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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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May 25, 2021

Start: 10:06 a.m.

Recess: 8:58 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)

B E F O R E: Daniel Dromm,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Adrienne E. Adams
- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Diana Ayala
- Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- Laurie A. Cumbo
- Darma V. Diaz
- Vanessa L. Gibson
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Karen Koslowitz
- Farah N. Louis
- Steven Matteo
- Francisco P. Moya
- Keith Powers
- Helen K. Rosenthal
- James G. Van Bramer
- Margaret Chin
- Carlos Menchaca

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

2

A P P E A R A N C E S

Senator Robert Jackson
New York State Senate

Henry Garrido
Executive Director of District Council 37

Michael Mulgrew
President of the United Federation of Teachers

Mark Cannizzaro
Executive Vice President of CSA

Daniel Clay
Local President of 1507 Master Gardeners Union of
DC37

Devon Gilliams
Representative of Doctors Council SEIU

Dilcy Benn
President of Local 1505

Donald Nesbit
Executive Vice President of Local 372

James Davis
Faculty Member at Brooklyn College and President
Elect of the Professional Staff Congress

Jim Hamlin-Mcleod
Local 1549

Valentin Colon
President of the New York Public Library Guild,
Local 1930

Marlena Giga
Parks Department Employee

Joe Puleo
District Council 37 Vice President

Barbara Bowen
PSC President

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

- Bob Gormley
District Manager of Community Board 2 in
Manhattan
- Jesse Bodine
District Manager of Manhattan Community Board 4
- Susan Stetzer
Community board budgets
- Jessica Guzman Mejia
Advocate for Latinos across New York City
- Michelle DeMott
Chief of Staff to Mitchell Netburn, President &
CEO of Samaritan Daytop Village
- Nicole McVinua
Director of Policy at Urban Pathways
- Jessica Cinque
Policy Analyst at FPWA
- MJ Okma
Human Services Council
- Juan Pinzon
Director of Health Campaigns and more community
engagement at the Community Service Society
- Christie Peale
Executive Director at the Center for New York
City Neighborhoods
- John Baker
Center for New York City Neighborhoods
- Carlyn Cowen
Chief Policy and Public Affairs Officer of CPC,
the Chinese American Planning Council
- Jorge Velez
Custodial Staff and Essential Worker for the
Queens Division of the Chinese American Planning
Council

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Zaynab Tawil
Mental Health Case Worker at the Arab American
Association of New York

Joy Luangphaxay
Assistant Executive Director for Behavioral
Health Services at Hamilton Madison House, HMH

Olivia Duong
President of Local 3778 of DC 37

Anya Mukarji-Connolly
Associate Director of Policy at the Brooklyn
Defender Services

Donovan Richards
Queens Borough President

Amber Khan
Director of the Health Justice Program at New
York Lawyers for the Public Interest, NYLPI

M'Ral Broodie-Stewart
Senior Staff Attorney in the Access to Education
Project at Staten Island Legal Services

Terry Lawson
Executive Director of UnLocal

Dariel Infante
Youth Leader with Future Of Tomorrow and Urban
Youth Collaborative

Jocelyn Palafox Diaz
Youth Leader at Make the Road New York and the
Urban Youth Collaborative

Juan Torres
Youth Leader at Sisters and Brothers United and
the Urban Youth Collaborative

Maria Bautista
Campaign Director at the Alliance for Quality
Education

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Keyanna Bernard
Youth Leader from Make the Road New York

Alejandra Vázquez Baur
Represent the New Yorkers for Racially Just
Public Schools Steering Committee and the New
York Immigration Coalition

Chrissy Word
Director of Education at City Parks Foundation

Jody Drezner Alperin
Advisory Committee of New York City Opt-Out

Lucas Healy
Eighth grader testifying with mom, Paullette
Healy

Paullette Healy
Member of the Citywide Council on Special
Education

Kaveri Sengupta
Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for
Asian American Children and Families, CACF

Matthew Malendez
Youth Leader at Sisters and Brothers United and
Urban Youth Collaborative

Kaliris Salas
President of CEC 4

Leonie Haimson
Executive Director of Class Size Matters

Heather Clarke Mackin
Representing organizations AQE and Arise
Coalition

Natasha Capers
Director of the New York City Coalition for
Educational Justice

Inshirah DuWors
Mother to Three Public School Children

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Grisel Cardona
Public School Mom with Three Children

Aakriti Khanal
Representing Adhikaar

Diya Basu-Sen
Executive Director of Sapna NYC

Erick Agarijo
Communication Coordinator for the Korean American
Family Service Center

Lakshmi Sammuganathan
Policy Fellow from the Coalition of Asian
American Children and Families CACF

Ravi Reddi
Associate Director for Advocacy and Policy here
at AAF

Roshni Ahmed
Advocate and Outreach Coordinator at Women for
Afghan Women

Sanjana Khan
Co-Founder and Executive Director of Laal

Katie Vo
Outreach and Education Specialist for the COVID-
19 test and trace

Danielle Mowery
The Partnership for the Homeless

Janet Perez
Director of Programs Mixteca Organization

Cheryl Warfield
On behalf of Arts and Culture

Amira Mustapha
Founder and Executive Director of Art Defined
Productions

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

- Benjamin Spierman
General Director of the Bronx Opera
- Melody Capote
Executive Director of the Caribbean Cultural
Center African Diaspora Institute
- Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez
Deputy Director of the Street Vendor Project of
the Urban Justice Center
- Mohamed Attia
Director of the Street Vendor Project
- Rui Li
BIPOC Small Business Empowerment Organizer at
Street Vendor Project
- Justin Pollack
Support for Street Vendors
- Zara Nasir
New York City Anti-Violence Project AVP
- Mallory Tompkins
Represent 82nd Street Academics
- Randi Levine
Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New
York
- Maggie Moroff
ARISE Coalition
- Jeffrey Lau
Adult Literacy Director at the Chinese American
Planning Council
- Kate McDonough
Dignity in Schools Campaign New York
- Emily Hellstrom
Vice President of the CEC for District 2 and
Founder and Chair of the Students with
Disabilities Committee

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Kim Watkins
President of CEC 3

Jeanine Kiely
Member of the ARISE Literacy Coalition

Amy Tsai
Member of the Citywide Council for District 75

Erik Joeras
Director of Government Affairs for the New York
City Charter School Center

Terri West
Director of Government Contracts and School
Partnerships at New York Edge (SPEAKING ON BEHALF
OF RACHAEL GAZDICK)

Jahluka Hamilton
Reside in the Borough of Queens and aged out of
foster care

Amelia Ramirez
Youth Coach at Sheltering Arms

Shyionna Medley
15-year-old, living in Staten Island New York and
Member of Fair Futures

Sade Lythcott
CEO of the National Black Theatre and the Chair
of Coalitions Of Theaters of Color

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes
Executive Director of Dance NYC

Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York

Olympia Kazi
Founding Member of the Music Workers Alliance

Lisa Gilday
Chief Operating Officer of Birch Family Services
(Filling in for Matthew Sturiale)

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Jennifer Stewart
Founding Member of Caring Parents

Jennifer Choi
Woodside Queens Parent of an 11th Grader with
Multiple Disabilities and an IEP

Josephine Okungu
New York State Certified Teacher

Nancy Crooms
Member of Caring Parents

Linda Rosenthal
Director of Early Childhood Educational Services
for Volunteers of America-Greater New York

Alice Bufkin
Director of Policy for Child and Adolescent
Health at Citizens' Committee for Children

Adam Ganser
Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks

Gregory Brender
Behalf of the Daycare Council

Carlos Castell Croke Associate for New York City
Programs at the New York League of Conservation
Voters (SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF JULIE TIGHE)

Tara Das
Government Affairs Manager with New York
Restoration Project (SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF LYNN
KELLY)

K Webster
Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition

Christina Taylor
Director of Programs and Operations for the Van
Cortlandt Park Alliance in the Bronx

Athena Bernkopf
Project Coordinator of the East Harlem-El Barrio
Community Land Trust

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Albert Scott
Board Member of the East New York Community Land Trust

