressive police forces into our communities to
18 wreak havoc, and spreading blatant misinformation
19 just to stoke panic. And to make matters even worse,
20 we're actually less safe as federal resources are
21 redirected away from investigations into trafficking
22 and terrorism, and more.

23 Trump's ultimate goal is to create fear
24 and to turn communities against each other. But
25 that's not what we do in New York City. Our history

1
2 is rooted in compassion and openness. And we will
3 always be the city that welcomes and protects our
4 immigrant neighbors.

5 With that, I'd like to thank our
6 Governmental Operations Committee staff: Committee
7 Counsel, Johari Frasier, and Policy Analyst, Erica
8 Cohen, for their thoughtful preparation for today's
9 hearing, as well as my Communications Director, Nieve
10 Mooney, and my Chief of Staff, Molly Haley, who is
11 absolutely brilliant.

12 In the glaring absence of leadership from
13 the Adams administration, we look forward to hearing
14 from advocates and legal experts about their
15 experiences and recommendations for how we can all
16 work together to defend New York City against federal
17 overreach.

18 We will be starting with two city leaders
19 who are not afraid to stand up to Donald Trump and
20 who have been fiercely leading the charge to protect
21 immigrant New Yorkers—Comptroller Brad Lander has
22 put his body on the line, showing up week after week
23 to support immigrants trying to do the right thing
24 and attend their scheduled hearings at 26 Federal
25 Plaza, and Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams, has

1 been a relentless champion for immigrants and
2 vulnerable New Yorkers for decades. I'm proud to call
3 them both friends, and we are fortunate to have them
4 as our elected officials.
5

6 With that, I would like to turn it over
7 to our Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams, for an
8 opening statement.

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.
10 Chair. Now you said "a couple of decades" for me, but
11 you didn't say anything for Brad. I just want people
12 to know that I'm younger, just so...

13 ALL: (LAUGHTER)

14 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Let's be clear
15 about that. But peace and blessing, love and light to
16 everyone, and good morning, Chair, and everyone who's
17 here.

18 First, at the top, I think it's pretty
19 disgusting that the mayor himself is not here, and he
20 sent no one in his stead. His audition to be deputy
21 president was not successful. I just want to say,
22 wherever he is, I wish he would just stay there and
23 put us all out of our misery and just let, you know,
24 [First Deputy] Mayor Randy Mastro, I guess, do his
25 thing until we can close this out. But it is

1 disgraceful, and unfortunately, that is how he has
2 led his administration. I wish he had closed out less
3 disgracefully, but he's chosen not to. He's
4 confirming that every decision he's made is more
5 about himself than the people of the city of New
6 York, and I cannot tell you how hard that's been to
7 watch happen in real time, particularly as a Black
8 citywide elected official to another more powerful
9 Black citywide official. He should be ashamed of
10 himself. I don't think he is, which is part of the
11 problem.
12

13 We are in a situation, as you mentioned,
14 Chair, where ICE agents kicked down the door—we saw
15 the video today, I think it was a couple of months
16 ago, kicked down the door of a mother with children
17 at gunpoint. To our understanding, they didn't show
18 any warrant. They may not even have had one. That is
19 the line being crossed at this moment in time.

20 Just this week, as you mentioned, I was
21 with a family where a mother was duped into coming
22 outside when she wouldn't open the door. When she
23 walked outside, you could see very clearly that she
24 had no concern because she thought she was going
25 somewhere, wherever the person called her from, and

1 they just kidnapped her from the street. In that
2 room, there was a very chilling feeling when I was
3 there, telling the remaining family members they
4 probably shouldn't leave their house for a couple of
5 days, as we try to figure out what's going on,
6 because the person who we think did this threatened
7 to call ICE on the entire family as an act of
8 revenge. That is chilling. You know, it reminded me,
9 although it's not as severe yet, but it reminded me
10 of what people may have felt as they were trying to
11 hide runaways, enslaved Africans, or, in Nazi
12 Germany, as they were trying to hide folks. That
13 feeling, that fear in that room, as I mentioned, I
14 don't want to act like the situation is the same, but
15 it is increasingly getting there. And it was just a
16 chilling feeling to have to talk to those family
17 members, saying you probably should not leave your
18 house, and we have to find people who can get you
19 some food if you need some.

21 And now for my official statement:

22 My name is Jumaane Williams, the Public Advocate for
23 the City of New York. Thank you, Chair Restler, and
24 members of the Committee on Governmental Operations,
25 for holding this important hearing and allowing me

1 the opportunity to testify alongside my friend and
2 colleague in safety, New York City Comptroller Brad
3 Lander. Brad, you've been doing this for a while. I
4 woke up and became an OG overnight. I don't know what
5 happened. But, I diet, so I try to...

7 (LAUGHTER)

8 Every day, the Trump administration
9 pushes our city and the country deeper into—let me
10 pause here, I just want to say, my diet may be on
11 Instagram, so it hasn't been, it hasn't been
12 something I'm hiding. Yeah, I am into transparency.

13 Alright, on the more serious topic
14 again, every day, the Trump administration pushes our
15 city and the country deeper into uncertainty. Our
16 social safety nets are being eroded, and our civil
17 and political rights are being hollowed out and
18 violated, including those woven into the fabric of
19 our democracy and delineated in the Constitution of
20 the United States and our Bill of Rights.

21 The right to due process is
22 indispensable, or should have been, to the American
23 legal system and is essential to individuals in this
24 country, irrespective of whether they traveled,
25 relocated, or were born here. Yet every day, we learn

1 of people being kidnapped from the streets in broad
2 daylight, held in inhumane, unsafe conditions, and
3 tricked into coming into court, and even spirited
4 away by private plane to be jailed in countries they
5 have no connection to. If we were discussing a
6 country in the global south where individuals were
7 incarcerated without trial by masked individuals who
8 display no discernible affiliation to any legitimate
9 law enforcement agency or office, we would be calling
10 for UN peace-keeping intervention.
11

12 The behavior of the U.S. Immigration and
13 Customs Enforcement, ICE, not only breeds fear and
14 distrust, but it also opens the door for bad actors
15 masquerading as law enforcement officials, of which
16 we've seen several instances already. We know an
17 active NYPD duty member is on trial now for being
18 accused of calling ICE on someone who spurned his
19 advances.

20 Furthermore, the mobilization and
21 politicization of the National Guard by the President
22 in peaceful cities around the country is a gross
23 violation of states' rights. Our republic fought for
24 independence from overreaching monarchical rule. We
25 cannot normalize this abuse of power. This is a

1 constitutional crisis that was created by the Felon
2 in Chief-Number 47.

3
4 As a city, we must:

- 5 • Penalize financial institutions that reverse
6 transactions in bank accounts held by The City
7 of New York, where no duly elected or
8 appointed official acquiesced to a reversal of
9 deposited funds.
- 10 • Be ready to file injunctions and lawsuits when
11 federal actors do not follow the laws of New
12 York City or New York State.
- 13 • Bear witness in the courts or in the streets
14 and serve as violence interrupters when we
15 see another human being forcibly detained
16 without a judicial warrant.

17 I look forward to working with Governor
18 Kathy Hochul—and finally, a mayor who cares more
19 about the City than themselves— Mayor-Elect Zohran
20 Mamdani, to protect New Yorkers from the overreaches
21 of this federal administration. We must stand
22 together in defending New Yorkers, our immigrant
23 communities, and upholding the rule of law. And to
24 anyone who hears this, we all have to do what we can
25 where we are with what we have. I remind the folks

1 that in history, in times and moments like this,
2 there are names we remember, because they made the
3 headlines, but there are hundreds of thousands of
4 people whose names we will never know, but were just
5 as important in getting (INAUDIBLE) to it. So, some
6 people are able to pray; some can show up with a
7 sandwich, they can just be present, whatever we can,
8 and are comfortable doing, we have to. However, we do
9 have to push past our comfort zone a little bit.
10

11 I am looking forward to January; it can't
12 come fast enough. And, again, this administration is
13 going to go down as one with disgrace and shame. And
14 it's just hard, there's just no way around it. But I
15 know that our mayor has created a new world for
16 himself in his mind, where that is not the case,
17 where he is a victim. He is not a victim. He has
18 created a city full of victims, and it has been just
19 so shameful to watch. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,
21 Mr. Public Advocate.

22 We'll now invite Comptroller Lander up,
23 and we have to swear him in—because the Public
24 Advocate is technically an ex officio member of the
25

1 Council. The Comptroller, though a former member of
2 the body, does not have the same standing.

3
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Before we begin, I
5 will administer the affirmation. I see you have
6 already raised your hand, Comptroller Lander.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
8 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, before this
9 committee, and to respond honestly to council member
10 questions?

11 COMPTROLLER LANDER: I do, thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin when
13 ready.

14 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Good morning, Chair
15 Restler and Public Advocate Williams, and thank you
16 for convening this critical hearing on protecting New
17 York City from federal overreach. It is great to be
18 in this new Council Hearing Room. It's my first time
19 in these fancy digs...

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Welcome.

21 COMPTROLLER LANDER: you have now.

22 But, for all the, you know, joking about
23 Jumaane's beard and this committee room, this is an
24 urgent moment. National Guard or federal troops have
25 been deployed, over the objections of state and local

1
2 elected officials, to Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland,
3 Washington, D.C., and now Charlotte, North Carolina,
4 which, let's be clear, is not even a sanctuary city
5 in all of those cases, stoking fear, provoking chaos,
6 and imposing federal power in a manner designed to
7 undermine constitutional democracy. ICE agents are
8 lawlessly abducting our neighbors every single day.
9 President Trump has weaponized federal funding, using
10 taxpayer dollars for purposes of coercion and
11 extortion.

12 Now, in the wake of New Yorkers' election
13 of Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani, Trump and his
14 administration are threatening to send troops here,
15 to further ratchet up ICE abductions and to cut off
16 funds to which we are legally entitled. It is a
17 critical moment for unified action by New York's
18 local, state, and federal officials. And while, as
19 the Public Advocate said, it has been profoundly
20 disappointing that Eric Adams has utterly failed to
21 stand up for New Yorkers in the face of this
22 onslaught, and let's be clear: that's a key reason
23 why New Yorkers utterly rejected him at the polls
24 earlier this month. It is a critical time for unity,
25 and it is just worth remembering that it is possible.

1 I think part of what happens when the mayor
2 (INAUDIBLE) the turf that he needs to be on, is that
3 we forget how to work together. But watching in
4 Chicago, how when Governor Pritzker and Mayor Johnson
5 worked together, and the City Council rallied
6 together, it is possible for people to stand up
7 together. It is unfortunate that this hearing is one
8 of the first times there is an effort just to have a
9 concerted, coordinated government effort.
10 Fortunately, a new day is coming. You can already see
11 Governor Hochul, Attorney General James, and Mayor-
12 Elect Mamdani starting to work together. But that's
13 got to be united with what you're doing here in the
14 Council, with what the city and state comptrollers
15 are doing. This is a moment for New Yorkers to be
16 united in our resolve.

17
18 Federal overreach has primarily taken on
19 three forms: (1) aggressive abduction, detention, and
20 deportation of immigrants, without sufficient legal
21 basis; (2) weaponizing and withdrawal of federal
22 funds; and (3) deployment of out-of-state National
23 Guard or federal troops without sufficient rationale
24 and over the objection of state and local officials.

1
2 New York City has already seen the first two. Now, we
3 are preparing for the third.

4 I have a longer written testimony, which
5 I won't go through all of here, but I will summarize
6 in each of those three categories, how New Yorkers
7 can respond, and what we can learn from folks around
8 the country, and what it looks like for us to be more
9 coordinated together.

10 We've been working together and talking,
11 uh, Chair Restler, and others, about what's happening
12 to immigrant New Yorkers. It's just worth remembering
13 how profoundly an immigrant city this is, not just
14 because you can almost see that copper-plated statue
15 out in the harbor, but 40% of New Yorkers are
16 foreign-born, and 50% of New Yorkers live in mixed-
17 status households, including one million children.
18 This is the past, present, and future of New York
19 City. These are our families, our neighbors. These
20 are New Yorkers. And Trump's cruel and lawless mass
21 deportation agenda not only violates the Constitution
22 and the values of our city, but fundamentally
23 violates what it means for us to be and live as New
24 Yorkers. We have been seeing that for months now at
25 26 Federal Plaza, just across the street, where

1 individuals who have been living here side by side,
2 sending their kids to school, you know, many have
3 work authorizations. They are working in our
4 businesses, show up as they are required by their
5 notice to appear and present their case to the judge.
6 In most cases, the judge says, "Thank you for coming.
7 Here's your next court date. Take this piece of paper
8 with you," and yet when they walk out into the
9 hallways, masked ICE agents who don't present a
10 warrant, who don't identify themselves, who don't
11 give any legal basis or grounding, rip families
12 apart. I saw a man separated from his eight-month
13 pregnant wife, siblings separated— real aggressive
14 cruelty—and then people put in detention conditions
15 that federal judges have said violate the
16 Constitution.

17
18 I give some examples in my written
19 testimony, but I won't go into those cases here. You
20 have seen time and again, 16-year-olds, families
21 separated. They have increasingly taken women and
22 even children, all lawlessly, and so many of them,
23 New Yorkers. There is more that we can do as that
24 gets ratcheted up. Tom Homan said this week that he
25 is about to "flood the zone" to send more ICE agents

1 here. They've got a giant increase in federal
2 funding. They've become the largest law enforcement
3 agency in US history. But fortunately, thanks to the
4 City Council and to many of the immigration advocates
5 sitting behind me, last year's budget saw a major
6 increase in funding for immigration legal services.
7 And what people are doing, I have to tell you, every
8 time we are due in court watching, I meet a new
9 lawyer who is there providing defense. And three
10 weeks ago, I saw Joel Camas be detained; two days
11 ago, thanks to his lawyer, he was released. Carlos
12 Lopez was an individual who was roughly grabbed from
13 his sister—thankfully, Make the Road filed a habeas
14 motion, and two weeks later, they were reunited.

15
16 However, we didn't need habeas motions
17 before, and so that is not a standard feature of city
18 contracts for immigration legal services. Thankfully,
19 some people have found the resources to step up and
20 do it. It is amazing that the network of service
21 providers, advocates, volunteers, mutual aid groups,
22 and lawyers are stepping up. What is needed now is
23 flexible funding to get the resources to the Council
24 provider, and the state legislature as well, on the
25 ground to that network of legal representation and

1 defense, whether that means bringing those habeas
2 motions, or helping people start to move forward on
3 an asylum application and make sure they have a
4 lawyer. Because if you have a lawyer, that lawyer can
5 request a virtual hearing, which means an individual
6 doesn't need to go and make themselves vulnerable, as
7 that family Jumaane talked about (INAUDIBLE) in their
8 homes. If they've got a lawyer, then, you know, they
9 have the opportunity to pursue the rights they have
10 under the global convention against torture without
11 putting themselves at risk.
12

13 Other cities around the country are doing
14 this—In Los Angeles, the City coordinates rapid
15 response efforts while trusted community groups,
16 labor unions, and mutual aid networks lead the
17 ground. In Illinois and Colorado, centralized intake
18 systems gather key information and route people to
19 the right help, reducing confusion in a confusing
20 time. In Colorado, nonprofits partner with a vetted
21 network of private immigration attorneys, because we
22 need a lot more, through a shared platform, almost
23 like a virtual law firm, which expands capacity by
24 shifting straightforward cases to private counsel so
25 nonprofit lawyers can focus on complex deportation

1 defense. And in Chicago, the Mayor issued an
2 executive order strengthening sanctuary protections,
3 requiring clear officer identification, increasing
4 transparency around federal enforcement, and
5 coordinating citywide defense of Chicago residents'
6 rights.
7

8 New York knows how to lead in a moment
9 like this, and we have not been doing it because we
10 have not had a mayor taking the lead. But the Council
11 has provided the resources, there's legislation, like
12 Council Member Hanif's Trust Act, and the New York
13 for All legislation at the state level. We can use
14 best practices from other cities and states, but
15 nobody's got a stronger network of grassroots New
16 Yorkers on the ground of immigrant-led organizations,
17 of mutual aid, and of legal services. So my office is
18 preparing a more detailed memo for the incoming
19 Mamdani administration on how to coordinate with
20 those legal service providers and across that network
21 to deploy that City funding. And we will, of course,
22 be glad to provide it to the Council as well.

23 Second, I will be more brief in the other
24 two categories, the weaponizing and withdrawal of
25 federal funds. Right after Trump was elected, my

1 office released Protecting NYC, outlining all of the
2 places that we have federal funds that might be
3 vulnerable. And when we uncovered that \$80 million
4 that'd been taken by Elon Musk, we forced the Adams
5 administration to get into court. The Law Department
6 is working diligently to get our money back, but it
7 is woefully understaffed. And now many more funds
8 have been threatened. Trump has canceled or delayed
9 \$450 million in clean energy grants, \$34 million in
10 counterterrorism funding, millions in grants for
11 afterschool and other public education programs, and
12 \$18 billion in infrastructure funding. We need more
13 coordinated work. The Mayor-Elect has rightly pledged
14 to hire additional attorneys at the Law Department
15 and to work closely with New York State Attorney
16 General Tish James and Governor Hochul on more
17 coordinated litigation to protect New York City's
18 funds. This is critical. What I would urge the
19 Council to do, as the budget process comes forward—
20 we are about to start the State and City budget
21 process—and last year, we talked about trying to get
22 more coordinated, identifying all of the funds,
23 making a clear and transparent tracker—what is being
24 upheld? What's the status of the various litigation?
25

1 How are state and city officials working on it? What
2 are we due? It is going to take months, and in some
3 cases years, through litigation to get the funding we
4 are owed. So, what does the bridge funding look like
5 to cover in the meantime?
6

7 In my Tin Cup Day remarks last year in
8 Albany, I urged the creation of a City and State task
9 force on financial defense, put some additional money
10 into the General Reserve to provide more transparent
11 information about what's been paused, canceled, or is
12 at risk across city and state levels. And with more
13 transparency, and with the new budget season upon us,
14 we've got a great new opportunity for the mayor-
15 elect, the governor, the attorney general, the
16 legislatures—the City Council and the State
17 Legislature, and others to unite in a common budget
18 defense of our resources.

19 And finally, United action is what we
20 will need as well in the face of the anticipated
21 deployment of out-of-state National Guard and federal
22 troops. We have seen in Portland and Chicago some
23 success in litigation. So, the governor, the attorney
24 general, and the mayor-elect can work together to go
25 to court.

1
2 We will see how it goes for the mayor-
3 elect on Friday at the White House. Maybe there is a
4 way to appeal to Trump's strange, mercurial ego. But,
5 I think what everybody saw happen on Canal Street
6 shows why it is not going to go well for Homan or the
7 Trump administration if they seek to do the same
8 thing here. The folks who responded on Canal Street
9 were not people who had downloaded the Hands Off NYC
10 instruction guide for what to do; they hadn't bought
11 whistles in advance, they were just New Yorkers. And
12 they know that when ICE does that, you show up, you
13 get your phone out, you ask, "What's the basis for
14 this arrest?" You say, "Where is your warrant?" And
15 so many New Yorkers are already starting to do that.
16 I joined Council Member Avilés and Council Member
17 Hanif to work on reaching out to small businesses.
18 Managers and business owners were excited to learn
19 that, okay, if an ICE agent comes into my store,
20 they're just like the public. I have to allow them
21 in, but if I just put an "Employee's Only" sign on
22 the breakroom, the bathroom, or the supply closet,
23 now they would need a judicial warrant to go in.
24 Together, we are going to be able to show what it
25 looks like when New Yorkers stand up. And we have

1
2 been seeing that. I would urge people to go to
3 handsoffnyc.com, download the resources, and know
4 what to do if someone shows up. We have been out in
5 the streets together, and we are doing all of this
6 work in a spirit of patriotism, building a broad
7 coalition, and in the tradition of witness bearing
8 and nonviolent civil disobedience. I was just in that
9 tradition of court watching when I was arrested by
10 ICE agents in June, who deported Edgardo. I got due
11 process, and he did not. We were back again a couple
12 of months later, along with the Public Advocate, 15
13 elected officials, and 100 New Yorkers. Some of us
14 had our hearing earlier this week. And I said, I am
15 going to go to trial, because the crime is not what
16 we were doing in the elevator lobby, the crime is
17 what ICE agents are doing on the other side of those
18 10th-floor doors. And New Yorkers are going to stand
19 up and fight for and insist on the rule of law. One
20 more tradition that's in is our tradition as New
21 Yorkers under occupation by federal or foreign
22 governments.

23 Next year, we will celebrate the 250th
24 anniversary of the founding of this country, and just
25 six weeks after the founders signed the Declaration

1 of Independence in Philadelphia, British troops were
2 sent here to occupy New York City. And after the
3 Battle of Brooklyn, for seven years, they detained
4 New Yorkers, they harmed property, they had martial
5 law, harsh conditions, cruel detentions, occupied our
6 city, and New Yorkers resisted tyranny then, and New
7 Yorkers are resisting tyranny now. Let's act together
8 so that when the history books are written, they
9 reflect that Trump's tyranny began to fail when he
10 tried to occupy New York City in the weeks after New
11 Yorkers elected Zohran Mamdani, the first immigrant
12 mayor in generations, our first Muslim mayor in
13 history. And New Yorkers remembered who we are, what
14 it means to wake up every day in this city with that
15 copper-plated statue in the harbor, and re-lit the
16 lamp of liberty for the whole world to see. Thank you
17 very much for convening this hearing and for
18 reminding New Yorkers how we stand up together.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,
21 Comptroller Lander, for that inspiring testimony.
22 And, very same to Public Advocate Williams. I believe
23 we're going to lose you in a couple of minutes, so
24 maybe I'll just start by asking a question or two of
25

1
2 our Public Advocate and then shift to the
3 Comptroller.

4 Public Advocate, have you heard anything
5 about what City Hall, what the current administration
6 has been planning to prepare for an increased federal
7 enforcement in New York City? Have there been any
8 conversations with your office?

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Officially,
10 absolutely not. I would say, I believe the number one
11 problem with the protection of New Yorkers was the
12 mayor himself. I think he just had no desire to put
13 any infrastructure together and organize people to
14 put a structure in that can provide the safety. And
15 part of that, by the way, is I acknowledge that the
16 tools are limited for the Mayor, but just having a
17 mayor speaking about what he wants to see or speaking
18 about the need to protect New Yorkers against this
19 type of tyranny would go a long way to communities
20 that are feeling afraid. Not seeing their mayor say
21 anything, or worse, siding and putting the red carpet
22 down for this president to harm them, made things
23 exponentially worse. Thankfully, there are people who
24 care about the city who work in this administration.
25 And so I had certain conversations with certain folks

1 about what we can do and how we can do it. I did hear
2 that the, the, you know, the Mayor was doing things
3 to try to help folks in specific individual cases, so
4 I don't want to say you know "absolutely nothing",
5 but to the scale of what we are seeing, the Mayor's
6 actions were pretty disgraceful, from nonfeasance to
7 malfeasance.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And I failed to
10 recognize we have Brooklyn's own Council Member
11 Vernikov online, and all the way from the South
12 Shore, Council Member Marano is here with us in
13 person. Thank you for being here.

14 As we look ahead, 40-something days out
15 from the next administration being sworn in, are
16 there kind of core areas in a blueprint that you're
17 looking for from the Mamdani administration, and how
18 we're looking for leadership to help keep New Yorkers
19 safe with this increased federal presence happening?

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Well, one,
21 we're going to have a mayor that actually cares about
22 the City, in my opinion, more than himself. It's
23 interesting, you know, that the mayor-elect is going
24 to be meeting with the president tomorrow. And I
25 think some folks are trying to compare that with Eric

1 Adams. And I want to be clear, because I've always
2 been clear, you have to meet with everyone. You have
3 to try to work with everyone, including President
4 Donald Trump. I said that even when the Mayor was
5 going to meet with him, but you also have to have a
6 mayor that is going to say, "I'm going to do
7 everything I can to prevent the worst of what you're
8 trying to do to New York". And so I'm confident
9 that's what we have in Zohran Mamdani, who's going to
10 do everything he can to work with the president, with
11 the governor. But if it's going to harm New Yorkers,
12 he won't.

14 So the first step is being able to
15 clearly draw the line of what you're going to do and
16 not do.

17 The second is, as you alluded to, I think
18 there's going to be a mayor who's going to actually
19 try to work with the partners. So, there are three
20 citywide elected officials, four if you count the
21 Speaker; there are borough presidents, there are
22 council members, there are advocates who I think are
23 waiting and have been waiting for a mayor who would
24 try to work with us to see what it is that we can do
25 and how we can work together. And we had, you know, I

1 always said, if you have everybody sounding like me,
2 you probably messed up a little bit. So the fact that
3 everyone was scorching the leadership of Eric Adams
4 was just tough because he did nothing to try to work
5 with us. So, I think the first thing is any mayor
6 saying with the electeds, what can we do, how are we
7 going to do it? There is a blueprint being laid out
8 by the folks that the Comptroller spoke about, who we
9 have been working with as well—Hands off New York.
10 The sad thing about what happened is that the only
11 civil line about this happening in other cities is
12 we're in touch with some of those other cities,
13 trying to learn lessons of what went right and what
14 didn't, and how you organize on the local level and
15 empower some folks. And so having a mayor that will
16 help do that—and unlike this mayor, who's trying to
17 leave a almost \$5 billion budget hole for someone
18 else to fix, I think they're going to have a mayor
19 who will say, let's find some money the budget to
20 support those efforts, provide structure for those
21 efforts and allow advocates an ability to get some
22 funding as well to provide the services that are
23 needed.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Really appreciate
3 you being here with us today. Thank you.

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
5 much. Brad, I don't know the last time we were in a
6 council hearing together, so this is awesome. I might
7 have to get reelected because these are great digs.
8 This is not what we had when we were council members.
9 So thank you again—peace everyone.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So you're going back
11 to the 45th, is that what we're talking about?

12 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Oh, Lord, no,
13 that's not what I'm doing.

14 (LAUGHTER)

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: I don't think
16 Brad is coming back here, but we'll see.

17 (LAUGHTER)

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, thank you for
19 being here.

20 Comptroller, thank you again for that
21 great testimony. You put out a really insightful
22 report in June around the need to do more on
23 immigrant legal services. And I would love for you to
24 elaborate on that a little bit more today. You spoke
25

1
2 to it a bit in your testimony, but just a few areas
3 that I'd love for you to dig in on.

4 The New York Immigrant Family Unity
5 Project, which provides, you know, essential legal
6 representation for immigrants detained and facing
7 deportation, we've done some additional investments
8 there. Is this an area where we need to be doing
9 more? ActionNYC, or I guess they're calling it
10 Immigrant Legal Help Centers now, they no longer have
11 a presence in schools, libraries, and hospitals,
12 which is a major concern for you and me. What impact
13 do you think this is having on our ability to reach
14 and support immigrant neighbors in need? Let me pause
15 on those two for now.

16 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah, super, thank
17 you. And it's great to be here with Council Member
18 Morano and now Council Member Brewer as well.

19 So yeah, both of those are really
20 critical areas. I mean, I was proud when I was a
21 council member that we started the New York Immigrant
22 Family Unity Project under then Speaker Melissa Mark-
23 Viverito. But of course, at that time, it made sense
24 to back-end the folks who got representation to the
25 moment when you might be facing detention on, you

1 know, your asylum or deportation case. And that meant
2 on the front end, there just haven't been that many
3 resources. The one small area where I will give the
4 Adams administration credit is that they created the
5 Asylum Application Help Center when so many people
6 were arriving here. A lot of people got some pro bono
7 legal assistance to file their asylum application or
8 maybe seek special immigrant juvenile status.
9 Unfortunately, that was shut down, so there is no
10 longer what people sometimes know as the Catholic
11 Charities facility or the Asylum Application Help
12 Center. And now so many of the people who are being
13 detained at 26 Federal Plaza, or 290 Broadway, they
14 have their notice to appear. It's their very first
15 hearing in court. So they haven't even had a chance
16 to get connected to counsel. And in many cases,
17 that's what the judge says. The judge says, "Okay,
18 this is your first hearing. Thank you for coming. I'm
19 going to give you six months to find a lawyer." But
20 then, when they go out in the hallway, rather than
21 getting time to find a lawyer, they're detained
22 before they can ever find one.

24 So, more front-end assistance is needed
25 to help people know if they can get a virtual hearing

1 online, if they do get detained, to get connected to
2 someone who can file a habeas motion in federal
3 court. Most immigration attorneys have never had to
4 do that before. They know Immigration Court, which is
5 part of the executive branch, but they aren't
6 necessarily lawyers who file habeas motions in
7 federal courts. So all of that needs to happen in new
8 ways than it did before. And a big part of that is
9 exactly the outreach that you're talking about,
10 because where are people going to learn about that?
11 Well, it's precisely in libraries, in public schools,
12 where their kids are going, and the kinds of
13 institutions and community organizations that
14 immigrant New Yorkers have relationships with. But
15 unfortunately, the Adams administration has pulled
16 back the provision of services in those places.

17
18 So yes, you guys allocated \$50 million in
19 the budget. Some of that has been put into contracts,
20 and that is good. But the majority of it remaining
21 that could go back into things like what was the
22 ActionNYC deployment of resources to public
23 libraries, public schools, where there's a
24 substantial number of folks, uh, the grassroots
25 contracts to community-based organizations that speak

1 the languages and are trusted by people to get the
2 basic information—"Okay, here's how you can ask for a
3 virtual hearing." Here's what to do: make sure
4 someone has your A Number so that if you are
5 detained, you can get connected to counsel." So that
6 front-end outreach work, that's going to be done by a
7 lot of actors, most of whom are not lawyers; they
8 might be volunteers, they might be employees of a
9 nonprofit, they might be a library worker. So, they
10 need to know what to do in those cases, that kind of
11 basic Know Your Rights, and then that has to be
12 connected to additional resources on the back end,
13 so that if you are detained, how can you quickly get
14 connected? Because if they move you out of New York
15 to a different detention facility, now we, New York-
16 based lawyers, who are just licensed here and not in
17 Louisiana or wherever it is, can't bring the habeas
18 motion. So then the connection between the front-end
19 resources and the network of legal service providers,
20 that is really what the City, through the Mayor's
21 Office of Immigrant Affairs, could do, is to
22 coordinate that network more effectively.
23

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's very
25 insightful.

1
2 Relatedly, you've advised that we should
3 be doing more around training frontline workers
4 across the city of New York, those workers in our
5 hospitals and our schools, in our shelters. What do
6 you think that looks like? How do you think we should
7 be approaching providing more technical assistance
8 and support so that city workers and city-contracted
9 workers know what to do when interfacing with ICE in
10 the months to come?

11 COMPROLLER LANDER: Yeah. One person I
12 want to praise here, and I do want to talk about how
13 leadership matters, is the current school's
14 chancellor, Melissa Aviles-Ramos, who I think a lot
15 of us didn't necessarily know before, but who has
16 shown what it looks like to say our schools are going
17 to show up for our kids. But the guidance that City
18 Hall has provided is confusing to frontline workers
19 about what to do. And it's not a simple situation. If
20 you're a school safety agent and you're sitting at
21 the desk in a front of a school and an ICE agent
22 shows up and says, "I'm coming into the school," you
23 know, what you're supposed to do is say, "Do you have
24 a judicial warrant?" And if they don't, say, "You
25 can't come into the school building."

1
2 But I mean, you know, are they supposed
3 to call NYPD? Is NYPD supposed to show up and
4 reinforce and say, "You can't come into the school
5 building"? And thankfully, those interactions have
6 not yet happened in the school buildings. There have
7 been New York City students detained. But everybody
8 just needs to... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We received reports
10 last week of ICE at an afterschool program a at
11 Sunset Park School, you know, so we're getting closer
12 to these...

13 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes, absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: situations becoming
15 very...

16 COMPTROLLER LANDER: And yeah, this is a
17 good example, you know, so maybe they don't like to
18 come in the front door literally, but they're waiting
19 at the afterschool athletic facility.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's right.