Boris Santos
Treasurer of the East New York Community Land Trust

Debra Ack
Board Member of the East New York Community Land Trust

Roxanne Delgado
Founder of Friends at Home Parkway

Hannah Anousheh
Coordinator of the East New York Community Land Trust

Izoria Fields
Vice President of the East New York Community Land Trust

Deyanira Del Rio
Co-Director at New Economy Project

John Krinsky
Professor at City College of New York

Michelle Neugebauer
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

Pilar De Jesus
Member of CPR, Communities Unite for Police Reform

Kevin Jones
Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New York

Rachel Sherrow
City Meals on Wheels

Katelyn Andrews
Director of Public Policy here on behalf of LiveOn New York

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

- Melissa Sklarz
Government Relations Strategist to SAGE
- Shubhra Datta
Program Manager and Community Outreach Supervisor
at India Home
- Danisha Harris
18-years-old, Social Services
- Juan Tucubal
20-years-old, living in Queens Ozone Park
- Shania Jeffrey
(Signed up to testify but does not know what it
is about)
- Caitlin Delphin
Special Education Teacher at a High School in
Bensonhurst, Brooklyn
- Bryan Cockrell
ENL Teacher in the Bronx
- Tabatha Holley
Pastor of New Day Church
- Kate Hoy
Director of Advocacy Services at AHRC New York
City
- Christopher Trieber
Associate Executive Director for Children's
Services with Interagency Council
- Carolyn Cleveland
Chief Operating Officer at the Kennedy Children
Center
- Jeanne Alter
Executive Director of Kennedy Children's Center
- Joyce Glassman
Special Education Teacher and Administer

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Jolene Gunther-Doherty
community-based 4410 Preschool Special Education
Program Director

Ramandeep Kaur
Policy Associate with the New York Public
Interest Research Group

Nia Morgan
Research and Operations Coordinator with the
Urban Collaborative

Darren Mack
Co-Director of Freedom Agenda

Sarita Dafftary
Co-Director Freedom Agenda

Lois Lee
Representing Chinese American Planning Council

Christina Gavin
One of Two Campus Librarians at a Campus of Six
High Schools in the Northeast Bronx

Debbie Meyer
Parent

Mark Gonsalves
Parent

Lauren Clavin
Lifelong Queens Resident

Liz Accles
Behalf of Community Food Advocates and the Lunch
for Learning Campaign

Pam Koch
Teachers College, Columbia University

Jacqueline Baum
Student at the City College of New York and
representing UHAB, the Urban Homesteading
Assistance Board

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Ligia Guallpa
Executive Director of the Workers Justice Project

Anita (WITH LIGIA GUALLPA)
Member Leader of Workers Justice Project

Diana Moreno
Chief of Staff of New Immigrant Community
Empowerment

Yesenia Mata
Executive Director of La Colmena

Lucy Sexton
Cultural Advocacy Coalition, New Yorkers for
Cultural and Arts

Madaha Kinsey-Lamb
Executive Director and Founder of Mind-Builders
Creative Arts Center

Sophia Harrison
Founder and Executive Director of Arts House
Schools of Music, Dance and Fine Art in Coney
Island

Taryn Sacramone
Executive Director of the Queens Theatre and
Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group

Chantel Fernandez
Ensuring Funding for Fair Futures

Holly Smeltzer
Fair Futures Program Director at the Coalition
for Hispanic Family Services

Kaitlyn Chavez
Young Adult Success Specialist at Coalition for
Hispanic Family Services

Zeniah Sinclair
Educational Supervisor at Youth Development at
Forestdale

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

1
2
3 Mon Yuck Yu
4 Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff at
5 the Academy of Medical and Public Health Services
6 or AMPHS

7
8 Robin Vitale
9 Vice President of Health for the American Heart
10 Association here in New York City

11
12 Greg Mihailovich
13 Community Advocacy Director for the American
14 Heart Association here in New York City

15
16 Laura Jean Hawkins
17 Advisory Board Chair of Astoria Queens Sharing
18 and Caring

19
20 Chris Hartmann
21 Sure We Can

22
23 Rhonda Keyser
24 On the Board of Sure We Can

25
26 Ryan Castalia
27 Executive Director of Sure We Can

28
29 Lee Gough
30 Member of 350 Brooklyn

31
32 Shane Correia
33 Deputy Director of Government Partnerships at the
34 Center for Court Innovation

35
36 Felicia Smith
37 Associate Executive Director at Youth Justice
38 Network

39
40 Kathy Park Price
41 Public Schools Advocate, as a Member of the Panel
42 for Educational Policy

43
44 Gabby Torres
45 Sure We Can

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47 Josefa Marin
48 Sure We Can

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Camilla Salvagno
Community Development Program Coordinator at Sure
We Can

Rene Del Carmen
Sure We Can

Alain Laforest

Lauren Bradley
Urban Librarians Unite

Lauren Comito
Board Chair of Urban Librarians Unite

Djaz Fredrick Zulida
Transgender Librarian at the Brooklyn Public
Library

Juana Flores
Children Librarian for the Brooklyn Public
Library

Kat Savage
Urban Librarians Unite

Lisa Marie Vargas
Director of Family Foster Care at Lutheran Social
Services of New York

Cheyenne Deopersaud
Support for Fair Futures

Demetrius Napolitano
Support for Fair Futures

Katherine DeLeon
Member of the Legal Services Team on Make the
Road New York

Cal Hedigan
CEO of Community Access

Dr. Cynthia Maurer
Visiting Neighbors

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

16

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Bei Chen
Brooklyn Resident

Fatima Shama
Executive Director of the Fresh Air Fund

Prakash Churaman
Arrested at the age of 15 in Queens New York

Matthew Shapiro
Legal Director of the Street Vendor Project at
the Urban Justice Center

Maya Williams
Communities United for Police Reform

Christine Henson
Member of the Justice Committee

Scott Daly
NYJTL

Annie Garneva
Vice President of Policy and Special Initiatives
at the New York City Employment and Training
Coalition

Liliana Polo-McKenna
Chief Executive Officer at Opportunities for a
Better Tomorrow

Caroline Iosso
Director of Advocacy and Strategic Communication
at OBT

Michael Pope
Executive Director of Youth Represent

1
2 SERGEANT PEREZ: Please start your recordings.

3 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: PC recording is started.

4 SERGEANT JONES: PC started.

5 SERGEANT HOPE: Cloud recording is started.

6 SERGEANT PEREZ: Thank you Sergeants. Good

7 morning, welcome to New York City Council's Remote

8 Committee Hearing on Finance. Everyone please turn

9 on your video at this time. Make sure all your audio

10 devices are silenced when you are speaking, so it

11 doesn't interrupt your testimony. All written

12 testimony can be submitted to

13 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is

14 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. Chair Dromm,

15 we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you Sergeant

17 Perez and thank you to all of the Sergeants for all

18 the work that you do for us all the time. Thank you

19 again very, very much.

20 Good morning and welcome to the City Council's

21 tenth and final day of the hearings on the Mayor's

22 Executive Budget for Fiscal '22. My name is Daniel

23 Dromm and I Chair the Finance Committee. Today, we

24 will hear from public. I am joined today by my

1
2 colleagues Council Members Adams, Darma Diaz, Brooks-
3 Powers, Matteo, Powers and Grodenchik and Louis.

4 Before we begin – and Moya. Before we begin with
5 public testimony, I want to say thank you to all the
6 members of the public who are taking time out of
7 their schedules to testify on the Fiscal '22
8 Executive Budget. We value what each of you has to
9 say so please know that even if we don't directly
10 respond to your testimony at today's hearing, we hear
11 you and your testimony is making a difference.

12 With nearly 300 people registered to testify
13 today, if only in the interest of time that we cannot
14 respond individually.

15 As a reminder, each of you will have two minutes
16 to deliver your testimony and we request that out of
17 respect of the hundreds of other people who are
18 waiting to speak, that you please stay within your
19 allotted time.

20 At the end of your testimony, you will be removed
21 from the Zoom meeting and you may continue to watch
22 the hearing via livestream for the duration of the
23 meeting at council.nyc.gov/livestreaming. With that
24 said, I will now turn it over to the Committee
25 Counsel to call up the first panel.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Dromm. My
3 name is Rebecca Chasan and I am Council to the New
4 York City's Council's Committee on Finance.
5 Panelists, as a reminder, you will be on mute until
6 it is time for you to testify, at which time, your
7 name will be called and you will be unmuted by the
8 Zoom host. If you mute yourself after you have been
9 unmuted, you will need to be unmuted again by the
10 host. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell
11 you when your time begins. The Sergeant will let you
12 know when your time is up as well.

13 As a reminder, as the Chair just said, you have
14 two minutes for your testimony and also, as the Chair
15 mentioned, after your panel has finished testifying,
16 you will be removed from the Zoom meeting by the host
17 but you may continue to watch the hearing live at
18 council.nyc.gov/livestream.

19 So, we will now hear from Senator, New York State
20 Senator Robert Jackson followed by Henry Garito.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 NOAH BRICK: Senator Jackson is not present yet.

23 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: Can you hear me?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, he is there.

25 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: Yep, he is there.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

3 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: Okay, so I would like to
4 start. So, good morning Chair Dromm, members of the
5 City Council. I am Robert Jackson representing the
6 31st senatorial district in Manhattan, former member
7 of this body, Chair of the Education Committee and
8 Co-Chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus and
9 part of the negotiating team. And I thank you for
10 dedication to this process and as a parent activist,
11 I will delete plaintiff in the campaign for Fiscal
12 equity lawsuit and after 28 years, we will finally be
13 receiving full funding for New York public schools
14 with \$.24 billion phased in over three years from the
15 state of New York along with federal stimulus money
16 of \$4.8 billion from the American Rescue Plan.

17 New York City finally had the funds to provide
18 our children with the opportunity for a sound, basic
19 education and beyond that. And now, we have to
20 figure it. And so Danny are you and your team from
21 the Finance Committee – My team has been focusing on
22 questioning and engaging education activists
23 citywide. And there are several student needs
24 parents have identified, a clear and benefit during a
25 pandemic was small class sizes and we must continue

1
2 that. But New York City finally had to fund to
3 provide our children with the education it rightfully
4 deserved. Now, I say to you, the contract for
5 excellence, look at that with respects to all of the
6 things that we need. We need nurses, we need social
7 workers, we need psychologists, we need wrap around
8 services for all of the children. Individual support
9 remains crucial, especially so many children that
10 have lost relatives and family as a result of COVID-
11 19. We need to have student – we need a targeted one
12 on one small group intervention for literacy,
13 universal early dyslexia screening, English Language
14 learners, the intellectual and development delayed
15 required dedicated services.

16 In essence Danny, you know what they need. You
17 were an educator yourself. You are a leader in our
18 City Council. So, before the pandemic and now with
19 all of the monies that we have, we must –

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: And Danny I ask you if I
22 can have 30 second more.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of course Senator.

24 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: Thank you. So,
25 obviously, you're dealing with the Executive Budget

1
2 right now and I depend – I and the parent depend on
3 you and the City Council to keep the Mayor and the
4 Chancellor in check in fulfilling the needs of our
5 children in the entire city.

6 Now, as you know, we heard all yesterday morning
7 that we're going to in-person learning and now we
8 have to work together in understanding that there
9 needs to be flexibility. But the most important
10 thing Danny I ask you and your colleagues and the
11 City Council, hold the Mayor, hold the Chancellor and
12 hold the Administration accountable to make sure
13 every child gets a good education. And I thank you
14 for giving me the extra time.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Senator Jackson and
16 I have to say, you are a hero of mine. You were the
17 one who fought for and walked to Albany not once but
18 twice to get those CFE funds that we so desperately
19 needed and so, it's our job now. And with your help
20 with the legislation that you are proposing in Albany
21 as well, you know that we make sure that this funding
22 goes where it will help the students the most.

23 I have made it very well known that reducing
24 class size is a top priority as a former New York
25 City public School Teacher, I know the impact that

1
2 class size reduction will have on teaching and
3 learning and I admire the work that you have done in
4 the past as the Chair of the Education Committee.

5 So, I just want to assure you that I am working
6 very hard toward that goal and I thank you for coming
7 in and for giving testimony today. It's very
8 meaningful and I appreciate it very much.

9 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: And I will send in my
10 formal written statement to you and the City Council.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Senator Jackson.

13 SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON: You're welcome.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
15 from Henry Garrido followed by Michael Mulgrew.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 HENRY GARRIDO: Good morning Mr. Chair. Good
18 morning everyone. My name is Henry Garrido, I am the
19 Executive Director of District Council 37 in New York
20 City. The largest municipal union in New York
21 representing 150,000 members and approximately
22 150,000 retirees. I appear before you today
23 virtually and thank you for the opportunity to
24 testify today.

1
2 District Council 37 represents the workers with -
3 spent the last year calling essential. Our school
4 lunch workers work throughout the holidays to
5 continue to deliver foods for families in need. Not
6 just children but families. Our EMT's raised to
7 every part of the city to deliver people to care.
8 Our health and hospital workers, social workers,
9 individual workers, helped countless families that
10 were grieving throughout this pandemic. For the most
11 part, they have reported the work as normal as every
12 day of this pandemic without question or complaint.

13 They have been the heroes who have kept the city
14 running. Even though this Fiscal Year outlook is
15 much better for FY22, the Executive Budget compared
16 to the Preliminary Budget, there still remains some
17 areas that need to be addressed in our opinion. I'd
18 like to specifically focus on five areas of critical
19 importance for DC37 and for the overall recovery of
20 the City of New York.

21 Number one, city public hospitals. Number two,
22 the libraries. Number three, the cultural
23 institutions. Number four, year around childcare for
24 families and number five, our parks.

1
2 I'll begin with health and hospital. More
3 hospital system has shouldered more of the burden
4 throughout this pandemic than the health and
5 hospitals. Our public sector health professionals
6 have given all that they have to treat New Yorkers
7 and keep our healthcare system afloat.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 HENRY GARRIDO: Mr. Chair can I have -

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, of course.

11 HENRY GARRIDO: I will summarize very quickly.

12 This year's budget represents already a one percent
13 cut for Medicaid. This could you know severally hurt
14 our safety net providers disproportionately because
15 they serve lower income communities more reliant on
16 Medicaid.

17 We already have seen 70 percent of the patients
18 on Medicaid or insured be treated by the Health +
19 Hospital corporation. And we have seen with our own
20 eyes what happens when we defund the safety net of
21 public hospitals.

22 I want to additionally talk a little bit about
23 what's happening with the assessors in the City of
24 New York who can traditionally bring in revenue. Who
25 have been cut traditionally; I'd like to bring that

1
2 to your attention. And just to summarize, I want to
3 speak very strongly about parks and libraries.

4 Particularly libraries as you know, have now become
5 centers for not only centers where people can get
6 vaccinated and tested but also centers that a lot of
7 the children will go to access internet, as we saw.

8 We saw lines of children standing outside public
9 libraries in order to capture the Wi-Fi so that they
10 can do the homework. In a city as rich as New York,
11 that is unconscionable and we should be addressing
12 that. So, the proposals to create libraries as hubs
13 for many governments is something that should be and
14 should be funded and looked into.

15 And lastly, I want to talk about parks and
16 childcare. We are in full support of the Mayor's 3K
17 for all for seats but let's not call it 3K for All
18 because it's not. It doesn't fund PreK for some
19 communities of color and areas that should be looked
20 into. It is an expansion and we are supporting of it
21 but we believe it should be continued, especially for
22 early childhood education. And so that, we're asking
23 for the Council to invest \$45 million to ensure full
24 childcare.

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2 And lastly, the Parks, who have been decimated
3 through this pandemic and need to be funded as more
4 New Yorkers begin to come back into an open area. We
5 expect this summer to be a record summer of people
6 coming into our parks. We are looking for the
7 Council to fund 100 CPW's, 50 gardeners and to fund
8 more PEP office as we see crime rise in the parks and
9 elsewhere.

10 Mr. Chairman, I will submit my written testimony
11 for the record but I thank you for the opportunity
12 for speaking with you today. You are on mute Mr.
13 Chair pardon.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you sir. Thank you
15 President Garrido. We recognize the issues that you
16 have raised. Working on many of them at the current
17 moment. Others have come in and provided some
18 testimony towards this in the past and in particular
19 don't like the dance that we have to always go
20 through around our parks workers and other workers as
21 well. So, hopefully before adoption, we will get all
22 of this settled and you know we'll come to a good
23 conclusion.

24 So, thank you for coming in and giving testimony
25 President Garrido.

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2 HENRY GARRIDO: Thank you sir.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Michael
4 Mulgrew followed by Mark Cannizzaro.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 MICHAEL MULGREW: First, I want to thank Chairman
7 Dromm and everybody in City Council for all your
8 partnering that we've done especially during this
9 pandemic and what we need to do to move forward.