21 COMPTROLLER LANDER: So, these are the
22 things that just have to get made a lot clearer to
23 school personnel, to public hospitals, to folks at
24 places like public libraries, uh, to understand the
25 situation basically.

1
2 Everyone needs to know a few things, but
3 then you need to have the quick ability to have, uh,
4 maybe a hotline so that you can quickly call and say,
5 "Here's the situation. How should I respond?"

6 And then I do think the role of NYPD here
7 is going to be critical and needs to be clarified. I
8 mean, a year ago, if we had said, "What would happen
9 if masked people come and don't say anything, don't
10 identify themselves, don't present a warrant, and
11 grab New Yorkers off the streets of our city?" We
12 would have said, "Well, that's kidnapping." And what
13 I would expect is that the NYPD would come and
14 prevent the kidnapping and not let you know-- And if
15 the kidnapers don't prove that they are, you know,
16 duly licensed federal agents and have a lawful reason
17 for the arrest to arrest them, that's kidnapping."
18 How are people supposed to know in the current
19 situation if that really even is a federal officer
20 and if they have any lawful basis for the arrest?

21 So, what are NYPD officers supposed to do
22 in that situation? We know they're not supposed to
23 participate in the civil enforcement of immigration
24 proceedings. But on Canal Street, it seems they knew
25

1 what was happening. They were there, and they just
2 stood back.

3
4 There needs to be more clarity. And what
5 I would like to see is for NYPD to make sure that
6 really is a federal law enforcement official and that
7 they have some legal basis for the detention. If they
8 do, and it's out in public and not on City
9 facilities, then they can't intervene. But what if
10 it's not? What if that's a U.S. citizen? What if
11 they've got the wrong person? What if they're
12 violating the law?

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Even more
14 troublingly, it appeared that the NYPD received
15 advance notice of what happened on Canal Street...

16 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: and failed to
18 intervene or to protect New Yorkers. I...

19 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Including-- And I
20 think four U.S. citizens that were detained on that
21 day; therefore, with zero legal basis.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I did not formally
23 recognize the former chair of this committee, but it
24 is always a pleasure to have Gale Brewer here with
25 us. It's good to see you, Gale.

1
2 And I have one or two more questions for
3 the Comptroller. I'm going to pass it over to Council
4 Member Morano, and I'm going to get some questions
5 from somebody on Zoom as well. Go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you, Mr.
7 Comptroller, for your testimony and for appearing
8 today.

9 I represent Staten Island South Shore,
10 which is a community, as you know, that values public
11 safety, fiscal discipline, and fairness. And I have a
12 few questions about how your office views federal
13 involvement and what the fiscal implications are for
14 New York City.

15 Since you guys were focusing on immigrant
16 and sanctuary policies, let me follow up on that. Has
17 your office analyzed the financial impact of refusing
18 to cooperate with federal immigration detainers,
19 particularly for individuals with serious criminal
20 records? Is the City spending more money holding and
21 processing people we could remove at the federal
22 government's expense?

23 COMPTROLLER LANDER: So we have taken a
24 look at this in a document we called "Facts, Not
25 Fear." And what I'll say is, you know, New York

1 sanctuary laws do permit cooperation with ICE where
2 someone has been convicted of a serious or violent
3 offense. In the vast majority of the detentions that
4 we have seen during the Trump administration, people
5 have no criminal records whatsoever, much less for a
6 serious or violent offense. And so what's happening
7 is arresting people who are working, who are parents.
8 And the evidence is pretty clear for New York City
9 that the value of being a diverse and immigrant city,
10 you know, is \$61 billion in taxes that immigrant New
11 Yorkers paid last year. There are also national
12 studies that show that sanctuary jurisdictions are
13 safer, on average, and have fewer property and
14 violent crimes per 10,000 people. I think it's 35
15 fewer crimes per 10,000 people and actually has a
16 higher median income, higher tax base, and higher
17 employment levels than non-sanctuary jurisdictions.

18
19 So while I agree with you that where
20 someone has committed and been convicted of a serious
21 or violent offense, that is a place where the law
22 allows some cooperation. The overwhelming majority of
23 what is happening here does not fall into that.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: What is the cost
3 to New York taxpayers when the City obstructs federal
4 removal efforts, and those individuals then reoffend?

5 COMPROLLER LANDER: Well, that has
6 happened in very, very few cases, so I don't know
7 that you could even tally the cost. The vast majority
8 of people who are being abducted, detained, and
9 deported have no criminal offense whatsoever. And
10 interestingly, in one of the very few cases that the
11 Trump administration pointed out, it was an
12 individual who had actually been arrested, was in--
13 not in New York, but was in, I can't remember which
14 state it was, prison. They were then deported, and
15 then they wound up back in the country and
16 recommitted. So honestly, it would have been better
17 if that detainer had not been honored, if that person
18 had served the sentence in the state court for the
19 crime that they had been duly and legally convicted
20 of. Like that's what the rule of law looks like, when
21 state and local law enforcement investigate crimes,
22 not civil immigration.

23 Right now, as the Chair said, all of
24 these resources that should be going to public
25 safety, to trafficking, to federal law enforcement

1
2 are being diverted to civil immigration enforcement
3 in ways that make us less safe.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Obviously, I think
5 most of us are hoping that when the president and the
6 mayor-elect sit down on Friday, they can get to a
7 point of cooperation that works well for the City,
8 works well for federal and city taxpayers. If they
9 can't, let's say, what is the dollar amount of
10 federal funds currently at risk if the City continues
11 to position itself in open conflict with the
12 administration? I'm thinking in terms of transit
13 grants, in terms of Homeland Security funds, in terms
14 of NYCHA and HUD, FEMA, or other federal law
15 enforcement grants.

16 COMPTROLLER LANDER: So out of the City's
17 budget of roughly \$115 billion, roughly \$10 billion
18 is federal funding—so a little less than 10%, but
19 significant—that's school lunch money, that's
20 Federal Housing vouchers. Now, those aren't things
21 that should be able-- The federal government is not
22 legally authorized to take one city's money. If the
23 federal government wants to cut food stamps, that
24 might be cruel, but if you do it to everyone, that at
25 least has a legal basis.

1
2 You know, but yes, they came for the \$18
3 billion that is the Gateway Tunnel and the Second
4 Avenue Subway. New Yorkers aren't yet relying on
5 those daily, but we have significant exposure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Lastly, just to
7 touch upon the National Guard situation, has your
8 office conducted any independent analysis to
9 determine whether federal deployments have actually
10 harmed public safety or the economy in other cities
11 where we've already seen that?

12 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Interesting, we have
13 not done that. That one might be an interesting
14 analysis to conduct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

16 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,
18 Council Member Morano. We may be getting some
19 questions from Council Member Vernikov, but I will
20 just ask one or two more in the interim.

21 I'm particularly concerned about the
22 utilization of our hospitals. Our public hospital
23 system has been the place where undocumented New
24 Yorkers access essential healthcare for generations.
25 It's painfully obvious that if immigrants are not

1 accessing the health care that they need, it makes
2 the entirety of communities less healthy and safe.
3 What additional step-- and, you know, you highlighted
4 the Chancellor's clear communication around, you
5 know, our schools being a haven for all New Yorkers—
6 the communications from our hospital system have
7 actually been a little bit more muddy, or gray, uh, a
8 little less crisp.

9
10 What do you think we need to see from our
11 hospitals to ensure that New Yorkers know that this
12 is a safe place to access the care that they need?

13 COMPROLLER LANDER: Yeah, this is a great
14 point, and it's obviously true for Health +
15 Hospitals, for our public hospital system, but our
16 private hospitals as well have emergency rooms. In
17 many cases, people go there because that's the
18 closest place to go if you've got a, you know, a
19 life-saving incident. And yes, I think what the
20 incoming administration could do is convene those
21 hospital networks, uh, beginning with New York Health
22 + Hospitals, but including our private hospital
23 networks as well, and make clear what New York
24 sanctuary laws, you know, say, which is that you
25 don't ask people their immigration status when

1 they're seeking healthcare. And for the city
2 hospitals in particular, if an ICE agent showed up,
3 just like at the front door of a school, they would
4 need a judicial warrant to be allowed in. And that
5 needs to be clear to all providers, so that, yes,
6 just like it's critical if you have witnessed a crime
7 to be comfortable coming forward to report it without
8 fear of deportation. If you are sick, if you have a
9 communicable disease, or if you have a life-saving
10 injury, you've got to be able to go to that hospital
11 without worrying about whether it will lead to your
12 deportation.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: One of the things
15 that I've been intrigued by is that in Los Angeles
16 Mayor Bass has coordinated philanthropic support and
17 cash assistance for families that have been ripped
18 apart or individuals who are unable to go to work as
19 a result of ICE raids and the National Guard
20 presence. And just wondering, is this something we
21 should be exploring? Do you know much about what's
22 been happening there? Any thoughts on that?

23 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah, we looked into
24 it a little, and we actually, I mean, this is one
25 other area where there was some coordination between

1 the Adams administration and my office. I worked with
2 then Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom to convene
3 philanthropy, and they raised about \$5 million to go
4 to some of the especially grassroots and frontline
5 groups, like the group that was showing up at Port
6 Authority originally called the Artisan Activist
7 Collective, which has now become Rock New York. Brand
8 new group that responded to this moment, and of
9 course, is eligible for public dollars. But you know,
10 when you're a brand new group, especially if you're
11 an immigrant-led, relatively small, philanthropic
12 organization, philanthropic dollars can be a much
13 more realistic way to get that first grant to start
14 providing the kind of grassroots support on the
15 ground.
16

17 So that network exists, the New York
18 Community Trust and Robin Hood Foundation were two
19 anchors of it. I know that there's a whole set of
20 foundations that are funding the transition effort
21 for the incoming Mamdani administration. I think this
22 would be one great thing for them to think about
23 using resources to do. Again, what's beautiful is if
24 we've got coordination, like you're leading today,
25 but also as the mayor-elect, can then direct, in

1 partnership with the governor and the attorney
2 general, to get our arms around the whole network.
3 Because for those folks, you know, to put folks in
4 libraries is a good use of City dollars. But for
5 grassroots immigrant community-based organizations to
6 speak the languages of their neighborhood and who can
7 show up at that afterschool program, that's more
8 likely to be a grassroots group affiliated with the
9 local church or a soup kitchen. And those are perfect
10 places for philanthropic dollars to help provide
11 support.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's very helpful.
14 And, you've, I think, spent about as much time as
15 anybody at 26 Federal Plaza over the last number of
16 months, who isn't providing legal assistance. Could
17 you just advise on what you've been seeing recently,
18 any trends, shifts, anything notable that New Yorkers
19 should be aware of?

20 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Yeah, first, I do
21 want to praise the folks who have been spending a lot
22 more time than I have there, who are those legal
23 service providers like Allison Cutler and Ben Remy
24 from NYLAG, and the lawyers from Make the Road. If
25 you wanted some detailed kind of point of view, the

1
2 FAQ podcast that Allison and Ben did a couple a
3 months or two ago really digs into what's going on,
4 and I think provides-- because it does keep shifting.

5 I will say that in recent weeks, the pace
6 of detentions appears to have dropped a little. We
7 don't have good data, but just-- now it's still
8 taking place, and there are still some awful
9 abductions, and some of the folks that were the most
10 violent have been put back on the job. Now that may
11 be because they're putting more time out into
12 communities. We saw what happened in Sunset Park,
13 Uptown in Morningside Heights, and out on Canal
14 Street. It seems like more resources are starting to
15 go out into neighborhoods. But it is continuing to
16 take place that, you know, after people's hearings,
17 there are detentions, after some check-ins, there are
18 detentions. I mentioned Joel's case, which was a
19 check-in on a siege case, Special Immigrant Juvenile
20 Status. There was no reason for that detention. This
21 is a place where there's no good transparency, so we
22 don't yet have all the numbers that will help
23 evaluate it. And they seem to be moving people more
24 quickly out of a Federal Plaza, either over to
25

1
2 Delaney Hall in New Jersey or to other facilities
3 around the country.

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: With that, unless
5 anything else from you, Frank, you're good.

6 I really want to thank you for being
7 here...(CROSS-TALK)

8 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thanks so much for
9 convening this hearing...

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And just your really
11 exceptional leadership on this issue. It's been, I
12 think, heartening to New Yorkers across the city.

13 COMPTROLLER LANDER: Thank you very much.
14 I appreciate you convening this hearing. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Appreciate it.

16 We are now going to shift to members of
17 the public. I have to read this statement--I got it
18 here--I have to read a statement that I will try to
19 read as fast as I possibly can, but they tell me I
20 have to do it.

21 I now open the hearing for public
22 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
23 is a formal government proceeding and that decorum
24 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
25 the public shall remain silent at all times.

1 the National Security Leaders for America, I may
2 have-- is it National Security Leaders for America
3 for both? I apologize. We have Katie Bishop from Five
4 Borough Veterans, and Michael Matos from Five Borough
5 Veterans as well. Thank you all for joining us.
6

7 We can go in whatever order you prefer,
8 or--Commissioner, Former Brigadier General. Whatever
9 order you prefer, thank you.

10 MR. JASON FORRESTER: Good morning,
11 Chairman Restler, Council Members, Mr. Lander, if
12 you're still here. I'm Jason Forrester, and I'm
13 representing National Security Leaders for America, a
14 bipartisan, all-volunteer organization of national
15 security leaders established in 2021 to counter
16 growing threats to our democracy.

17 Today, I will address the dangerous
18 possibility of deploying National Guard troops for
19 domestic policing in New York City.

20 Before my presentation, allow me to offer
21 some relevant background information: Starting almost
22 20 years ago, I was an advocate for the National
23 Guard in the context of their heavy utilization
24 during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Later, I was
25 appointed by President Obama to serve as a Deputy

1
2 Assistant Secretary of Defense, where I developed
3 manpower and personnel policies for the Guard and
4 Reserve.

5 Now to the heart of my testimony:

6 Misusing the National Guard to police our
7 streets is dangerous to our democracy, ineffective at
8 reducing crime, and potentially unlawful.

9 First, it's dangerous. Using the Guard
10 for policing blurs the line between military and
11 civilian authority. Our troops swear to defend the
12 nation against external threats, not to patrol our
13 neighborhoods. A recent Pentagon memo establishes
14 something deeply troubling: a permanent, federally
15 monitored civil defense, quick reaction force, that
16 has 500 personnel per state, identical riot gear, and
17 monthly federal reporting. This weakens the authority
18 of governors and normalizes what should be
19 exceptional.

20 Federally commanded armed soldiers on
21 city streets chill free speech, intimidate residents,
22 and discourage civic engagement. When we normalize
23 such patrols at home, we weaken the trust that keeps
24 our democracy strong.

1
2 Second, it's ineffective. Guard units are
3 not trained for community-oriented police work. Also,
4 the data doesn't support deployment since New York
5 City is experiencing declining violent crime rates.
6 Effectively addressing crime requires well-funded
7 civilian solutions. Deploying troops ignores root
8 causes and risks making matters worse.

9 Third, it's potentially Unlawful. The
10 Posse Comitatus Act makes it a crime to use the
11 military as a domestic police force. The President
12 can federalize the Guard under the Insurrection Act,
13 but only for narrow conditions. Ordinary street crime
14 doesn't meet this threshold. A federal judge in Los
15 Angeles found Guard deployment "improper" because
16 there was no rebellion, and civilian law enforcement
17 was capable of handling the situation. In addition,
18 cross-state deployments without a governor's consent
19 violate state sovereignty.

20 In conclusion, domestic use of the
21 military must not outpace the law. New York City
22 deserves real public safety solutions—not a military
23 occupation.

24 I urge you to support law-bound,
25 governor-led actions. Prioritize de-escalation over

1 coercion. Demand transparency and oversight. The
2 National Guard should defend the nation, not patrol
3 its neighborhoods. Thank you very much.

4
5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It means a great
6 deal to have you here today. And, thank you for that
7 really compelling testimony.

8 DR. LOREE SUTTON: Chair Restler and
9 distinguished Committee Members, Community Leaders,
10 Advocates, and Friends:

11 Thank you all for being here—and for your
12 leadership and commitment to making New York City a
13 place with space and grace for all to claim lives of
14 purpose, passion, dignity, and respect.