10 I am going to try to be as quick as possible.
11 Look, right now, it really comes down to what do our
12 kids need to move forward and in order to do that we
13 have to be smart and actually make it about what our
14 kids need. I was horrified last week when I heard
15 the Department of Ed testify in front of you that
16 they want to spend a half a billion dollars to test
17 children.

18 When we have a proposal on the table that says,
19 what we actually need are intervention teams for
20 every 250 to 300 students in New York City. An
21 intervention team made up of a social workers, a
22 guidance counselor, an academic intervention
23 specialist and a psychologist to actually do one on
24 one analysis of each and every student of New York
25 City. Not going out and doing an RFP on some test

1
2 from a private company and then coming back with an
3 analysis that really doesn't make sense to us.

4 So, that's why we need City Council to really
5 stand strong here. The other things, some of the
6 things we've already started working on with your
7 help and support, we're making available to every
8 graduating senior a one on one colleague and career
9 counseling center with an expert. We are moving
10 forward with training all the teachers and we have
11 already trained over 5,000. Training all teachers
12 are making it available so that they recognize the
13 signs of emotional, social and emotional distress or
14 complete trauma. We need to recognize that in our
15 students as well as in themselves because these are
16 the folks who are going to be doing the work.

17 But when we do recognize it in a student, we need
18 to make sure we have a place to put that student. We
19 cannot go through four to five months of paperwork
20 trying to get them the proper support that they need.
21 Which is probably going to be a clinician at that
22 point.

23 And to Rob - Senator Jackson's point, we really
24 need to start planning on how to learn and we know
25 smaller class sizes makes a big difference. We have

1
2 seen it during this pandemic but the city never has a
3 plan. So, what we are recommending is taking the 100
4 DDS schools in New York City and right now -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 MICHAEL MULGREW: Telling the Department of
7 Education - If I could have a moment more I would
8 appreciate that.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of course.

10 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you and telling the
11 Department of Education, ordering the Department of
12 Education to say these 400 media schools need to
13 lower their class sizes this year and let's come up
14 with a plan so that all schools can start lowering
15 their class.

16 So, again, when we're trying to decide what we
17 need from this budget, we need to be smart. What do
18 our kids need? What do our parents need to help our
19 children and what do the people at the school need to
20 meet this great challenge on doing all of the harm in
21 this pandemic? And we're going to invite all of City
22 Council to work with us starting this evening on the
23 Our Kids Need Campaign because that's what's going to
24 make a difference. Not hiring more consultants so
25 that we can make - have press conference and say

1
2 we're doing something that really isn't going to make
3 a difference. And I thank you for all your support
4 and all of the work that we've done on behalf of the
5 children in New York City.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you President Mulgrew.
7 You know that I was a proud New York City public
8 school teacher and UFT Chapter leader for many years,
9 so I am very aware of the issues that you have
10 raised. You know the testing piece deeply concerns
11 me. I remember when I went through education classes
12 at City College. They told us the proper way to look
13 at fraud, to make your individual decisions and
14 observations and assessments of students, not based
15 on what other people thought but your own individual
16 observations. And to bring back this testing issue
17 at the cost that they want to pay, the money that
18 they would put into that is money that could be used
19 to meet the objectives that you have spoken about,
20 particularly class size reduction.

21 So, I look forward to continuing to work with you
22 as we move toward adoption to meet many of the goals
23 that you have mentioned here in your testimony today.
24 Thank you for coming in and I deeply appreciate all
25 of your supports.

1
2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you so much.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Mark
4 Cannizzaro followed by Daniel Clay.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 MARK CANNIZZARO: Good morning everyone and thank
7 you Chairman Dromm and Treyger for your hard work and
8 to all the Council Members. Before I even begin, I
9 just want to say thanks because last time I testified
10 a few months back, I was asking you to make sure that
11 budgets were held harmless for deficit rollover next
12 year. And I was asking to make sure that we receive
13 the 100 percent Fair Student Funding for our schools.
14 And both of things have been accomplished in addition
15 to the fact that you always fund our executive
16 leadership institute and have committed to doing so
17 again.

18 So, that gives me great hope going into next
19 school year. I am certainly on board with the class
20 size reduction piece but I do caution everyone that
21 we do not use the Fair Student Funding, 100 percent
22 Fair Student Funding as a reason or as funds to
23 reduce class size because those funds – that formula
24 is based on full class size as of today. If we are
25

1
2 going to reduce class size further, we may need
3 additional targeted funds in order to do so.

4 I also thank the Council for the Mayor's - the
5 response to the executive's budget in asking for \$21
6 million for our early childhood educators. All we
7 hear about is the Mayor's plan and the signature plan
8 that the Mayor has for early childhood education and
9 PreK and 3K. While we have our early childhood
10 educators who are doing everything that our school
11 leaders are doing it for the Department of Education
12 but they happen to work in CBO's. They happen to be
13 minority; majority women and majority minority
14 employees and they are funded at about 50 percent or
15 they are paid at about 50 percent of what their
16 colleagues in Department of Education make.

17 That \$21 million response to the Mayor's budget
18 is great and it would be greatly appreciated if you
19 could continue to push for that so that we can
20 finally get them on a path to pay parity.

21 And then finally, I would just like to say that
22 we're all excited about all of our students returning
23 to in-person learning in September but there is one -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
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2 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thing that everyone needs to
3 know. Chair, if I could just have 30 more seconds.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, yes.

5 MARK CANNIZZARO: One thing everyone really needs
6 to know is, the current social distancing guidelines
7 will not allow for 100 percent of students to be in
8 schools in most cases. Now, we're all banking on the
9 fact that these guidelines will be further reduced
10 and the restrictions will be lifted and the only
11 reason I am mentioning it here is because when I read
12 quotes in the newspaper, coming out of City Hall and
13 the Department of Education that we're going to
14 follow current distancing guidelines and have a 100
15 percent of the students in school. I see this being
16 a set up for principals being the one's to ask
17 families or to tell families that no, in the current
18 situation, they can't all fit. So, we need to be
19 honest with our families and let them know.

20 Some schools maybe able to do it but there will
21 be many, many schools that won't and again, I am
22 encouraged and I'm confident that these guidelines
23 will change as time goes on but everyone should know
24 where we stand now. Thank you all so much.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you President
3 Cannizzaro and thank all the principals that have
4 done such a tremendous job being there on the front
5 line over this whole last 15 months or so of the
6 pandemic. And I agree totally with what you have
7 brought up as issues that remain and you're right, I
8 don't think that we should be relying on 100 percent
9 fair student funding to reduce class size.

10 Particularly because many principals may want to use
11 that to hire people but also, other principals may
12 want to use it for other things in their schools.

13 So, what I have done with the DOE was when they
14 came in for questioning was to say, there is no way
15 we will know exactly, I don't think, how many
16 principals have used it for additional teachers in
17 their school before we come to adoption. So, we
18 actually really do need, I propose at least \$250
19 million for class size reduction.

20 And just finally, let me say as a former member
21 of your union and a daycare center director, I know
22 first hand the issue that you are talking about with
23 the directors and with the staff and the daycare
24 centers. And actually, it's one of the reasons I
25 want to the Board of Education was because I could

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2 make more money as a Board of Education teacher than
3 I could as a daycare center director. So, that is
4 something that we will continue to fight for and I
5 have been proud to fight for in the past.

6 And I know that Council Member Helen Rosenthal
7 has a question.

8 MARK CANNIZZARO: Sure.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much.
11 Chair Dromm, I'm just going to double down on – you
12 took all the words out of my mouth.

13 Mark, you are phenomenal leader for these
14 principals.

15 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: They are so lucky to
17 have you. You hit the nail on the head on all the
18 important remaining issues. Frankly, Chair Treyger
19 has reiterated your point about Fair Student Funding
20 not necessarily paying to reduce class size. That's
21 eviction and in addition to that, when we spoke about
22 it with the DOE and with the SCA, we very clearly
23 made the point that if you are serious about reducing
24 class size, then you have to get more space in our
25 schools or build more schools. You're not being

1
2 honest when we talk about smaller class size if it
3 doesn't come along with more physical space and I
4 agree with you, the burden ends up falling on our
5 principals and that's not right.

6 Also, I agree with you 100 percent that we've
7 created a two tier system of early childhood care and
8 it's irresponsible of city government anywhere to do
9 that. And we will fight hard to make sure that the
10 early childhood centers that are not affiliated with
11 schools are fully funded in the same way that our
12 schools. We work hard to make sure they are fully
13 funded and that the teachers and the administrators
14 are paid fairly. It's a union contract.