15 I speak today wearing several hats,
16 having served as the founding Commissioner for the
17 New York City Department of Veterans' Services, as a
18 combat veteran with nearly 30 years of military
19 service, as a psychiatrist, and as an advocate for
20 accelerating access to breakthrough treatments for
21 PTSD. As a member of the National Security Leaders
22 for America (NSL4A), a bi-partisan, all-volunteer
23 organization of senior national security leaders,
24 established in 2021 to counter growing threats to our
25

democratic institutions, constitutional norms, and
the rule of law.

The recent election should remind
Americans of what New York has always embodied:
resilience through diversity. Mayor-Elect Mamdani
cannot govern alone; he'll require stable,
cooperative intergovernmental relationships to govern
effectively as well as alliances that span
neighborhoods, faiths, and political tribes. He'll
need a civic resilience strategy to prove that
democracy still works when citizens choose
cooperation over chaos; that New Yorkers can mobilize
to protect the city from federal overreach.

Ensuring that federal authorities adhere
to longstanding norms is a bipartisan imperative,
regardless of who occupies the White House. The
principles at stake are constitutional, not partisan.
Federal overreach is far from theoretical—we have
already seen the opening moves in cities across the
nation, including improper use of the National Guard
for routine policing. This dangerous overreach
undercuts military readiness, flouts the rule of law,
and does nothing to address the root causes of crime.

• *Adopt a "Truth in 30" Communication*

Standard—

Rumor spreads fear. Fear fuels authoritarianism. New York should commit to releasing verified information within 30 minutes of any viral rumor, federal action, or safety threat. False claims about raids, curfews, or unrest would meet immediate, multilingual facts through Notify NYC, 3-1-1, municipal social media, and community radio.

• *Rebuild trust, confidence, and cohesion—*

After years of political whiplash and venal corruption, New Yorkers need proof that government can function under extreme duress without capitulating or collapsing. If New York governs with calm, clarity, and resolve, it can model civic resilience and sustainable democracy for the entire country.

In closing, New York is entering a struggle that is larger than one city and larger than one mayor. It is nothing less than a test of whether American democracy can withstand a federal government

1 willing to intimidate and harm its own citizens.

2 Recent federal actions risk undermining the normal,

3 cooperative relationships between federal and

4 municipal authorities. Such actions, if expanded,

5 could interfere with normal governance processes and

6 undermine confidence in election administration. But

7 New York has a chance to prove the opposite: that

8 civic resilience is still possible, that governance

9 can outlast grievance. Rising above the din of

10 politics as usual, New Yorkers must meet the demands

11 of this moment—together, with unwavering strength and

12 shared purpose.

13
14 Thank you for your leadership in

15 addressing the critical challenges. I look forward to

16 your comments and questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

18 MR. MICHAEL MATOS: Good morning, Chair

19 Restler, Council Committee Members. My name is

20 Michael Matos, and I serve as the President of Five

21 Borough Veterans. This independent organization

22 advocates for New Yorkers who swore an oath to

23 defend the Constitution and their loved ones.

24 We are here because federal overreach is

25 not merely a policy dispute, but a direct threat to

1 our safety and our democracy. As a Coast Guard
2 veteran, I know that credible authority demands
3 transparency. That is why the use of masked,
4 unidentified federal agents and unmarked vehicles
5 is unacceptable.
6

7 When force is used without names, faces,
8 or accountability, it does not secure our streets. It
9 undermines trust, endangers the public, and damages
10 the reputation of every federal officer who serves
11 with integrity.

12 Deploying the National Guard, framed by
13 the president as a response to crime and social
14 unrest, has serious implications for our communities.
15 Guard members swear a dual oath to state and nation.
16 They are also our neighbors, coworkers, and loved
17 ones. Suggesting they be used against their own
18 communities risks crossing boundaries signaled by the
19 Posse Comitatus Act. And forces them into an
20 impossible ethical dilemma.

21 No service member should be asked to
22 stand against the very people they are charged with
23 defending. Ongoing federal threats to arrest and
24 deport Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani raised deep
25 concerns about the misuse of federal authority.

1 Targeting a naturalized citizen, elected by New
2 Yorkers, sets a dangerous precedent, using
3 citizenship as a weapon against political opposition.
4 Such actions erode confidence in our electoral system
5 and call into question the security of citizenship
6 itself—striking at the principles that those of us
7 who've served have promised to uphold.

8
9 Today's moment calls for courage and
10 responsibility. The constitutional principles that
11 safeguard the city and the integrity of our
12 democratic process all depend on active leadership.
13 Veterans from all Five Boroughs remain committed to
14 protecting our people, just as we did in uniform. The
15 question that now stands before those in office is
16 whether they will demonstrate the same resolve in
17 upholding the values that anchor our city and our
18 Constitution. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

20 MS. KATIE BISHOP: Good morning, Council
21 Member Restler. Good morning, Council Member
22 Morano. Good morning, General.

23 My name is Katie Bishop. I served in the
24 Marine Corps from 2007 to 2011. I moved to New York
25 about a decade ago, went to Queens College, and

1 graduated about eight years ago. I serve on
2 Community Board 6. We've shared some space. I own a
3 business in Gowanus, and I am deeply invested in my
4 city and our city.

5
6 To echo what all of my friends here at
7 the table have said, this is a gross overreach, the
8 idea of sending National Guard troops to New York
9 City. It undermines what we swore an oath to
10 defend. We swore an oath to defend the
11 Constitution, to protect our nation from enemies
12 foreign and domestic. And we should not be using
13 these resources on our city streets. Part of what
14 sets America apart is the fact that we don't use
15 our military, our active duty military, on our
16 domestic soil.

17 I also want to speak, Council Member
18 Morano, about the allocation of resources. I would
19 think that the amount of money being spent on ICE
20 in the States is a misallocation of resources. I
21 think that this is addressing a symptom of a larger
22 problem. I would posit that putting federal
23 resources into bringing more education to our
24 communities, bringing fair housing to our
25 communities, and making sure people are fed are

1 things that prevent crimes. When people have a
2 house, when people have food, when people have
3 stability in their lives, this is what keeps us
4 safe. I don't think having masked people in our
5 streets is really preventing crime. It's merely
6 responding to it.
7

8 I second everything said by these
9 friends, and I look forward to any further
10 conversation. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.
12 I really want to thank each of you for such
13 thoughtful testimony and, most of all, for your
14 service to our nation and the courage and clarity
15 of your words that you shared with us here today.

16 Council Member Morano, do you have any
17 questions you'd like to ask?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: A couple of
19 brief-- Thank you, everybody, for your testimony.

20 A couple of brief questions specifically
21 for General Sutton. General Sutton, thank you again
22 for decades of service to the nation and to New
23 York City's veterans. I appreciate the intent
24 behind your testimony. I have a couple of questions
25 about the practical framework of how few aspects

1 would go, specifically the "Truth in 30" standard,
2 which calls for verified information within 30
3 minutes of a major rumor or threat.
4

5 How do we ensure accuracy when agencies
6 are pressured to respond so quickly in situations
7 that might be fast moving, incomplete, or still
8 under investigation? Obviously, you, having headed
9 a city agency, are probably better prepared to
10 answer this than most.

11 DR: SUTTON: Yeah, no, thank you for your
12 question, Council Member Morano, and for all that
13 you've done for veterans over the years.

14 The "Truth in 30" tool is really drawn
15 from Emergency Management. This has been used by
16 FEMA. It's been adopted in many places. Perhaps not
17 "Truth in 30"—that is something that New York City
18 could pioneer. But I think what is critical, and
19 what has been learned in city after city and crisis
20 after crisis, not just today's crises but over
21 time, is that communication has to be clear, it has
22 to be credible, and it has to be really actionable.
23 People have to know that even when things seem
24 absolutely dire that there is a source that they
25 can trust with credible communication. If New York

1 City could stand up a platform like 311 in all five
2 boroughs in the time that they did it, I am
3 confident—I am confident—that we can do it here
4 and do it in a way that supports those New Yorkers
5 who are afraid already but who are facing
6 uncertainty, who are fearful, who see masked
7 agents, who see armed personnel, and know that
8 something's not right, and who deserve accurate,
9 credible, and quick information.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: You've emphasized
12 that New Yorkers need proof that government can
13 function under extreme duress without collapsing.
14 In your assessment, which specific city systems are
15 currently most vulnerable under stress, and how
16 does your proposed framework directly strengthen
17 those systems?

18 DR. LOREE SUTTON: Sure. I think that
19 we've seen over these last several years, Emergency
20 Management certainly has been tasked with the
21 migrant situation and the budget implications, and
22 all that goes with that. I think our legal-- It's
23 already been said our Legal Department is grossly
24 understaffed. I think when you look at the (TIMER)
25 staffing changes within the military, the Judge

1 Advocate Generals have been hollowed out—Inspector
2 Generals. There is a real paucity of resources,
3 both at the local, state, and federal levels, that
4 have to be addressed. That's why the Civic
5 Resilience Coalition that I suggested would be a
6 mayor-led coalition that would bring together
7 leaders from public agencies at the city and state
8 level, leaders from labor and business, and
9 immigration networks, education, but really being
10 an all-hands-on-deck. Talk about a quick reaction
11 force, this could be a really civic tool that could
12 build confidence, build trust, and sure up those
13 agencies and resources that are really under
14 duress.

15
16 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council
18 Member Morano, for such thoughtful questions. He
19 was just recently appointed to this committee, and
20 we are very happy to have him.

21 I'd like to ask questions, I think for
22 the whole panel, but maybe I'll start first by
23 directing them to the former Deputy Assistant
24 Secretary. You mentioned in your testimony that
25 guard units are not trained for community-oriented

1
2 police work. Are there risks or concerns you have
3 about safety in New York City as a result of these
4 deployments and the similar deployments that have
5 happened all across the country?

6 MR. JASON FORRESTER: There certainly are
7 examples in our history where the utilization of
8 the National Guard for policing purposes has gone
9 awry. The most prominent example is 1970 at Kent
10 State, which is obviously a well-known unfortunate
11 example.

12 I think it comes back to what you said a
13 second ago, Mr. Chairman. If you're not trained for
14 the mission, then you're gonna have a hard time
15 successfully carrying out the mission.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You mean when I was
17 quoting you? What I said a second ago, you know,
18 just to be clear. (LAUGHS)

19 MR. JASON FORRESTER: (LAUGHS) I do
20 believe that to reiterate my testimony, if they're
21 not well trained for it, then that could easily end
22 up in situations where you have a dangerous
23 situation with the use of force by soldiers who are
24 not properly equipped for it. I mean, I'll give you
25 one quick example: when you look at Washington,

1 D.C., in terms of how the National Guard has been
2 used there, one of the most common descriptions of
3 how Washington D.C. or how the National Guard
4 troops have been used in Washington, D.C., has been
5 for things such as protecting storefronts, picking
6 up trash, and doing lawn care. Which sort of
7 boggles the mind. But I think it partly gets at...

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Lawn care? Really?

10 MR. JASON FORRESTER: Yeah, really, lawn
11 care.

12 I think it partly gets at the general
13 subject of—you don't want to put people in a
14 situation where there could be this kind of
15 friction between the population and the armed
16 element.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: To play devil's
18 advocate a little bit, Governor Hochul, and
19 governors before her, have deployed National Guard
20 into our subways and in other areas in the city
21 when there's been a concern about public safety,
22 and when those deployments have occurred, you've
23 heard questions raised about whether these people
24 are trained for this kind of work? Is this actually
25 beneficial for deterring criminal acts?

1
2 What's happening is that a different
3 approach than what's being considered here? And why
4 is this a more concerning model that the Trump
5 administration has kind of activated?

6 MR. JASON FORRESTER: It is. It is
7 categorically different. And to get into U.S. Law
8 for a second, Title 32 of U.S. Law allows for
9 governors to mobilize troops for different
10 contingencies within their state. Title X, on the
11 other hand, is the utilization under federal
12 purposes. So, on the surface, it is something that
13 I think gives a lot of people pause, as you were
14 saying a second ago, regarding troops being in
15 situations that we are not accustomed to having
16 them.

17 The utilization of those troops under
18 the governor's authority, which I would strongly
19 emphasize that piece because this is not what we're
20 talking about in terms of the possible federal use
21 of forces, for instance, through this quick
22 reaction force as one example. But the utilization
23 of those troops, as anyone who's gone through Penn
24 Station or Grand Central, you know, these troops
25 are providing presence. They're not providing--

1 they're not even going into bags or doing, you
2 know, frisking people, they're standing there in
3 case something goes quite haywire.

4
5 So the bottom line is Title 32, it's
6 under the governance authority. It's categorically
7 different from Title X. And how the governor
8 decides to use those forces is certainly a subject
9 for public debate.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to ask
11 the panel if there's anything you all would like to
12 elaborate on further on this topic?

13 DR. LOREE SUTTON: You know, just to build
14 on what Jason's been saying here, you know, after
15 9/11, New York stood up. Task Force Empire Shield,
16 and those are the troops that we see in the
17 subways. Those troops are trained to coordinate
18 with local NYPD and state law enforcement. What
19 happens when troops are federalized and thrown into
20 a crisis for a law enforcement situation, the
21 federal forces use, you know, they apply different
22 policies, federal policies, they have different
23 tools. You risk using federal intelligence tools,
24 for example, of surveillance and other capacities
25 with troops who have not been trained, and for

1
2 whom-- bad things can happen. And as has been said
3 across the panel here, this is not what troops have
4 signed up for. There's been anecdotal evidence to
5 this point. We'll have to see over time. I've heard
6 of a number of troops who are making decisions
7 around the kitchen table about whether to stay in
8 uniform. That's both the active and the reserve
9 National Guard forces. I've heard of, you know,
10 very high-ranking folks turning their back away
11 from a promotion to Flag Rank, Admiral, or General.
12 This is a tremendous waste of resources. If this is
13 allowed to continue, I think that, uh-- Well, let's
14 just be clear, cities should not be used as
15 military training sites. Nothing good comes from
16 that. Americans, New Yorkers are not the enemy.

17 And, finally, we cannot have National
18 Guard Troops mobilized and deployed to do routine
19 law enforcement. Their role is, as we saw after
20 Superstorm Sandy, as we saw for the epidemic, the
21 pandemic, as we've seen with the infrastructure
22 needs here in a city like New York City, the
23 hospitals, the power grids, the water plants, this
24 is what our national guardsmen are trained to do.
25 It's what we do. We live to serve. And I think New

1
2 York City is in a good position to uphold the rule
3 of law to protect constitutional safeguards, and to
4 do so in a way that makes it clear in the New York
5 way—We don't do fear. We do planning. We do
6 preparedness, we do protection.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah.

8 DR. LOREE SUTTON: And, you know, if we can
9 protect the rule of law here, we can protect it anywhere.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Very well said, thank
11 you.

12 Mr. Matos, do you want to add something?

13 MR. MICHAEL MATOS: One small note, just to
14 give context. So our constituency does make up of members
15 in the National Guard who, at this present moment, feel
16 they don't have a voice because they're in service.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

18 MR. MICHAEL MATOS: So that's why I'm here to
19 speak on their behalf. A lot of these folks, especially
20 lower enlisted, are concerned that as the Trump
21 administration and federalization come into scope,
22 they're trying to figure out, "Am I going to be used
23 against my own communities? Am I going to be used against
24 my own family in my own neighborhood?" And that's a very
unfortunate situation for us to be in.

25 You know, I joined the military, 18 years
old, right out of high school. And all I wanted to do was

1
2 give back to my community and protect those folks that I
3 care about the most. I can't imagine being in those shoes
4 now, where they're now wondering, "Am I going to be able
5 to protect them or will I be used against them?" And
6 that's why we are here today to ensure that this doesn't
7 happen. So, thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Incredibly powerful.

9 I had one final question before I let you
10 all go, and I am just so grateful for your time and your
11 expertise here today.

12 Vice President Vance has stated that the
13 Trump administration is considering the kind of
14 utilization of the Insurrection Act of 1807 to get around
15 some of the recent court orders that have been issued so
16 far to place limitations on how the National Guard can be
17 activated.

18 Any suggestions for how New York should be
19 prepared to respond to that that you'd like to advise on?
20 And if you wouldn't mind, just...

21 MR. JASON FORRESTER: I'll keep it short. I
22 would start by saying that we are-- the conditions are
23 not met for us to utilize the Insurrection Act. We do not
24 have the kind of lawlessness that would merit using this
25 element of law.

DR. LOREE SUTTON: I would also say that, uh,
what's going to be critical going forward is to maintain
transparency, to maintain accurate communication. That's

1 why I suggested the "Truth in 30" tool; to convene a
2 Civic Resilience Coalition, and to demand, citywide,
3 we as leaders must provide, *we must provide*,
4 transparency, accountability. There must be legal
5 resources to both protect individuals and families as
6 well as to protect the institutions and the
7 provisions of the Constitution. And we have to have
8 After Action Reports, independent, that evaluate the
9 use of force. New Yorkers need to know what the rules
10 of force are. It has to be independent. It has to be,
11 in terms of the evaluation, there has to be
12 transparency and accountability. And to the extent
13 that New York does what New York has long done, and
14 that is rise up in the face of overwhelming
15 challenge, I am confident that we can do this again.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I am once again just
18 incredibly grateful for each of your services to our
19 country and for the courage and the clarity of your
20 convictions that you've articulated today. I
21 certainly appreciate it, and I really want to just
22 thank each of you for being with us, Mr. Forrester,
23 former General Sutton, Mr. Mantos, and Ms. Bishop.
24 Thank you each. Really appreciate it. Thank you so
25 much.

1
2 We have two more panels, which may
3 stretch into three, so we really appreciate
4 everybody's patience.

5 We now invite Quinn Raymond from Protect
6 Democracy, a former constituent. We still love you
7 anyway. David Moss from the Legal Defense Fund,
8 Deborah Lee from the Legal Aid Society, and Susan
9 Lerner from Common Cause. Even when people leave the
10 33rd Council District, they're allowed to testify.
11 You know, maybe you could move back. You could move
12 back.

13 MR. QUINN RAYMOND: It was heartbreaking.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You all can go in
15 whatever order you all feel so moved.

16 MR. QUINN RAYMOND: All right, I'll get us
17 started.

18 It's really good to see everyone here. My
19 name is Quinn Raymond. I grew up in the East Village
20 and currently reside in Council Member Hanif's
21 district in the North Slope. Sorry. I'm a Policy
22 Advocate at Protect Democracy, a national, cross-
23 ideological nonprofit dedicated to defeating the
24 authoritarian threat. Our experts use litigation,
25 advocacy, research, and technology to stop the

1 consolidation of power, defend dissent, protect our
2 elections, and build a thriving multi-party
3 democracy. Some of our work includes securing a
4 judicial order in Chicago to protect protesters and
5 the press from unconstitutional and excessive force
6 by DHS officers, successfully advocating for both
7 federal and state laws that can improve our
8 democracy, and, more locally, suing the Trump
9 administration to challenge the unlawful cancellation
10 of \$400 million in research funding for Colombia.
11

12 To address the imminent threat of federal
13 overreach into our city, I will highlight three areas
14 of focus for your consideration:

15 1. *Coordination And Solidarity Between State and*
16 *Local Governments, Civic Groups, and Protest*
17 *Movements—*

18 This coordination and solidarity were critical
19 in Chicago, where we've seen major progress by
20 local leaders pushing back on federal
21 intrusion. We're proud to be a part of that
22 effort, and we're glad to see the groundwork
23 being laid here by the Hands Off New York City
24 Coalition and other groups. But in a city of
25 our scale and political culture, unity is not

1 a foregone conclusion. So expanding this
2 coalition will require communication,
3 patience, empathy, and above all else, a
4 broader set of unconventional alliances.
5 Leadership from the Council can be critical in
6 ensuring that everyone, from business to labor
7 to houses of worship, understands we have a
8 shared interest in protecting a free, open,
9 and thriving New York from federal abuse.

10
11 *2. Sustained and Unified Commitment to First*
12 *Amendment Expression—*

13 Local law enforcement can and should be a
14 critical partner here. They should take the
15 lead in facilitating peaceful protest and, as
16 they did with the No Kings March, express
17 support for those peacefully exercising First
18 Amendment rights. The NYPD can also affirm,
19 plainly and repeatedly, its ability to
20 maintain public safety and clarify that
21 federal intrusion would make us less safe, not
22 more.

23 *3. State Laws Need to Be Updated Quickly to*
24 *Reflect Current and Incoming Threats—*
25

1
2 Although this is a city hearing, state law can
3 play a critical role in building resilience
4 against federal abuses. Your voice will be
5 essential in encouraging Albany to prioritize
6 safeguards as soon as possible.

7 We respectfully request that you consider
8 passing resolutions of support for two
9 priority bills:

10 • Number one is Senate Bill 8500, also known
11 as the New York Civil Rights Act, which
12 establishes a private civil cause of action
13 for the deprivation of rights under the US
14 Constitution, allowing for state lawsuits
15 against federal agents who engage in violent
16 and otherwise unconstitutional conduct
17 against New Yorkers.

18 • Number two is Senate Bill 8533, which
19 prohibits troops from other states from
20 entering New York without the permission of
21 the governor unless they've been
22 federalized. Many other states already have
23 this protection.

1
2 Thank you for your time today. Protect
3 Democracy stands ready to work with you and your
4 colleagues on these many fronts.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Before we continue,
6 I just have to take a moment to acknowledge that we
7 have been joined by the great Council Member from
8 Bushwick, Jennifer Gutiérrez.

9 MS. DEBORAH LEE: Good morning, or...still
10 morning...

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Still morning,
12 barely.

13 MS. DEBORAH LEE: Good morning, okay.

14 Good morning, my name is Deborah Lee, and
15 I am the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law
16 Unit at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). Thank you, Chair
17 Restler, for your leadership and for the opportunity
18 to testify today. Legal Aid is grateful for your
19 steadfast support of programs like the New York
20 Immigrant Family Unity Project that recognize that
21 noncitizens are the foundation and fabric of New York
22 City, and that we are lesser when noncitizens' rights
23 are threatened.

24 Today, the greatest threat facing
25 noncitizens is mandatory detention without the

1 possibility of bond. Recent federal actions,
2 including the Laken Riley Act, Board of Immigration
3 Appeals precedent decisions, and policy memorandum,
4 have dramatically expanded who is subject to
5 detention, all with the same aim: Detain and deport as
6 many non-citizens as this federal administration can.
7 When a loved one is detained, families go days
8 without knowing where they are, conditions are
9 inhumane, and many non-citizens are coerced into
10 abandoning their cases and requesting deportation.
11 When someone is detained, the families they leave
12 behind in our city will likely never see them again.

13
14 For many, the only viable path to release
15 is through habeas petitions. The need is
16 overwhelming. We desperately need a deep investment
17 to build our capacity to fight in our federal courts
18 against this administration and their unlawful
19 targeting of non-citizen New Yorkers.

20 We at Legal Aid are representing detained
21 non-citizens both in Immigration Court and federal
22 court proceedings, as well as training up staff
23 across our organization, and pushing out Know Your
24 Rights resources to educate community members. But
25 we, like others advocating on behalf of non-citizen

1 New Yorkers, need more support to meet this daunting
2 moment. With the election of Zoran Mamdani as the
3 next mayor of New York City, we are expecting
4 redoubled efforts by the Trump administration to
5 target the city for immigration enforcement. Federal
6 militarization will have devastating ripple effects.
7 People will be too afraid to leave their homes,
8 access medical care, ride the subway, go to work, or
9 even buy food for themselves and their families. This
10 is not just a legal crisis; it is a humanitarian one.
11 Communities must know their rights, where to turn for
12 help, and how to stay safe in the face of these
13 aggressive tactics.

14
15 ICE raids are already happening
16 throughout the city, on Canal Street in Corona, in
17 Sunset Park in Bensonhurst. These actions and the
18 promise of dramatic escalations by this federal
19 administration in the days, weeks, and months to come
20 threaten all our civil liberties.

21 Alongside legal partners and community
22 members in this city, (TIMER) The Legal Aid Society
23 will continue to fight against injustices against
24 non-citizens and is actively monitoring these federal
25 actions against non-citizens to see how we can best

1 contribute. We remain steadfast in our commitment to
2 defending New Yorkers, and we will not be
3 intimidated. We cannot do this alone, though.
4 Together, we must fight to protect due process and
5 the rule of law. Thank you.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

8 MR. DAVID MOSS: Good morning. Thank you,
9 I am David Moss here on behalf of the Legal Defense
10 Fund. We thank the Committee for this opportunity to
11 testify.

12 We are greatly concerned about the harm
13 that militarized federal law enforcement is already
14 inflicting in New York and the potential harm on the
15 horizon. Around the country, recent deployments of
16 National Guard troops and federal law enforcement
17 personnel have devastated local communities by
18 exacerbating existing injustices while also creating
19 new ones. In Memphis, Black and Brown residents have
20 been terrorized over low-level or non-existent
21 offenses. Pedestrians have been interrogated by
22 heavily armed officers about their citizenship
23 status. And the task force that's been set up there
24 has relied heavily on traffic stops, which have long
25 plagued Black Memphians as a site of unnecessary,

1 aggressive, even fatal police encounters, as found by
2 the DOJ Pattern or Practice investigation there, and
3 as demonstrated by the brutal killing of Tyre Nichols
4 in 2023.

5
6 Washington, D.C. was already heavily
7 saturated with police activity that subjected Black
8 residents to aggressive policing, and the city
9 already had an overburdened court system. Federal
10 deployments there have made these problems worse.
11 Some of the conduct there has been so extreme that
12 one judge even stated on the record that a case
13 before him involved, "Without a doubt the most
14 illegal search I've ever seen in my life."

15 In Chicago, federal officers have fired
16 tear gas, rubber bullets, and pepper balls at
17 protesters and journalists, prompting a federal judge
18 to issue a temporary injunction barring DHS officers
19 from using these abusive tactics or issuing crowd
20 dispersal orders at all.

21 Violent conduct against protesters by
22 federal officers in Los Angeles led to a similar
23 preliminary injunction there as well.

24 In New York City, we must acknowledge
25 that hyper-aggressive federal policing is already

1 here. ICE officers have been tearing families apart
2 in the hallways of courthouses for months. In
3 October, masked officers descended on Canal Street in
4 an armored vehicle and with assault rifles to arrest
5 Black and Brown street vendors. Last week, NYPD
6 officers responded to reports of armed men pulling
7 people out of cars in Washington Heights, only to
8 find that those armed men were plainclothes federal
9 immigration agents.
10

11 It's clear that Black and Brown New
12 Yorkers, protesters, and journalists are all at
13 heightened risk by the current and future deployment
14 of federal officers and National Guard troops. There
15 are several bills currently in front of the City
16 Council that it can pass right now to protect New
17 Yorkers from harm. And I really want to emphasize the
18 bills that are already introduced in the City Council
19 that can do this. For one, the City Council must
20 abolish the NYPD Gang Database by passing Intro 798.
21 The Gang Database is a system of files kept by the
22 NYPD that associates 8,000 New Yorkers with gangs,
23 often based simply on racial stereotypes. Almost
24 everyone in the database is Black or Latino, most
25 people in the database have no prior felony records

1 and no relationship to gun violence, yet they are
2 frequently subjected to stops, searches, arrests, and
3 interrogations. And there is a significant risk that
4 this database is fueling or could fuel the
5 administration's mass deportation agenda.
6

7 ICE has a long history of relying on
8 local gang databases to arrest immigrants. We've seen
9 this administration (TIMER) weaponize unreliable gang
10 allegations to hastily deport people without due
11 process. New York State has a gang database that
12 feeds directly to ICE. DHS has used Chicago's gang
13 database—many reasons to be concerned about this.

14 I understand my time is up. I will just
15 very quickly go down a few other bills:

16 The City Council can protect First
17 Amendment rights by passing Intro 1176, the CURB Act,
18 which would protect protesters by making sure the
19 NYPD doesn't act as a force multiplier.

20 If federal agents were to come in and
21 violently suppress peaceful protest, the City Council
22 could strengthen New York City's sanctuary status by
23 passing Intro 214, The NYC Trust Act, which would
24 create a remedy for the rights bestowed on people
25 through our sanctuary city laws.

1
2 And the City Council should look towards
3 other opportunities to limit surveillance technology
4 and limit local participation in federal law
5 enforcement operations—joint task forces, fusion
6 centers, these are sites where local and federal
7 forces come together and can cause a particularly
8 large amount of harm in the current moment.

9 And I will leave my comments at that.
10 Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

12 MS. SUSAN LERNER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think we should
14 just acknowledge that--I think that Miss Lerner has
15 testified more before this committee than any other
16 individual over these two years. And so we are very
17 grateful, as always, for having your expert insights.
18 It's good to be with you.

19 MS. SUSAN LERNER: Thank you, thank you so
20 much. I've submitted written testimony. I'm not going
21 to read it. I want to focus on three different
22 things.

23 First, picking up on the things that the
24 Council can do immediately within its legislative
25 function. I've identified specific bills that are

1 before the Council. But there are two Albany bills
2 that I'd like to point out, and one that I know will
3 be the subject of a resolution that will be
4 introduced, and that is the bill that was mentioned
5 that would prohibit foreign National Guard from
6 coming into our state without the approval of our
7 governor.
8

9 But picking up on Chairman Restler's
10 concerns about the hospitals, there is a bill which
11 is pending in Albany which is a bill that deals with
12 sensitive locations. Prior to this administration, it
13 was the policy of Immigration not to go into schools,
14 hospitals, or houses of worship as sensitive
15 locations.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

17 MS. SUSAN LERNER: There is a bill that
18 Senator Jackson carries in the Legislature, which
19 would make that prohibition an aspect of New York law
20 protecting those locations. We've seen hospitals--
21 we've seen now press reports that ICE is planning to
22 target houses of worship that conduct their services
23 in Spanish during the *holiday* season, which is so
24 reprehensible it's almost incomprehensible. So it
25 should be part of our policy that these sensitive

1 locations that are essential for our society, our
2 safety, health, and education of New Yorkers, be
3 protected. So I would suggest a resolution.

4
5 We are very happy-- we are members of
6 Hands Off NYC. We're very happy to see the press
7 conference in October that the Speaker championed,
8 and we would like to see more of that. We would like
9 to see each and every district take very seriously
10 its obligations to help protect its residents. Some
11 resources could be available. I know some districts
12 have hosted Know Your Rights instances and canvased
13 in their neighborhoods to small businesses, using
14 their printing allotment to provide materials which
15 could be passed out by activists in the
16 neighborhoods, and strengthening our community ties,
17 which is really such an important function for each
18 and every one of the council members. So I would hope
19 that internally, any measures that can be used to
20 urge individual council members to do that sort of
21 very localized work would be encouraged.

22 I want to talk about the ability of this
23 committee. You've mentioned the fact that I've
24 testified a whole bunch. I don't remember the first
25 time I testified that this committee should use its

1 subpoena power, but it was a damn long time ago. And
2 I believe that this (TIMER) situation that we are
3 faced with, with a mayor that is cooperative and that
4 goes against the public policy of protecting our
5 citizens, is an instance where this committee should
6 use its subpoena power. The subpoena power has
7 remained in The Rules for a very long time, but there
8 is a recent change in The Rules that were just
9 adopted, which, to me, suggests that the subpoena
10 power could be enforced. And I know that's been a
11 problem. Will the Corporation Counsel actually
12 enforce a subpoena that the City Council issues
13 against an agency? In the most recent Rules change,
14 the General Counsel Office of the Council has
15 empowered, uh, has now been authorized to litigate on
16 behalf of the Council. So you now have your own
17 enforcement mechanism.

18
19 And there is an excellent model,
20 Comptroller Lander mentioned activities in Chicago
21 with actions that the Chicago mayor has taken. But
22 the Chicago Council, we believe, and it's in my
23 written testimony, has a model for examining the way
24 in which city agencies, including the police, have
25 cooperated or not cooperated with ICE in specific

1
2 raids. And I suggest that that is a model for this
3 committee to actually delve into the conduct, what
4 was known, and who took what actions, around the
5 Canal Street raid.