15 So, I just wanted to double down on what you've
16 said and let you know that it helps us. Your coming
17 here today helps us remember to double down on these
18 issues -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And you have my word
21 that I will be as a member of ENT, along with Chair
22 Dromm and Treyger fighting very hard for these
23 issues. Thank you.

24 MARK CANNIZZARO: Your support is much
25 appreciated. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Before we move on
3 I want to say that we've been joined by Council
4 Member Ampry-Samuel and I believe that there are at
5 least Council Member Grodenchik has a question.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I just want to join
8 with Chair Dromm and Chair Rosenthal and make that
9 point again about, uhm, if you are going to reduce
10 class sizes, you need the space to do it. And you
11 know I have visited every single one of my schools
12 multiple times and it's just not possible in many of
13 our schools to reduce class sizes.

14 So, we have to be very, very smart about how we
15 go about this and I also would not want to see any of
16 the monies that have been put out - Fair Student
17 funding to be diverted in such a way. If the city is
18 serious about reducing class sizes where we can,
19 there must be more funds allocated to that.
20 Principals, we have fought for as long as I have been
21 in the Council to make sure that there was fair
22 student funding at 100 percent for every school and
23 we're not going to allow for diversion of those
24 monies.

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2 So, thank you President Cannizzaro and President
3 Mulgrew for being here today.

4 MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. We'll now go back
7 to Committee Counsel.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Daniel
9 Clay followed by Devon Gilliams.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 DANIEL CLAY: Hi there everybody. My name is
12 Daniel Clay and I am Local President of 1507 Master
13 Gardeners Union of DC37 and Gardener here in Prospect
14 Park where I'm - from where I am speaking to you and
15 I am out in the field right now working with some of
16 my favorite people. Our regular volunteers, these
17 guys are monstrous and what we're doing is taking
18 care of a woodland. We're weeding and cleaning the
19 woodland, so that they don't become a crazy, weedy,
20 viny, thorny, filled with poison ivy, just
21 disastrous.

22 So, instead, they can become good, healthy
23 woodlands. And so, like I always say, you think of
24 us gardeners as you know happy folks planting a
25 couple of flowers and sprinkling some water on them

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2 but no, no, no, like, I always say, we've got so much
3 work to do. Please, please, I urge the City Council
4 and the Mayor to do the right thing. Baseline the
5 workers. Restore the budget. Do more, do the best
6 you can so that everybody in New York City can enjoy
7 the benefits.

8 I yield the rest of my time. Thanks everybody.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you very
10 much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Devon
12 Gilliams followed by Dilcy Benn.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 DEVON GILLIAMS: Good morning Council Member
15 Dromm and Committee Members. My name is Devon
16 Gilliams and I am here today as a Representative of
17 Doctors Council SEIU. Thank you for the opportunity
18 to testify today. Doctors Council SEIU and United
19 Voice for Doctors our patients in the community we
20 serve. We are a union representing thousands of
21 doctors, an employed practice in New York City, New
22 York State and other cities and states.

23 We believe in quality affordable and safe
24 healthcare as a basic human right and social good
25 achieved and accessible by all. Our members put

1
2 their lives on the line during COVID-19 pandemic and
3 continue to do so often leaving their families behind
4 to care for the most vulnerable and sick patients and
5 to manage and to respond to this disease.

6 While we realize that New York State and New York
7 City may face budget issues in the future due to the
8 enduring economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.
9 Laying off workers or demanding concessions will not
10 serve the problem. The city budget problems will
11 need to be addressed but not on the backs of those
12 who work for the city and those who have given and
13 continue to give so much to deal with the coronavirus
14 pandemic.

15 On vaccinations, we must continue and increase
16 our efforts, especially working to understand and
17 address how communities of color have been
18 historically effected by institutional racism and how
19 this can result in distrust of vaccination efforts.
20 We must ensure culturally competent care. We must
21 ensure that the communities of colors that were
22 disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 receive the
23 resources and care needed.

24 We must act quickly and decisively to reverse the
25 long trend of austerity which has effected the

1
2 strength and efficacy of our healthcare system and
3 this means working to address the harmful practice of
4 hospital closures and consolidation, which has led to
5 the creation of healthcare deserts in low income
6 communities of color.

7 As we move forward through the pandemic, we must
8 be mindful of and fund new or emergent pathways to
9 administer care or amplify and enlarge existing ones
10 including telehealth. We must continue and increase
11 funding H+H and the mayoral agencies to enable the
12 retention of doctors and the recruitment of new
13 doctors.

14 We need to fund mental health services for
15 healthcare workers who worked during the COVID-19
16 pandemic. It's important for us -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 DEVON GILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. I want
20 to say we have been joined by Council Member Ayala as
21 well and Counsel, would you please call the next
22 witness?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Dilcy
24 Benn followed by Donald Nesbit.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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DILCY BENN: Hello, can you hear me? Hello?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you.

DILCY BENN: Okay, good morning Chairpersons Dromm, Rosenthal and fellow City Councilmembers. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify. My name is Dilcy Benn and I am the President of Local 1505 of DC 37 representing over 1,000 thousand City Parks Workers referred to as CPWs, primarily in New York City and the Parks and Recreation Department.

My members work in all five boroughs conducting maintenance and operations in all City Parks. Once again, I want to thank the Speaker, the City Council, and the Mayor for baselining the 100 CPWs in Fiscal Year '20, what was fought for for five years.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the Parks Department reduced the budget by \$84 million in Fiscal Year '21. It was the second largest agency cut in the city budget. This came at a time where attendance at parks was unpredictable. Okay, this year, the help of federal funding and the Parks Department announced that they are in the process of hiring the full amount of seasonal staff,

1
2 maintenance, cleaners, as well as adding 2,500 City
3 Cleanup Corps members to work in parks.

4 While this is good news, the Executive Budget
5 does not address the restoration of the \$10 million
6 for the additional 100 City Park Workers and 50
7 Gardeners in the City Parks Department's budget that
8 was added in Fiscal Year '20 but not baselined. As
9 the city starts to reopen and the Mayor's
10 announcement of all the openings of beaches and pools
11 for the summer, these workers are needed more than
12 ever.

13 We saw that what happened last year when there
14 wasn't enough staff to care for and maintain parks,
15 pools and beaches. These areas were dirty, filled
16 with garbage and continue to dedicate to continue to
17 accumulate. Despite council members organizing
18 cleanups in their areas with volunteers but there is
19 nothing like dedicated parks workers. Furthermore,
20 due to the shortage of workers, many parks bathrooms
21 were closed, parks were closed, since there was not
22 enough staff to clean and stock the bathrooms.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 DILCY BENN: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Donald
3 Nesbit followed by James Davis.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 DONALD NESBIT: Good morning. Good morning
6 Chairman Dromm and the distinguished members of the
7 City Council Finance Committee, I am Donald Nesbit,
8 Executive Vice President of Local 372. We have
9 24,000 members in schools. It may be a little noisy
10 in the background but I decided this morning that it
11 is important to testify with the members who are
12 actually doing some work. So, it's not noisy because
13 they want to be noisy but they are still servicing
14 the public and the students that are in our schools.

15 The thousands of workers in Local 372 represents
16 perform essential support work to help the 1.2
17 million public school children of New York City and
18 help them in getting learning ready. Our School
19 Crossing Guards, who remained essential throughout
20 the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure the children cross
21 safely and adults cross safely during the mornings
22 and afternoon commutes. Our School Lunch Workers
23 unload, prepare and serve food each day, including
24 during the summer and continue to feed both students
25

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2 and members of the community on an essential basis
3 throughout this time of crisis.

4 Our Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention
5 Specialists work with students in mental health, are
6 needed now more than ever to prevent substance abuse,
7 gun violence and bullying and gang prevention and
8 mediation. I want to thank and commend the Mayor and
9 the City Council for recognizing the importance of
10 and the importance of investing in New York City's
11 public schools and employees.

12 The future that our education provides for a
13 child is one of the most important obligations we
14 must fulfill. I also want to commend the city for
15 its leadership in prioritizing the health and safety
16 of over one million students and tens of thousands of
17 teachers and support staff throughout the schools
18 since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic over a year
19 ago.