6 But I would also like to suggest that it
7 would be appropriate for this committee not just to
8 look at what the financial implications are of the
9 relationship between the federal government and our
10 city, but also where our city is actually already
11 sharing information. I've been informed that the Law
12 Department, for instance, keeps a list of all of the
13 contracts between city agencies and the federal
14 government. Often, they have requirements that
15 information be shared. It would be important to know
16 what information agencies are providing, either
17 contractually or sometimes on an informal basis, and
18 that would be an excellent oversight activity for
19 this committee to try and begin to catalog where
20 information is being shared, either voluntarily or
21 under contract, and determine whether that is or is
22 not a compliance with our sanctuary city status.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much.
25 I would welcome being corrected. And I-- we did note

1 and appreciate that shift in The Rules, because we've
2 been in conversation with the Speakers' team over the
3 course of the past year about the Council's
4 utilization of subpoena power. My understanding is
5 that the decision to utilize that subpoena power sits
6 with the Chair of the Oversight Committee and with
7 the Speaker, not with the chairs of any other
8 committees individually. So with the cooperation of
9 the Speaker, we can pursue that. You know, we've had,
10 I believe-- Molly can correct me, but five of our
11 last six hearings have been boycotted by the Adams
12 administration, I think because I'm perhaps too nice
13 and charming up here.

14
15 (LAUGHTER)

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But maybe for other
17 reasons, too. You know, three of those have been
18 focused on the failures of the Trump administration,
19 and I think that Mayor Adams and his team have been
20 particularly reticent not to engage on that topic--
21 uh, particularly reticent to engage on that topic,
22 excuse me. But we would love to continue the
23 conversation on how we can smartly gather information
24 and require people to appear, uh, most effectively.
25 The Council has to provide rigorous oversight, no

1
2 matter who the mayor is, and there are a lot of
3 questions and concerns about information sharing
4 between-- and cooperation and coordination between
5 the city and the feds today that we need to get to
6 the bottom of. Hopefully, I fully expect we'll have
7 an incoming mayor who's going to be much more aligned
8 with the Council as a whole on these topics. But it
9 is important that we get to the bottom of what is
10 happening right now. So I really appreciate those
11 sentiments.

12 Before I ask a couple of questions, I
13 just want to invite my colleagues, Council Member
14 Morano, please.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you,
16 everybody, for your testimony.

17 A couple of quick questions for Ms.
18 Lerner, whom I'm used to sitting next to as we
19 frequently testify before a lot of Charter Revision
20 Commissions and similar type hearings.

21 You're urging, in your written testimony,
22 for us to investigate federal immigration enforcement
23 actions, including ICE raids. Do you acknowledge that
24 ICE does have a lawful federal mandate approved by
25 Congress to detain and remove individuals who are

1 here illegally and have criminal backgrounds or
2 outstanding warrants?
3

4 MS. SUSAN LERNER: With appropriate
5 procedures that protect the rights of any individual,
6 yes. But what we have seen, unfortunately, is a
7 reckless and unconstitutional and unprofessional
8 assertion that goes way beyond the statutory
9 authority in my mind.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: So are you
11 suggesting that the City Council should actively
12 explore intervening or obstructing lawful federal
13 operations, even when those operations are targeting
14 individuals who pose a public safety threat?

15 MS. SUSAN LERNER: So I guess the question
16 is, how do we define lawful? Is a masked,
17 plainclothes person taking a baseball bat to
18 somebody's car window and dragging them out a lawful
19 assertion of federal authority? Some courts have said
20 not.

21 We're not suggesting that the
22 investigation be into any quote-unquote
23 "interference"; what we're suggesting is that it's
24 the appropriate role of this committee and the
25 Oversight Committee to look at whether city agencies

1
2 are following city law in their interactions with the
3 federal government. That's what we're suggesting.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: In your written
5 testimony, you point to the example of the Chicago
6 City Council. Is there any data showing that
7 Chicago's investigations into ICE improved community
8 outcomes, or are these actions primarily symbolic or
9 political?

10 MS. SUSAN LERNER: So I think the
11 investigation has recently started. I don't think we
12 have an idea of what the results would be. But again,
13 I would suggest that it's appropriate. The
14 investigation in Chicago is about Chicago agency
15 conduct, and that's a very appropriate role for any
16 city council as part of the legislative oversight
17 responsibilities in the federalist system.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: You also point to
19 Boston, and you're urging us to emulate other cities
20 that openly oppose federal law enforcement. What
21 safeguards do you propose so that oversight doesn't
22 become politicized and doesn't run-- doesn't turn
23 into a de facto effort to shield repeat offenders
24 from federal consequences?

1
2 MS. SUSAN LERNER: So, you know, as the
3 Comptroller pointed out, the sweeps that our
4 communities are suffering under are rarely, if ever,
5 really addressed towards, you know, the "famous
6 criminal" Who is supposedly out there. The people who
7 are being dragnetted in are working people who have
8 no criminal record, in most cases. So, you know, we
9 have kind of a straw man situation because the people
10 who are being dragnetted in are not the criminals
11 that the president promised would be removed from our
12 streets, but rather productive members of our
13 communities who have had challenges in their
14 immigration status, because of the broken federal
15 immigration law.

16 So, you know, kind of the basic premise
17 of your question, unfortunately, isn't really based
18 on the facts as our communities are living them. As I
19 think you know, our representative from Legal Aid has
20 pointed out that the people who are being dragnetted
21 in are not criminals. When there are actual
22 criminals, frankly, what's interesting is that it is
23 harder to find the criminals, it seems to me, just as
24 a private individual. And therefore, the federal
25 agents, under an extraordinary requirement to fill up

1 numbers, not quality, but numbers of people to
2 deport, are going to places where the law abiding
3 citizens are to be found—the Immigration Courts,
4 outside of the Home Depots, places where working
5 people, who aren't documented, congregate and are
6 easy to find. Therefore, the federal authorities
7 don't have to work hard to find the actual criminals,
8 who apparently are much harder to find in our
9 community, and I don't think anybody wants to protect
10 them.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Council Member?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I
15 don't have any questions. I just want to applaud your
16 testimony and uplift Chair Restler for hosting this
17 extremely important topic.

18 I also just want to make sure that it's
19 on the record that, for those of you who are here,
20 thank you so much for coming and testifying in what I
21 hope is in support of our efforts, along with
22 advocates' efforts and our state colleagues' efforts
23 to protect New Yorkers, to follow the Constitution,
24 and to listen to federal judges.
25

1
2 But also, what we've been seeing across
3 the board, our schools are doing everything they can,
4 and we have to understand that they have limitations.
5 So I encourage all of us to work with our local
6 schools. These are parents just like you and me, who
7 are trying to make sure that parents feel safe, that
8 they have access to food, and that with all the
9 impending cuts, they are filling those holes. But
10 they can't do all of that and keep our family safe.
11 So I would just implore all of us to continue that
12 support and work with our schools. They're doing
13 amazing things. NYSNA (The New York State Nurses
14 Association) was just here this week, and their top
15 point of advocacy was not just about worker
16 conditions, but the realities that people are not
17 seeking care because they are fearful. This is on the
18 top of everyone's mind. And regardless of the threats
19 that we are getting from the federal government, we
20 are a lot more aligned here in the city. But we have
21 to find those people.

22 And so I love your recommendations, Ms.
23 Lerner, about working district to district. Many of
24 us have been doing that, and we will continue to do
25 that. So I implore you all to collaborate with us at

1 the City Council as much as possible. Let us know how
2 we can be more helpful, how we can get even more
3 granular. But I just appreciate all of your advocacy.

4 And once again, just want to give my
5 flowers to Chair Restler, who's done an incredible
6 job. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You remain the best.
8 I really appreciate your thoughtful words.

9 I wanted to ask about what we should be
10 doing as a city, and I think Ms. Lerner spoke to this
11 a little bit, uh, spoke to this quite a bit. I'd love
12 for you to expand on limiting coordination with ICE,
13 uh, prohibiting assembling on public property, and
14 encouraging property owners to prohibit ICE's
15 assembly on their property, banning agents from using
16 masks, or refusing to identify themselves.

17 Are there particular priority steps that
18 the City should be taking —And we would welcome
19 anyone on the panel to really speak to this—that you
20 think are the right areas for focus at this time?

21 MS. SUSAN LERNER: So we at Common Cause
22 are strong supporters of Intro 1268, which Council
23 Member Avilés has introduced. It really is a very
24 basic idea, which is to ensure that city buildings
25

1
2 protect people's rights, and that the private versus
3 the public spaces in city buildings are clearly
4 delineated.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

6 MS. SUSAN LERNER: The City owns a lot of
7 property and is not effectively using its status as a
8 property owner to protect individuals and to make
9 that delineation. In a lawful law enforcement
10 process, there's no problem when you've got a
11 judicial warrant and are serving your judicial
12 warrant anywhere on any premises. The problem is the
13 extrajudicial, reckless conduct that violates due
14 process rights of anybody who is a target, citizen,
15 or noncitizen. And the City could very quickly be
16 providing guidance, posting, and the bill also, I
17 believe, sets up instructions for building personnel.
18 What are their rights, what is appropriate? How do
19 you collaborate? When is it inappropriate to
20 collaborate? And I think that that's something the
21 City could do very quickly. And that bill, I believe,
22 will be up for a hearing in December.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Thank you.

24 Would you like to elaborate?
25

1 MR. QUINN RAYMOND: I'd just say to build
2 on that, not a legislative solution, but I think
3 really aggressive and sustained counter speech when
4 it comes to the disinformation narratives around the
5 safety of the city and being really rooted in data,
6 quantitative data, that indicates the relative safety
7 of our communities, I think is really important and
8 underestimated as one of the tools.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Uh, that's great.
11 And, you know, I appreciate in the testimony that I
12 believe Mr. Raymond and Ms. Lerner each, uh, in their
13 testimony, the references to Senator Gounardes' bill
14 and Senator Myrie's bills, focusing on prohibiting
15 militias or National Guards from other states to come
16 into New York without the approval of the governor
17 and establishing the Right of Action for the
18 deprivation of constitutional rights and allowing
19 individuals to sue ICE for their civil rights
20 violations. I just think it is a really important
21 piece of legislation for us to lift up with
22 resolutions in the Council and to advocate for their
23 passage in Albany.

24 And then, I would just like to ask
25 generally on the legal services front, as we

1 discussed on the first panel, we did make a
2 significant new investment in expanded legal services
3 in this budget. But clearly with the various
4 challenges that we're facing today, the crises that
5 we're facing today, it's not enough. What would you
6 prioritize for this council to be investing in
7 immigrant legal services to help do more to keep New
8 Yorkers safe?
9

10 MS. DEBORAH LEE: So I think in the short
11 term, I think any sort of infusion to invest in
12 building habeas capacity is the most critical thing,
13 or other sort of federal litigation efforts. I think
14 just investing in legal service providers, being able
15 to do more, give them more to work with, essentially.
16 You know, I think in terms of the immigration legal
17 services community, for years and years we've focused
18 primarily, with the US Citizenship and Immigration
19 Service or Immigration Court, and that was sort of
20 the venue that we fought in. We cannot get justice in
21 those arenas anymore, so we have to go to federal
22 court. So I think just some sort of short-term
23 infusion is very helpful.

24 But I think also, you know, just thinking
25 a little bit longer term, for my unit, I can't hire

1 up, you know, 50 attorneys all at once. It just takes
2 time. And I think thinking about sort of what is
3 needed and what we can responsibly do is also
4 important. So giving a one-year sort of chunk of
5 money is helpful, but there's only so much you can
6 do. And there's only so much I can plan for with that
7 amount of money.
8

9 So I think some kind of acknowledgement—
10 we have a couple more years to go, at least with this
11 administration...

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's right.

13 MS. DEBORAH LEE: We need a longer-term
14 investment strategy.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, I think that's
16 very fair. And you know, we budget for the fiscal
17 year, but you know, in recognizing the political
18 dynamics in Washington are not going to change before
19 2028, uh, we need to do a better job of making clear
20 that our commitments, our full intentions are for
21 multi-year funding on these topics.

22 And you know, when there are RFPs and
23 things like that, that are multi-year commitments,
24 that's one thing. But when it's just Council-
25 allocated funding, and it's year to year, we can at

1 least make a verbal commitment that it's our full
2 intention to, you know, sustain this funding for a
3 multi-year period.
4

5 Anything else that anyone would like to
6 add?

7 MS. SUSAN LERNER: Just with subpoena
8 power, get together with Oversight. Hold joint
9 hearings.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I always love
11 hanging out with my friend, Gale Brewer.

12 With that, I just want to thank the
13 Protect Democracy Project, the Legal Aid Society, the
14 NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and, of course, Common
15 Cause, for your thoughtful and insightful testimony
16 today. We appreciate you being here.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We are going to try
19 to squeeze five up at the table, if that works, so
20 hopefully everybody will be willing to squeeze a
21 little.

22 We have Vladimir Tlali from NYIC, the New
23 Yorker Immigration Coalition, Carolina Moreno from
24 Mixteca, Sophia-Helene Mees de Tricht, I'm sorry,
25 from Common Defense, Alexandra Rizio from Make the

1 Road New York, and Hannah Stauss from Hands Off New
2 York. Did we lose somebody? We might have? Okay. I
3 think somebody had to go. We invite you to testify in
4 whatever order you all feel so moved to do so. You
5 want to begin? Great.

7 MS. HANNAH STAUSS: Chair Restler and
8 Members of the New York City Council Committee on
9 Governmental Operations, State and Federal
10 Legislation, my name is Hannah Stauss, I'm an
11 organizer with 50501NYC and Strong Economy for All
12 Coalition; I've led on some the biggest mass
13 mobilizations in this city this year, and I am also
14 one of the co-leaders of Hands Off NYC. I submit this
15 testimony on behalf of Hands Off NYC.

16 We're campaign-supported by over 150
17 organizations in the city, from labor unions to faith
18 leaders to grassroots organizations and many others,
19 to preempt, prepare for, and stand up to federal
20 incursions in our city.

21 I testify today to emphasize the need for
22 the City Council to use all its powers, be it through
23 oversight or other levers of power, to stand up to
24 federal incursions, whether that is military troops
25

1
2 or any of the other federal agencies like ICE and
3 Border Patrol in our streets.

4 New York City is our home, and we are
5 diverse, vibrant, and fiercely committed to
6 democracy. We're living through an extremely
7 dangerous time as those holding the reins of federal
8 governmental power inch closer to authoritarian rule.
9 There's no shortage of heartbreaking stories and
10 videos of federal aggression that is already on our
11 streets, and the Trump administration has signaled
12 plans to turn New York City into a training ground
13 for the military. Just two days ago, White House
14 Border Czar Tom Homan announced plans to further
15 boost ICE operations in the city. The threats are
16 real, the timeline is short, and the political
17 terrain is volatile.

18 Hands Off NYC will act as a central hub
19 for New York City's resistance, providing resources,
20 training, organizing strategies, and constructing key
21 infrastructure for developing and maintaining
22 neighborhood groups and rapid response networks.

23 There are three concrete steps that we
24 think the City can take:

1
2 First, aggressive oversight of any
3 cooperation between city agencies and federal
4 entities. We know that federal agencies often attempt
5 to pressure local departments into information
6 sharing and joint operations that violate the spirit,
7 if not the letter, of our sanctuary values. The
8 Council must regularly require reporting, hold public
9 hearings, and audit agency practices to ensure that
10 no department is overstepping or quietly complying
11 with federal demands and that federal agencies are
12 not violating local laws.

13 Second, use the legislative and budgetary
14 powers of the Council to set clear boundaries.
15 Federal authorities will attempt to commandeer our
16 police, our data systems, our infrastructure, and our
17 social service networks. The City must proactively
18 legislate safeguards. You have the authority to
19 restrict data sharing, limit participation in federal
20 operations, and require transparency whenever
21 agencies request City resources.

22 Third, publicly and consistently defend
23 New Yorkers' rights; oversight is not just internal,
24 it is also political. When federal actors target
25 immigrant communities, threaten protest rights,

1
2 undermine labor protections, or attempt to override
3 local policies, New Yorkers look to City leadership
4 to stand firm.

5 New York City has always led the nation
6 in defending civil liberties, in welcoming
7 immigrants, and insisting that government exists for
8 the common good. In this moment when federal
9 overreach is not hypothetical but daily, Hands Off
10 NYC is looking forward (TIMER) to continuing to work
11 with the City Council to ensure all New Yorkers are
12 protected. Thank you for your time, your (already)
13 support, and your commitment to this city.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Thank you
15 so much.

16 MS. ALEXANDRA RIZIO: Good afternoon. My
17 name is Alexandra Rizzio; I'm Supervising Immigration
18 Attorney at Make the Road New York. Thank you for the
19 chance to discuss the steps the City can take to
20 proactively support immigrants and all New Yorkers as
21 federal enforcement continues to escalate.

22 As a provider of legal and survival
23 services and a membership organization of 28,000
24 members with community centers in Queens, Brooklyn,
25

1 and Staten Island, we've been preparing for a range
2 of scenarios and monitoring events closely.
3

4 In recent weeks, we've witnessed an
5 uptick in immigration enforcement near our community
6 centers. One of Make the Road New York's members was
7 picked up off the street near a Bushwick office, and
8 there was an ICE raid in a bakery a few doors away
9 from our Staten Island office. There have been
10 confirmed abductions at a steadily increasing rate in
11 Corona, Queens, not far from our community center
12 there. You may have seen a recent article in the New
13 York Times that shared the harrowing experience of
14 our client Carlos, who is legally blind. He was
15 detained by ICE and kept in solitary confinement
16 without his assistive devices, including his cane.
17 Our legal team was able to secure his release, and
18 that work is supported in significant part by the
19 Council.

20 We're grateful to have the resources to
21 continue that important work, but there is so much
22 more we believe the Council can do to fortify New
23 York City. As we help lead the rapid response work on
24 a number of fronts, there are several areas where the
25

1 City could take further action. The Council could
2 support the following work with funding or action:
3

4 • *Rapid Response Legal Support*

5 We're grateful for the Council's existing
6 support of the Rapid Response Legal
7 Collaborative, but immigration legal providers
8 are unable to meet the increasing need of
9 families whose loved ones have been detained.
10 We recommend expanded funding for legal
11 services, including habeas work.

12 • *Know Your Rights Education*

13 Make the Road is one of the organizations
14 equipping community members with knowledge and
15 tools to protect themselves and others through
16 workshops, printed materials, and peer-led
17 training. We've reached tens of thousands of
18 people already this year, and we are working
19 with the Hands Off NYC campaign to scale up
20 and coordinate this work, which the Council
21 could amplify.

22 • *Mobilizing Communities*

23 Make the Road is working with Hands Off NYC
24 and other grassroots partners such as Vocal
25 NY, NYCC, CVH, DRUM (phonetic), NYIC, CAV, and

1 SVP, mobilizing residents to minimize harm
2 from immigration and military enforcement
3 through door-to-door, peer-to-peer outreach,
4 block meetings, and public activity. This
5 includes: Neighborhood Defense committees made
6 up of nonprofits, council members, hospitals,
7 and others. We encourage the Council and
8 individual members to support these efforts
9 around the city.
10

11 There are a few other things that I note
12 in my written testimony, but I also want to highlight
13 the NYC Trust Act, which other testifiers have
14 uplifted. (TIMER) Would create a private right of
15 action for individuals unlawfully detained or
16 targeted through the City cooperation with federal
17 immigration authorities. And we'd like to ensure that
18 there's a shared approach by the City and State to
19 issue guidance to agencies about what to do if, but
20 really when, the military is deployed to our city.
21 Thank you for your support.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,
23 and I apologize for butchering your name earlier.

24 MS. ALEXANDRA RIZIO: (LAUGHS) That's
25 okay.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think I butchered
3 your name, too, so I apologize in advance.

4 MS. SOPHIA-HELENE MEES DE TRICHT: That's
5 okay.

6 Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members, thank
7 you for this opportunity to speak to you today. My
8 name is Sophia-Helene Mees de Tricht. I use she/her
9 pronouns, and I'm representing Common Defense, the
10 nation's largest progressive veterans organization. I
11 represent over 500,000 members nationwide, over 1,000
12 in New York, and hundreds in the five boroughs.

13 I have listened to the testimony of my
14 compatriots, my fellow veteran organizations, and I
15 largely agree with their views on National Guard
16 deployment. What I've not heard very much about so
17 far is specifically, you know, the use of force from
18 federal agencies. So that's what I want to focus on
19 today.

20 So to establish my background, I joined
21 the US Navy just months after the events of 9/11. I
22 was motivated by that to join the military. And my
23 first ship, I earned the Coast Guard Special
24 Operations Medal for conducting operations
25 interdicting drugs and also unsafe migrant vessels in

1 the South Pacific. Once I got out of the Navy, I
2 served for eight years, and then I joined the Coast
3 Guard. As an E-4 in the Coast Guard, I was a federal
4 law enforcement officer. I've spent years of my life
5 really steeped in understanding the use of force,
6 specifically as regards to law enforcement operations
7 and detaining personnel.
8

9 So, in my naivete and idealism, when I
10 got out of the Coast Guard in 2012—I was discharged
11 for being transgender—I was under the impression
12 that all federal law enforcement, indeed all law
13 enforcement generally, were subject to the same rules
14 of force or use of force continuum training that I
15 was. The murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor,
16 and I could waste the rest of my time just on that
17 list of names—not waste, but I could spend the rest
18 of my time on that list of names, shattered that. So
19 what I'm here asking is, we have seen CBP and ICE
20 violating rules of force and best practices for use
21 of force all over the nation, and a surge in ICE and
22 CBP operations in the city is going to bring that
23 here. This has affected our members, uh, two of our
24 members are engaged in litigation currently against
25 ICE and CBP for violating use-of-force rules. Were I

1 to display the kind of wanton disregard for safety
2 that we have seen from CBP and ICE, I would be
3 stripped of my qualifications to carry a weapon and
4 probably (TIMER) imprisoned. And that is what I
5 suggest the Council explore in dealing with the surge
6 of federal law enforcement coming to our city. That
7 sounds harsh, but one thing I learned in the
8 military, and I know I'm out of time, so I'm just
9 going to very briefly wrap up with this: When you
10 carry the tools and the authority to end life, you
11 carry a commensurate responsibility to protect life.
12 We're just not seeing that from our ICE and CBP
13 officers. I think we should not work with them. I
14 think we should tell them that our laws regarding the
15 use of force apply when they're here.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's powerfully
18 said. Thank you for sharing your expert testimony.

19 Just before you begin, I just want to
20 invite Vlad to come up as a part of this panel as
21 well. Thank you so much.

22 MS. CAROLINA MORENO: Good afternoon,
23 thanks for the opportunity to testify. My name is
24 Carolina Moreno, and I am a Latinx Ecuadorian
25 immigrant and community advocate at Mixteca, which is

1 a community-based organization in Sunset Park in
2 Brooklyn that has served the Latinx and indigenous
3 immigrant community for over 25 years.

4
5 Today, I am here to be the voice of many
6 community members who have shared their stories when
7 they arrive at Mixteca to seek help, guidance, and
8 resources. It's important to recognize the stories we
9 witness every day. We host events to build community
10 and safety, yet advocates, volunteers, and neighbors
11 are reminded to stay alert for ICE or for any
12 suspicious vehicles in the area. Landlords continue
13 to raise rents, making it nearly impossible for
14 immigrants, often working three jobs, to keep up with
15 all the rent they have to pay. Accessing childcare
16 has also become a major challenge, with families
17 pushed onto a long waiting list, while mothers
18 struggle to find space and time to work. Meanwhile,
19 the number of people signing up for Medicaid or food
20 distribution programs has surged over the past three
21 weeks, as families grow increasingly afraid that they
22 might lose access to their food stamps.

23 As an immigrant woman who had to leave
24 her home country for safety, I know the courage it
25 takes to start over again. It is unacceptable that

1 after fleeing danger and working hard here, we
2 immigrants still have to face racism, discrimination
3 and systemic barriers. Today, we need your
4 partnership and deeper investment in immigration
5 programs and organizations that protect families and
6 defend their rights. Our community deserves care,
7 respect, and resources. So, respectfully urge you to
8 reinforce sanctuary laws and clearly regulate how or
9 whether city agencies cooperate with federal
10 immigration authorities; exercise oversight of all
11 local agencies, schools, hospitals, shelters,
12 correctional facilities, and city services to ensure
13 non-collaborate with ICE with a valid judicial order;
14 strengthen immigrant support offices, including MOIA
15 and expand their mission to holistic services, such
16 as housing, employment assistance, assistance,
17 healthcare, and mental health support; protect data
18 and privacy and insure that no city agencies become
19 sources of information for federal immigration
20 enforcement; invest in local programs and community
21 institutions so that New York remains resilient and
22 less dependent on the federal system.

23
24 Council Members, you are the guardians of
25 our city's autonomy and the defenders of the values

1 that make New York a beacon of hope. Protecting our
2 sanctuary laws is not a defense. It's just a
3 constitutional duty and the defense of human dignity.
4 If we can make it in New York, we can make it
5 anywhere. So I ask you firmly and respectfully,
6 defend our city's independence, protect our
7 communities, and strengthen the laws that ensure no
8 one lives in fear because of their immigration
9 status. New York has always been a city of fighters,
10 and we must fight for a city that is free, just, and
11 deeply human. Thank you.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

14 Vlad?

15 MR. VLAD TLALI: Good morning, Chairman
16 Restler, and Members of the Committee. Thank you so
17 much for convening this important hearing. My name is
18 Vlad Tlali, and I am the Senior Policy Strategist at
19 the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). I am also
20 a proud immigrant and a naturalized citizen.

21 The NYIC is a statewide network of more
22 than 200 organizations that support immigrants and
23 refugees across New York.

24 The scenes have become chillingly
25 familiar across the country, from D.C., LA to

1 Chicago, and Portland to Memphis and Charlotte: major
2 American cities have become the primary target of the
3 Trump administration's overt abuse of federal
4 authority.
5

6 New York City has strong sanctuary laws
7 that ensure that our city's resources do not assist
8 with federal civil immigration enforcement. But this
9 moment requires greater action and proactive steps,
10 especially now that we have learned from our
11 municipal counterparts from around the country and
12 their efforts to restrict federal overreach in their
13 respective cities.

14 In the event of an escalated federal
15 takeover of NYC, there are several steps that the
16 Council and Administration must enact at the
17 municipal level, and call on state governing
18 counterparts to enact at the state level:

19 First, the Administration must declare a
20 local state of emergency, and the City Council should
21 publicly call on the Governor to declare a state of
22 disaster emergency. State of emergencies are the
23 necessary tool to allow for city agencies to make
24 emergency modifications to their operation
25

1 regulations and meet the urgency that the federal
2 takeover would require.

3
4 Second, the Council should identify,
5 mobilize, and appropriate emergency resources to
6 partner with CBOs to respond to the emergency,
7 including: Support for emergency legal services
8 accessible where communities are: libraries,
9 hospitals, schools, mobile legal clinics, and
10 remotely via phone and online, support for emergency
11 food access, and continued health care access, and
12 mobile clinics, support for education continuation
13 via remote learning, support for small businesses,
14 street vendors, and independent workers affected by
15 the federal takeover, and support distributing Know
16 Your Rights materials and guidance on what
17 Individuals should know when faced with federal
18 agents.

19 Third, the Council should work with the
20 Administration to declare or legislate that city
21 property cannot be used for ICE staging or any other
22 form of immigration enforcement, including parking
23 lots, parks, maintenance yards, city-owned property,
24 public rights-of-way, and other city-owned spaces for
25

1 staging for the purposes of civil immigration
2 enforcement.
3

4 Fourth, the Council and Administration
5 should ensure that no city data is being used for the
6 purposes of civil immigration enforcement, and ensure
7 that the Chief Privacy Officer is already auditing
8 our systems for vulnerabilities and should
9 immediately terminate contracts with third-party
10 vendors, including data brokers and license plate
11 readers, that are sharing information with federal
12 authorities.

13 Finally, the Council and Administration
14 should work with the New York Police Department to
15 ensure compliance with our city's laws that prohibit
16 collusion between local law enforcement and federal
17 civil immigration enforcement.

18 Thank you so much. We look forward to
19 partnering with the City Council to defend all New
20 Yorkers.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.
22 I really appreciate the--most of all the work that
23 you all do. It is just incredibly important and
24 appreciated, uh, protecting and defending New Yorkers
25 every single day.

1
2 I just wanted to take a second on the
3 record to recognize one of the people who has played
4 such an important role in Hands Off New York, Hae-Lin
5 became--Hae-Lin naturalized yesterday. So I just want
6 to congratulate Hae-Lin Choi on that. And, you know,
7 I think we have close--the number in my head is that
8 we have about 750,000 legal permanent residents in
9 New York City. And I think for many of those people,
10 there has been a decision not to become a citizen for
11 whatever reason over a period of time, and the
12 threats that green card holders, that legal permanent
13 residents face right now, especially people who are
14 activists and who speak out on issues, and this is
15 just different than what we have experienced in the
16 past. So, it is really important that we as a city
17 provide all of the resources and support that we can
18 to help as many people naturalize who want to, and
19 to, uh, provide subsidy and support, legal support,
20 through that process. I think we really assist,
21 mostly through CUNY, for tens of thousands of people
22 a year, when the potential demand is so much greater.
23 And I will just note that there is also a significant
24 economic benefit in terms of resources we bring down
25 from the federal government if people do choose to

1
2 become citizens. So, it is a thing that I have long
3 advocated for us to invest more in, I think,
4 especially in this moment. But, I digress, I just
5 want to congratulate Hai-Lin.

6 Maybe, Hannah, starting with you, but I
7 welcome everyone's input on this. What, from a
8 resources standpoint, do you think the City Council
9 should be prioritizing to support Hands off New York
10 Coalition and the efforts on the ground right now to
11 make sure that communities are able to mobilize
12 effectively and keep one another safe?

13 MS. HANNAH STAUSS: I'll defer to other
14 people on the panel about specific legislation, but I
15 think what we're looking...

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Resources in
17 particular, if that's okay. I'm interested in whether
18 there are investments that we should be making to
19 support local groups that would be most helpful to be
20 able to help protect one another in neighborhoods
21 across the city of New York. So, just to clarify the
22 question.

23 MS. HANNAH STAUSS: As far as resources
24 go, one of the things that I believe somebody else
25 brought up earlier is that some of the council

1 offices have been using the physical spaces that they
2 have in neighborhood, and their printing allotments.
3 Small things like this can really help our
4 neighborhood groups that are trying to mobilize their
5 communities. From resources, a lot of those that we
6 need are funding some of our partners who are sitting
7 here at this table, who do the really, really
8 important work of being there legally for immigration
9 workers and also supporting mutual aid networks.

11 But as far as individual council members,
12 we're really looking for partnerships on physical
13 things that are going to make it easier for us to get
14 in connection with hubs that people can find Know
15 Your Rights material, uh, being able to print all of
16 these signs for businesses. We will get the
17 volunteers there if we can get some help in getting
18 some of those materials.

19 And we've had some lovely coordination
20 thus far with the City Council, and just keeping that
21 open line of communication not only at a high level,
22 but on an individual level in those neighborhoods to
23 see what they specifically need. Our city is so
24 large, and organizing in Bushwick is very different
25 than Washington Heights, than anywhere else. So we

1 would just really appreciate continued coordination
2 with the City Council as those needs come up and
3 support for the members of our coalition that are
4 doing a lot of this work that requires heavy
5 resources.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah. I think Susan
8 mentioned that some of our offices, I think including
9 ours, have been doing... Is that right? Printing.
10 Yeah, we have been helping. And I think Council
11 Member Hanif, and sure Council Member Gutiérrez,
12 because she's always ahead of the curve, have been
13 helping to print. And we want to continue to provide
14 that kind of support. But I think we should be
15 thinking more about whether there are resources that
16 organizations need to help be those organizing hubs
17 to mobilize neighborhoods effectively, get the word
18 out, and be-- the way that neighbors responded on
19 Canal Street, that New Yorkers responded on Canal
20 Street a few weeks ago, was really inspiring. And it
21 is important that we provide the support, resources,
22 and technical assistance to organizations to be able
23 to help mobilize people in real time as much as
24 possible. And I know that Council Member Gutiérrez
25 and Council Member Nurse have been thinking-- with

1 people released, by petitioning the federal
2 government, not the agency, which is the Immigration
3 Court. So that kind of funding, I think, is really
4 key.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Anything
7 you'd like to add?