20 It is important for us here today to applaud
21 essential workers, including those represented by
22 Local 372. Though the school system was largely
23 closed, many of the 9,000 School Lunch employees and
24 2,600 –

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

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2 DONALD NESBIT: I will summarize Mr. Chair if
3 that's okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

5 DONALD NESBIT: Alright, 2,600 workers, School
6 Lunch Employees and School Crossing Guards remained
7 on the job throughout this pandemic. I applaud the
8 Council for looking into the public health crisis
9 that we had in our school kitchens, with ventilation
10 and air conditioning and the response from the
11 Council to provide \$69 million on a crispy year 2022
12 in the city budget towards the DOE's capital plan.

13 Our students are facing mental health crisis and
14 I want to point out that the SAPIS are already
15 prepared for the social emotional component in
16 looking into what the children need forward – moving
17 forward and so, we want to ask the Council if they
18 can match the \$2 million allocated for SAPIS that the
19 state legislature has done. Parent coordinators have
20 also navigated this crisis for families, our
21 community titles and assisted parents who have
22 language barriers, with paperwork and different
23 things that they need to go to certain agencies
24 throughout this crisis and are certainly needed.

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2 We deal with a public health homeless crisis and
3 Local 372 members while working and servicing
4 members, community member and children also
5 experience this homelessness.

6 So, to address this homeless crisis among our
7 working members, Local 372 respectfully requests that
8 the City Council and the Mayor raise our members
9 wages in addition to looking into has it paid for
10 those who are essential so that they can afford to
11 stay in their homes and put food on their own tables
12 to ensure our members have adequate job and income
13 protections. And at this critical time, school
14 support staff are critical in this function in school
15 system. They create space everyday where teachers
16 can teach and students can learn. Local 372 workers
17 will provide these essential services to the public
18 school system.

19 In closing, I'll just extends my gratitude to the
20 members of the Council for your support for our
21 titles. We recognize that it is not enough resources
22 to address every worthy or righteous cause and for
23 service throughout the city. I mean, they have some
24 tough decisions to be made over the next couple of
25 years but we thank you for your support and on behalf

1
2 of the 24,000 members of Local 372, I want to thank
3 you for this opportunity to testify before you at the
4 Council.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Donald and thank
6 you for being in a school. It's really important
7 that you are actually there. Thank your workers
8 please for the frontline service that they provided
9 New Yorkers during the pandemic, especially providing
10 food. I saw them at a number of the schools handing
11 out food and they were kind and receptive and really
12 did a fantastic job, as do all of your members. So,
13 thank you for coming in and giving testimony. Very
14 much appreciate it, thank you.

15 DONALD NESBIT: Thank you Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member Darma Diaz has
17 a question.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Thank you Chair Dromm. No,
20 it's not a question. I just want to say thank you to
21 Donald Nesbit for the 24,000 you know that you are
22 representing today. It was defiantly an honor and a
23 pleasure to work with you in getting the food out and
24 the meals and for you yourself going the extra mile
25 and making sure that the meals were delivered. I

1
2 just want to thank you again publicly for your
3 service and that of your staff and I know it was hot
4 and intense conditions. And gain, I can't thank you
5 enough for making it happen. Thank you Donald.

6 DONALD NESBIT: Thank you Council Member for all
7 you do.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Let's go to our
9 next witness Counsel.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from James
11 Davis followed by Jim Hamlin-Mcleod.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 JAMES DAVIS: Good morning, thank you Chairperson
14 Dromm and Finance Committee members. My name is
15 James Davis, I am a Faculty Member at Brooklyn
16 College and the President Elect of the Professional
17 Staff Congress. The union that represents 30,000
18 faculty and staff in the CUNY system. I appreciate
19 the opportunity to speak with you for a minute this
20 morning about the needs that CUNY has as you
21 negotiate the final city budget.

22 In a moment, I think my colleague outgoing
23 President Barbara Bowen will speak to you about
24 attempting to restore the cuts. Right now on the
25 table are approximately \$67 million in cuts to CUNY

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2 and we are really seeking a restoration of those
3 cuts. But I want to focus on a couple of areas of
4 investment above and beyond the cuts that we believe
5 would really go a long way to making CUNY be central
6 to the recovery of the city.

7 Three area in particular: One is that we're
8 really seeking support from the city for revenue to
9 offset the tuition losses that our community colleges
10 are currently suffering. Community college
11 enrollment has declined but it will recover and it's
12 really critical that in addition to the support from
13 the state, that the city also do its part in helping
14 the community colleagues to rebound. So, we're
15 seeking approximately \$40 million to help from the
16 city so that those hardest hit students can come back
17 from the pandemic.

18 The other two areas we are seeking additional
19 funding \$20.4 million has to do with mental health
20 counseling and academic advisement. Currently CUNY
21 students do not have access at nearly the
22 professionally recommended rates of mental health
23 counselors or academic advisors. So, these are the
24 areas that we really seek the Committees assistance
25 in negotiating with the Executive. We feel that any

1
2 recovery for the city has to go through CUNY and that
3 we serve the hardest hit communities during the
4 pandemic. Thank you for your consideration.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Did you say
7 Barbara was going to join us or?

8 JAMES DAVIS: I believe she is.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you President
10 Davis or President-elect Davis. I appreciate you
11 coming in. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jim
13 Hamlin-Mcleod followed by Valentin Colon.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Hamlin-Mcleod?

16 JIM HAMLIN-MCLEOD: I'm sorry. I did have my
17 unmute, I'm sorry. Okay, good morning Chair,
18 Committee Chair and good morning Committee members.
19 This testimony is on behalf of Local 1549 President
20 Eddie Rodriguez and the 14,000 members and taxpayers
21 of New York City Clerical Administrative Employees
22 Local 1549. Our members are the frontline workers in
23 nearly every city agency, 311, New York Police
24 Department, New York Health and Hospitals and Metro
25 Plus.

1
2 Our members primarily are women of color who
3 live, work, shop, and vote in every community in this
4 city. In Local 1549 Executive Board and its 14,000
5 members and I, are asking once again for the
6 Council's Finance Committee to take a leadership
7 role, cost efficient, responsible action to save this
8 city. We have been asking far too long for the city
9 to monitor the agency spending and hiring of its
10 civilian employees in HRA, Health + Hospital, and
11 311, and NYPD.

12 The uniform agencies like NYPD, Corrections,
13 Sanitation have been asking for more money for
14 additional personnel. But they still have uniform
15 personnel doing administrative work Local 1549 latest
16 figures factoring in our collective bargaining raise
17 but not those of uniformed personnel. In the NYPD
18 alone shows a conservative saving of roughly \$30
19 million recurring yearly. We have asked for an audit
20 of these agencies' personnel and their assignment.
21 This would save the agency, city and taxpayers
22 millions of dollars each year. The cost of uniform
23 member is two to three times as clerical worker such
24 as, a Police Administrative Aid or Clerical
25 Associate. The savings could be allocated to other

1
2 city projects, like housing, homelessness, childcare
3 and the environment.

4 With more than half of the City Council seats are
5 up for grabs, a mayoral election and Borough
6 President position, change is coming. But today's
7 Committee Council Members can start to move in the
8 right direction. The coronavirus pandemic hit the
9 city hard. It put us in a huge deficit. Thanks to
10 President Biden and Congress passing the recovery act
11 bill. Helping states, cities and families across the
12 country. Since the city has received this stimulus
13 funding it is a perfect time to invest in the savings
14 that would begin to accrue immediately.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 JIM HAMLIN-MCLEOD: It is time to help our
17 diverse population in need of hiring professional
18 services interpreters instead of the Council proposed
19 in the latest response to the city administration
20 proposed budget for increased privatization of the
21 interpreter function.

22 I'm sorry Chair, can I get a couple more seconds?

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, please.

24 JIM HAMLIN-MCLEOD: Okay, I'll wrap it up. We
25 have an issue with 311 call volume has gone up in the

1
2 last year, mainly due to the pandemic. The need for
3 more Call Center Representatives. The Agency had to
4 spend money on the outside help last year just to
5 keep up with the call volume.

6 The Local asked the committee to fund the Agency
7 for hiring more CCR's to stop unnecessary outsource
8 spending. The local and I, also ask for the city to
9 put money into the budget for interpreters. The
10 agencies are wasting money, more money outside the
11 parties to this interpreters. The city has a civil
12 service title to do interpreting. These titles are
13 not high paying jobs and they promotes growth for the
14 city and needed income.