8 MR. VLADIMIR TLALI: Yeah, definitely. I
9 think there's a cycle where we can, in every step of
10 the way, support organizations and communities. First
11 of all, prevention of abductions, prevention and
12 organizing communities of rapid response, providing
13 whistles, you know, providing printing, providing
14 materials that are needed, attention, and legal
15 services for people who are at the moment requiring
16 them. So the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative is an
17 amazing resource and should be used more. We have
18 been in conversations about building a hotline, for
19 example, that could be centralized. And MOIA (Mayor's
20 Office of Immigrant Affairs) should honestly probably
21 be the agency that is coordinating these.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Who?

23 ALL: (LAUGHTER)

24 MR. VLADIMIR TLALI: (LAUGHS) MOIA. But
25 that is not happening, and it is a need, right? There

1 are a few numbers out there that people are calling,
2 but we don't exactly know who those are or who is
3 posting these numbers. Like, you can see them
4 whenever there's a raid; there are some posters. Some
5 of them are, like, people that we know or some lines
6 that we know, for example, for New York Lawyers for
7 the Public Interest, but these lines are not attended
8 24 hours a day. Right?

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The MOIA hotline has
11 that been a helpful resource?

12 MR. VLADIMIR TLALI: Not really. It is...
13 No.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And can I ask about,
15 I think generally, we heard from Comptroller Lander
16 and Public Advocate Williams, and others, about the
17 challenges in coordinating with this administration
18 or maybe the lack of coordination with this
19 administration in general, but as we know, most of
20 the social services in New York City are... Actually,
21 did you want to add something before I go to a next
22 question? I'm sorry.

23 MS. CAROLINA MORENO: I just want to add
24 something very particular, because with the
25 experience with the current administration, a lot of

1 burnout of our colleagues or the team members, we are
2 not a very big organization. Our team is about 25
3 people, so it would be something very thoughtful to
4 look further in terms of trying to build or create
5 more space where we can, you know, be (INAUDIBLE) and
6 also replicate and provide this to the people in the
7 community. Because, unfortunately, we can't... We
8 wish we could tell them, like, "Oh, we're going to be
9 fine, everything is going to be fine". We want to
10 say that, but we are not sure at all. And also, that
11 creates a lot of stress during work, and the amount
12 of people working is not enough with all the cases.
13 We know that we have a lack of, you know, paralegals
14 and lawyers, even if we connect with other
15 organizations. So I think that, in general, there
16 should be a bigger investment in the community
17 organizations and the services that we provide.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Two more
20 questions from me:

21 First, as I was just saying, despite the
22 kind of lack of cooperation and coordination from the
23 Mayor's Office and the administration more generally,
24 most of our social services are provided by nonprofit
25 partners. And have there been efforts to date to try

1 to bring together DHS operators, afterschool programs
2 at schools, and other types of groups that are
3 working on the frontlines every day to try to help
4 them make sure that they're educated, prepared, and
5 can handle these kinds of situations? Is this
6 something that we need to focus on more? Any
7 suggestions there? I don't know who would like to
8 jump in, but Hannah or Vlad?
9

10 MS. HANNAH STAUSS: Yeah, I will be short,
11 but I will say that this is a big reason why we
12 started Hands Off NYC and why we work with such a
13 broad range of partners. There are Hands Off NYC
14 schools and families sections that are really working
15 to bring together a lot of those educational
16 resources. There is one for faith. There are some for
17 students. So, if you reach out to us, one, we have a
18 bunch of people to put you in touch with, and two, we
19 would love any connections that the Council, or any
20 of the members here, can provide in helping us
21 aggregate those. But it is definitely at the top of
22 our list.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

24 MR. VLADIMIR TLALI: And likewise, I think
25 that resources for rapid response are always needed.

1
2 And some other thing that I wanted to add is when
3 someone is detained, their families still need to
4 eat, right? And it still needs to pay rent and still
5 needs to pay utilities. So that's something that we
6 are also looking into, how we can support families of
7 people who are detained. Another very big need is
8 mental health. This is tremendously affecting kids,
9 and not only the people who are detained, but the
10 entire family and the entire community, right? So
11 that is another thing. And the post-release support
12 that is needed. Right? People are being tortured and
13 are being subjected to inhumane treatment while in
14 detention, and they have rights. Right? So I think
15 the City can support people who have been released,
16 can support people and their families with their
17 mental health needs, and just their material needs
18 while they are detained. So, those are things that
19 could also be where community based organizations
20 have the contacts.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, I couldn't
22 agree with you more. And I think we have been really
23 impressed by the model that Karen Bass pulled
24 together in Los Angeles for philanthropic resources
25 to be distributed to families where somebody has been

1 abducted or kidnapped, and to help make sure that
2 they are stabilized in that situation. So I
3 appreciate you calling that out.

4
5 Last question for me, what are the best
6 ways for New Yorkers to get involved to support and
7 be more informed, so that they can be helpful allies
8 in these moments?

9 MS. HANNAH STAUSS: We are going to be
10 running, starting this weekend, boroughwide trainings
11 across the city. And we are going to go over what it
12 looks like, what your rights are when you see ICE. We
13 are going to over plugging people into their
14 communities' defense structures. Again, a big reason
15 why we started is to really be a funnel to all of the
16 amazing partners that we have, and really help people
17 plug in in a concrete way. A big thing that you can
18 do is, one, grab a whistle, get informed about--we
19 will be posting about a hotline that you can call
20 that is going to dispatch neighborhood community
21 teams. But a big part of it is talking with your
22 neighbors, connecting with your community. What we
23 need to know is that if ICE shows up on a street down
24 from you, you know your neighbors, that you're going
25 to get a text, and that you're going to know what to

1 do in that situation. And it seems like a high task,
2 but we are going to try to make it as easy as
3 possible for you.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Anything else
6 that folks would like to add?

7 MS. SOPHIA-HELENE MEES DE TRICHT: I would
8 say that having frequent and well-advertised town
9 halls for information and to receive questions from
10 constituents is really important right now,
11 especially because we don't know what's going on, and
12 that makes it all the scarier. And so just hearing
13 from our elected leaders, exactly what is happening,
14 what the City plans to do...

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You're right.

16 MS. SOPHIA-HELENE MEES DE TRICHT: is
17 going to really take the edge off, I think.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think that's
19 really important. And we are, you know, Council
20 Member Hanif and I did a Know Your Rights town hall
21 on Zoom a few months ago. And there were, like, 300-
22 400 people who joined. The demand for more
23 information--and, you know, we organized, as was
24 mentioned earlier, with Council Member Hanif, some
25 canvases--and Council Member Avilés, this weekend,

1
2 Shahana partnered with us on one of them, there were
3 two others in other parts of her district, I think
4 across the three in her district, there were a couple
5 of hundred people who came out. There were 450 or so
6 people who came out in our portion of where we kind
7 of border. We just need to create more opportunities
8 for people to get educated in Know Your Rights, and
9 actually to share information that helps businesses
10 and frontline workers to know how they can protect
11 New Yorkers who are in risky situations.

12 So, I just really want to thank you all
13 for your work and for taking the time to join us
14 today. It is deeply appreciated. Thank you so much.

15 Okay, last up, we are going to hear from
16 a couple of people on Zoom. And we are going to have
17 Christopher Leon Johnson in person, Rex Chen from
18 LatinoJusticePRLDEF, and Robert Huggins, III,
19 representing himself or themselves. We will let the
20 folks on Zoom go first, and then we will hear from
21 Chris as our closer.

22 Why don't we go to Mr. Chen first if that
23 works?

24 MR. REX CHEN: Thank you. I trust you can
25 hear me okay. My name is Rex...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Now we can see you,
3 too. Great.

4 MR. REX CHEN: And I trust you can hear
5 me. Thank you so much.

6 My name is Rex Chen. He/him pronouns. I'm
7 the Supervising Immigration Lawyer at
8 LatinoJusticePRLDEF. We're a civil rights nonprofit
9 based in New York City. We pursue impact litigation
10 (INAUDIBLE) Latinos community, including Latino
11 immigrants. You know, this month we won a \$112
12 million jury verdict in federal court against Suffolk
13 County sheriffs because they illegally held people
14 relying on ICE detainers.

15 Now, preparing for federal overreach
16 includes building connections to work together in
17 case there are massive illegal raids. Since July of
18 this year, Latino Justice has organized meetings with
19 many immigration nonprofits in New York City to share
20 the lessons we're learning from other cities, such as
21 from Chicago advocates and Los Angeles advocates.
22 We're developing plans to fight back against
23 overreach in the future. We've taken specific
24 concrete steps, and we're working on additional
25 steps.

1 court litigation of an impact size, which we actually
2 focus on and have been doing for decades at
3 LatinoJustice. Investing time and money now will make
4 us stronger for when these illegal actions happen.
5

6 And it feels like the cruelty is the
7 point of these illegal attacks. But there's a
8 solution—by supporting each other from top to
9 bottom, we can resist these attacks. After all, the
10 people united will never be defeated... (CROSS-TALK)

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Will never be
12 defeated. Thank you so much.

13 MR. REX CHEN: Thank you. It's always
14 risky. Okay... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We got you. Thank
16 you so much... (CROSS-TALK)

17 MR. REX CHEN: And the support will
18 overcome their hatred. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We appreciate you.

20 Mr. Huggins?

21 MR. ROBERT HUGGINS: Thank you so much,
22 Chair Restler. I really appreciate you holding this
23 hearing and allowing for the opportunity for public
24 testimony.
25

1 My name is Robert (LOST AUDIO) Huggins,
2
3 III. I am with the Center for Data-Based Governance.
4 We are active in large urban areas in the United
5 States. And I just wanted to make a few points.

6 Once again, thank you so much for holding
7 this hearing. I really appreciate your focus on the
8 ways that the City Council and this (LOST AUDIO)
9 (INAUDIBLE) can push back against federal oversight
10 (sic), or federal overreach.

11 A few things I wanted to point out:

12 One, I assume the Public Advocate
13 (INAUDIBLE) is still there, but one thing is that we
14 always try to make sure that there is-- we try to
15 avoid miscommunication, and we try to avoid
16 misleading the public. One thing I noticed is that
17 the Public Advocate pointed out a \$5 billion gap in
18 the budget in (LOST AUDIO) (INAUDIBLE) years. So, we
19 actually look at the budgets. I used to work at the
20 Federal Office of Management Budget, and I worked at
21 a New York State Division of Budget and the Colorado
22 Division of Budget. So I do have a lot of budget-
23 heavy analysis. One thing that I noticed is that the
24 Public Advocate pointed out a \$5 billion gap (LOST
25 AUDIO) (INAUDIBLE) next year, which was a little

1 misleading. Because that is typically the out year
2 gaps, and that is actually very similar to what was
3 left (LOST AUDIO) (INAUDIBLE) previous mayor, Bill de
4 Blasio, who you worked for (LOST AUDIO) (INAUDIBLE)
5 standing (INAUDIBLE) Chair Restler, is very in line
6 with what he left. But I saw that you didn't point
7 that out or try to clarify. So I hope that you could
8 maybe use the time now to clarify that that
9 (INAUDIBLE) not necessarily abnormal, and is not
10 necessarily leaving the next mayor (LOST AUDIO)
11 (INAUDIBLE) previous mayor...

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. Thank you very
14 much, Mr. Huggins.

15 We will now shift to Christopher Leon
16 Johnson.

17 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello, my
18 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. Thank you, Chair
19 Restler and Chair Gutiérrez, for having this hearing
20 today.

21 I want to say this right now: it is a
22 disgrace that our Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani, who
23 said he cares about immigrants and migrants, is
24 reappointing an anti-migrant mayor, uh, anti-migrant
25 commissioner, Jessica Tisch, to be the commissioner

1 in this administration. I am calling on the City
2 Council, you know, we are not worried about a federal
3 crackdown, we got to worry about this mayor-elect,
4 uhm, (INAUDIBLE) on all of his promises that he made
5 as the mayor. And I want to make it clear that I am
6 calling the City Council to push Senators Brisport
7 and the outgoing Assemblymember, Harvey Epstein, to
8 push the bill to where that, uhm, in the state senate
9 to where that they--the City Council could rule the
10 mayor--can remove the mayor from this, uh, City
11 Council, has the authorization to remove the City
12 Mayor, uh, the Mayor of New York City on the three-
13 fourth majority. I'm talking about removing Zohran
14 Mamdani, because Ramadani (sic), the way he's acting
15 right now, he is not the person that was in the
16 primary. He's not the person that is in the general
17 election. So Ramadani (sic), I'm gonna say this right
18 now, he's a Muslim Andrew Cuomo, and that's what he
19 is. He's nothing but the Muslim Andrew Cuomo. He is
20 doing what Andrew Cuomo was going to... was gonna do
21 if he would have become the mayor. But, he's just
22 a... He's just a Muslim Andrew Cuomo. And, I'm gonna
23 say this right now, that Mr. Zohran Mamdani, uhm,
24 better, uhm, remove the commissioner or the City
25

1 Council should be pushing to remove Zohran Mamdani in
2 2029. Because Mamdani is not the person that, uhm, he
3 say (sic) he... He say he was gonna do when he become
4 mayor (sic). He is completely turned to the moderate
5 Zionist mayor that Andrew Cuomo, Curtis Sliwa, and
6 Eric Adams was gonna be if they got re... If they got
7 elected to the seat. He is just as bad now as the
8 other three.
9

10 And I want to say this right now, we have
11 to make sure that the City Council passes Intro 1332
12 (BACKGROUND NOISE) to protect the deliveristas, and I
13 want to say this right now that the only way the
14 federal government might start reaching in, is when
15 this mayor--Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani, start (sic)
16 empowering those Muslin nonprofits and those Muslin
17 stakeholders, such as Debbie Almontaser and Linda
18 Sarsour to start handing out all those MWBE contracts
19 to all the Muslim folks, while excluding all the
20 African Americans and Jewish people in the City
21 Council and in the city. I'm calling the City Council
22 to make it where that they have the oversight hearing
23 when it come (sic) to handing out MWBE contracts to
24 the so-called minorities, and minority women are
25 those people will be... Will those people practicing

1 Muslims that get these contracts or Christians and
2 Jews and Buddhist and Catholics that get these
3 contracts? Because I have a big feeling what's gonna
4 happen in the Mamdani administration is that he's
5 gonna hand all these contracts to people that
6 practice Islam only in the City Council and the City.
7 And the federal... The federal government will crack
8 down with the help of the Civil Rights
9 Administration--Civil Rights Division (INAUDIBLE)
10 Harmeet Dhillon.

12 So, I want to make this clear right now,
13 like I said, this guy needs to be... need to be
14 watched (sic) in 2026. Zohran Mamdani should be the
15 main guy. He need to be watched by everybody in this
16 city. Because, he's going to-- if he keep on going
17 the route he going (sic), he's going to (TIMER)...

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Your time
19 has expired.

20 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to say
22 for the record, you know, we have these hearings, and
23 people are allowed to come and testify and share
24 their thoughts, but no one made allegations that Bill
25 de Blasio was going to send the MWBE contracts to

1 Italian women or that Mike Bloomberg was going to
2 send the MWBE contracts to Jewish women or that Eric
3 Adams was going to send all the MWBE contracts to
4 African Americans. So, I find the sentiment that
5 Mayor-Elect Mamdani is going to try to somehow put
6 his finger on the scale to direct MWBE contracts to
7 practicing Muslims to be both without merit, without
8 evidence, and frankly, offensive... (CROSS-TALK)

9
10 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: It's not
11 offensive, it's...

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And so with that, I
13 am going to say, thank you all for joining us today.
14 I hope everybody has a wonderful afternoon. And I am
15 going to call it a day. [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 no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 16, 2025