15 Okay, we ask the City Council to make sure
16 essential workers' pay is done fairly. We ask that
17 you support and see that New York City, Corrections,
18 Sanitation Civilianize and administrative functions
19 and place employees in the jobs they were hired to
20 do. We ask that they look into the premium pay as
21 well, that was allocated for the states. Thank you
22 for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
25 Valentin Colon followed by Marlana Giga.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 VALENTIN COLON: Good morning Chairman Daniel
4 Dromm and fellow committee members, my name is
5 Valentin Colon, I am the President of the New York
6 Public Library Guild, Local 1930. And I want to
7 thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify on
8 behalf of all the patrons and employees of the
9 Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library,
10 and the Queens Public Library.

11 I'm here to speak on behalf of my colleagues, the
12 President of the Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local
13 1482. The New York Public Library Quasi-Public
14 Employees Local 374 and Queens Public Library Guild
15 1321. The four of us once again join our
16 collaborative forces to come together to testify on
17 the importance of an open library that is clean,
18 secure and fully staffed. We're here to say thank
19 you to each and every city Council Member who has
20 taken steps to protect and fight for library funding.
21 You have been the guiding light for our communities
22 that want and need us.

23 It is your vision that has seen us through many
24 rough and rocky waters. During this terrible time of
25 the pandemic, our members demonstrated their

1
2 resiliency to face the challenges that they failed us
3 and to not only create but enhance in-person and
4 remote library services for all. Our members, the
5 frontline workers that our communities come in
6 contact with, day in and day out, find themselves
7 struggling to maintain library services as more and
8 more of their fellow workers leave the systems. And
9 with the Mayor's proposed budget cuts, the remaining
10 staff will need to reassess what can actually be done
11 and what needs to be shelved.

12 Right now, the three library systems do have
13 enough staff to – do not, excuse me, do not have
14 enough staff to open six days a week. During the
15 pandemic many public service work, staff, librarians,
16 clerks and custodians either retired, found other
17 work, or left for other reasons. The three libraries
18 have graciously turned over several branches to the
19 city so that we can play our part in fighting this
20 pandemic.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 VALENTIN COLON: We do not know what – Chairman
23 Dromm, if I –

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

25

1
2 VALENTIN COLON: Thank you. We do know that the
3 impact of this pandemic will have – we not know, I'm
4 sorry, what the impact of this pandemic will have on
5 the future of libraries and the services we provide.
6 Some things will be the same, some will be different.
7 However, when we open all 213 branches, Adult
8 Learning, and Tech centers for our new normal
9 operation, our customers will expect to have their
10 libraries and in-person services open six days per
11 week.

12 I will say that at New York Public Library, when
13 the pandemic subsides and we return to fuller
14 services with increased hours, programs, events and
15 library services, this will be at the expense of the
16 staff. Over the last couple budget battles Local
17 1930 has continued to lose members. Local 1930 has
18 lost over 50 positions, as well as never getting an
19 additional 100 new positions that were promised to it
20 several years ago.

21 Management will tell you that circulation and
22 programming numbers are up, this has all happened at
23 the expense of staff not being able to take a real
24 vacation. My members for many years now have had to
25 cancel or just not take vacations due to staffing

1
2 shortages and these shortages have at times effected
3 branch operations, which require branch being closed.
4 Alternately, New York Public Library has had to offer
5 overtime, just to keep a branch open. Security at
6 our neighborhood branches has always been a major
7 issue for all stakeholder and given the current
8 environment we unfortunately find ourselves in,
9 security is of even greater importance.

10 I will say that I was recently informed that for
11 the Staten Island branch's we may be losing all the
12 security guards at the branches when we reopen. And
13 at other locations it has at times, been inadequate
14 and that will continue. The concerns expressed at
15 New York Public Library are the concerns shared by
16 Queens and Brooklyn union members. Lack of staff,
17 security, schedules change, juggling too many
18 programs and services are affecting each and every
19 library employee.

20 I will say I recently celebrated 40 years of
21 service with the library and 12 years of service as
22 the President of Local 1930 and can speak to the
23 decline in staffing and the impact that these
24 shortages have created.

1
2 The Mayor's proposed cut will devastate library
3 services and harm our communities, especially now
4 when our neighbors need us to bridge the digital,
5 educational and social divide enhanced and made stark
6 by the pandemic.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you wrap up for us?

8 VALENTIN COLON: Yes. These proposed budget cuts
9 will continue to have a lasting impact on our
10 neighborhood libraries and the communities that call
11 their library their second home. This will be the
12 last time that I will have the privilege to
13 testifying before this distinguished Committee and it
14 is my sincere hope that your voice will once again
15 resonate as our champions. That your wisdom will
16 prevail and that your will; will once again see the
17 three libraries through yet another funding crisis.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Mr. Colon.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Marlana
21 Giga followed by Joe Puleo.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MARLENA GIGA: Hi, good afternoon everybody. My
24 name is Marlana Giga and I am a Parks Department
25 Employee for 20 years and a union rep and I want to

1
2 say that now more than ever, Parks Personnel is
3 needed. People are going to be utilizing the parks
4 this summer now more than ever. People are enjoying
5 the outdoor space. We need to keep the parks safe.
6 We need more PEP offices. We need to keep it clean.
7 We need more APSW maintenance workers and CSA's.
8 CSA's are the backbone of the city, especially in the
9 height of the season during this summer and we just
10 applaud the work that the Parks Department Employees
11 do and please keep the funding, so we can keep New
12 York safe and keep the parks clean. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Joe
15 Puleo followed by Barbara Bowen.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 JOE PULEO: Okay, thank you. Thank you City
18 Council. I just want to touch upon what Giga had
19 said. Last year, for the first time during the
20 pandemic, this local - for 25 years, I should say,
21 had layoffs. We laid off last year urban park
22 rangers at a time where we needed it most. We had
23 180 lines that we lost through last years budget. We
24 would like these lines restored. Okay, these are PEP
25 officers, these are Urban Park Rangers, these were

1
2 all the essential workers that were needed during
3 this time.

4 These rangers that were laid off, about 50 of
5 them, were doing pop up sessions during the pandemic.
6 They were assisting children on how to use masks for
7 COVID and they were like, a lot of these people have
8 come from out of New York City. These were newly
9 planted people that unfortunately had to go back home
10 to their previous states while providing this
11 essential service. The parks were in horrendous
12 conditions during the pandemic. More and more people
13 use the parks than ever before in our history and to
14 have these workers let go. The city seasonal aids,
15 the urban park rangers, the CPW's, the assistant park
16 service workers. All of these people that were in
17 our parks that were doing the essential work were cut
18 back. So, we'd like to see all these people
19 restored. We'd like to see the money earmarked.
20 That we don't have to do this dance every year. We'd
21 like to see them reinstated so that our people feel
22 safe in our city and that you know we provide full
23 time real jobs. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Barbara
3 Bowen followed by Bob Gormley.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 BARBARA BOWEN: Good morning everyone. Thank you
6 so much Chair Dromm. Thank you members of the
7 Council and other members of the public. It's good
8 to be in this with you, all of us together. You
9 heard from my colleague James Davis who will soon be
10 taking the role of PSC President about what is needed
11 in addition in the CUNY Budget but I wanted to talk
12 about what has been cut.

13 It is absolutely the wrong way to go in this
14 crisis to keep in the cuts that Mayor has proposed in
15 the Executive Budget. The Preliminary Budget from
16 the Mayor had \$77 million in cuts, largely to the
17 CUNY community colleagues. Thanks to the work of the
18 Council already, \$10 million of that money has been
19 put back for the ASAP program but \$67 million in cuts
20 remains. This is totally the wrong approach. The
21 city got federal money, so that the budget could be
22 stable and yet, there is a cut proposed here for
23 CUNY.

24 That money will mean fewer positions, fewer
25 people in classrooms, fewer mental health counselors.

1
2 The nationally recommended standard for mental health
3 counselors is one to 1,000. At CUNY it's one to
4 2,700 students. That's unconscionable in this
5 crisis. The CUNY students suffered deeply in this
6 crisis. Our students are 80 percent people of
7 color, most of them are from families whose incomes
8 are under \$30,000 a year. Their communities were
9 devastated. To cut further in this moment, is
10 completely the wrong approach. It is the opposite of
11 reimagining the city or doing the kind of radical
12 reinvestment that goes against systemic racism that
13 our mayor has called for and that the Council has
14 stood up for. We've heard the argument that there is
15 federal money coming into CUNY but that's not enough.
16 This money needs to be baselined and we cannot start
17 from behind. So, I call on you in my final week as
18 PSC President where, this will be my last budget that
19 I fight for but not my last as a rank and file
20 member. Make sure that this budget doesn't start
21 with a cut -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 BARBARA BOWEN: To CUNY and our students. Thank
24 you all so much.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you President Bowen.

3 We hear you and I can assure you that I will be
4 fighting for the \$66 million that you mentioned. I
5 am glad that the ASAP program will be restored. That
6 is very important and it has been a very successful
7 program as well. But I also want to personally thank
8 you for your service. You have been dedicated,
9 honest, you know a strong fighter for your members
10 and I deeply appreciate the relationship that we've
11 had over the years, ever since I was elected to the
12 City Council.

13 So, thank you very much. Good luck and hang in
14 there.

15 BARBARA BOWEN: Thank you. I will be back in the
16 classroom.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We don't want to lose you.
18 We don't want to lose you.

19 BARBARA BOWEN: I will be in the classroom, don't
20 worry.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, okay.

22 BARBARA BOWEN: Thank you do much Danny.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Bob
24 Gormley followed by Jesse Bodine.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sir, you are still on mute.
3 Can you accept the unmute request?

4 BOB GORMLEY: Okay. Sorry about that. Good
5 Morning Chairperson Dromm and other Council Members.
6 My name is Bob Gormley, I am the District Manager of
7 Community Board 2 in Manhattan. I've already
8 submitted my full testimony, so I will just read the
9 final two paragraphs.

10 On December 21, 2020, all the community boards in
11 New York City received an email from the Office of
12 Management and Budget directing us to reduce our
13 Fiscal Year 2021 budgets by over \$3,600 and our
14 Fiscal Year 2022 budgets by over \$8,000. This
15 directive was driven by "budget challenges the city
16 faces due to COVID-19."

17 I was able to specify the Fiscal Year 2021 cuts
18 from our OTPS budget while gratefully knowing that we
19 still had \$5,500 from discretionary funds provided by
20 Council Members Chin and Kallos that would get us
21 through the remainder of the year. However, I
22 explained to OMB that our total Fiscal '22 OTPS
23 budget was actually \$7,181, which would leave us
24 almost a \$1,000 short of the requested budget cut.

1
2 Put another way, the Fiscal 2022 cut would
3 eliminate our entire OTPS budget, meaning that we
4 would have no city money to pay our cleaning person
5 who comes in once every two weeks, make our quarterly
6 copy machine payments, purchase paper, paper clips or
7 staples or the various other items necessary to run
8 an office. We recognize that, despite guarded
9 optimism regarding the city's economy, we have a long
10 way to go before we are out of the woods. However,
11 as the city's economy slowly rebounds and funds from
12 the Recovery Act passed in Washington help make the
13 city's economy more stable, we are hopeful that the
14 City Council will see the wisdom of restoring all or,
15 at least, part of the pre-pandemic community boards
16 budgets.

17 The money invested in community boards is a
18 miniscule portion of the city budget and gives
19 tremendous bang for the buck. We are a good
20 investment. This committee, Speaker Johnson, and the
21 entire City Council has always recognized the value
22 of community boards and historically has rescinded
23 most of the budget cuts proposed by the executive
24 branch. We need your support. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and very
3 well said and I look forward to supporting that issue
4 as we move forward.

5 BOB GORMLEY: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jessie
8 Bodine followed by Susan Stetzer.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 JESSIE BODINE: Good morning Chair Dromm and
11 fellow Council Members on the Committee on Finance.
12 My name is Jesse Bodine and I have the privilege to
13 be the District Manager of Manhattan Community Board
14 4, representing West Chelsea, Hudson Yards, Clinton
15 and Hell's Kitchen. The last time I provided
16 testimony before this body I was advocating for the
17 continuation of the Council's dedicated increase to
18 the Community Board budgets. We are certainly in a
19 different time and place.

20 With no consultation and very little notice the
21 Community Board budgets were told to cut
22 approximately \$12,000 out of their Fiscal Year '21
23 budget and apparently, these cuts will remain for
24 Fiscal Year 2022.

1
2 As some of you know from your personal
3 experiences on Community Boards that we are
4 responsible for meeting our City Charter mandates,
5 adhering to all Open Meeting Laws, and providing city
6 agencies and elected like yourselves with thoughtful
7 and effective recommendations. And we do all this
8 with an OTPS budget that hasn't had consistent
9 baseline increase in decades. The impact of the
10 COVID-19 Pandemic has brought a lot I'm sorry, has
11 brought a lot of changes to Community Board
12 operations. It has clarified our strengths and our
13 weaknesses. But what has not changed is our
14 dedication to providing the communities we represent
15 with a transparent and authentic access to the public
16 process.

17 Sorry, hold on one second. Within a matter of
18 weeks of the city shutting down we trained our staff
19 and our members and shifted to a completely virtual
20 format. Virtual meetings have allowed us to reach
21 more people than ever before but to sustain this
22 operation will require resources. Without City
23 Council restoring the cuts to our budget we will
24 essentially be ignoring the benefits of virtual
25 meetings have had on the public process.

1
2 While I can only speak for my board, the demand
3 of a hybrid virtual in-person public meeting process
4 is a reality and that has an organization that we'll
5 need to respond to. For these reasons I urge this
6 committee to recognize the cost effectiveness of
7 restoring the budget cuts -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 JESSEE BODINE: To Community Boards and to pre-
10 COVID-19 levels. And I thank you today for your time
11 and attention.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Susan
14 Stetzer followed by Jessica Guzman Mejia.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 SUSAN STETZER: Thank you for this opportunity to
17 testify for community board budgets. I am submitting
18 more detailed testimony but will summarize here.

19 Those of us who have been district managers for a
20 long time have been through programs to eliminate the
21 gap and we know how to share the pain. That is not
22 the case now. We were informed last December budgets
23 would be cut. This went from \$8,000 to \$11,000 which
24 left some of us in the red and the cuts had to be

1
2 spread out over more than one year, which is unheard
3 of.

4 My board has survived the current year only
5 because of City Council discretionary funds. We were
6 told cuts might not occur for FY22. It depended on
7 federal funds. We did get federal funds, agencies
8 received funding and the Executive Budget response
9 for community boards was and I quote, "In FY22, the
10 Community Board Budget is maintained." I still don't
11 understand this.

12 We called OMB and found that budgets had not been
13 maintained and our Council office confirmed this.
14 This seems to be more about how community boards are
15 valued rather than about relatively small amount of
16 funding. We maintain that community boards are the
17 biggest bang for the buck in New York. Each board
18 has 50 members working without pay as part-time civil
19 servants.

20 The ability of 59 boards to perform their charter
21 mandated responsibilities must be supported by
22 funding salary and operations. Boards partner with
23 city agencies making each more effective. This has
24 been crucial during the pandemic when we worked with
25 local nonprofits, elected officials, agencies to

1
2 deliver food, PPE and now testing and vaccines to
3 those in need.

4 The ability for community boards to outreach to
5 our communities is more important than ever. We have
6 many new programs open restaurants, open streets,
7 open culture that have confusing and conflicting
8 regulations especially with overlapping agencies such
9 as DOT –

10 SERGEANT AT ARM: Time.

11 SUSAN STETZER: And the State Liquor Authority.
12 Community Boards bridge the gap with information to
13 businesses and residents and provide feedback to our
14 agencies. Our virtual meetings have allowed us to
15 reach more people than ever and we cannot meet
16 demands for service delivery assistance and
17 facilitate a community input without maintaining our
18 funding. We should be receiving additional funding.

19 Our district service cabinet meetings held
20 monthly have never been more crucial. At these
21 meetings we work collaboratively to try and
22 understand and resolve new issues that have never
23 been experienced before.

24 Community Boards urge City Council to support
25 restoration of our full budgets so we can continue

1
2 our work with our residents and businesses, our
3 elected officials and city agencies to fulfill our
4 indispensable and charter mandated responsibilities.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jessica
8 Guzman Mejia followed by Michelle DeMott.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 JESSICA GUZMAN MEJIA: Thank you, Council Member
11 and Committee Chair Dromm and all other committee
12 members for taking the time to listen to the
13 testimony drafted by Hispanic Federation. I am here
14 today to advocate for Latinos across New York City.

15 As the City Council builds the 2021-2022 budget
16 to aid New York City's post-pandemic recovery, we
17 urge you to prioritize funding to boost the economic,
18 health and educational livelihood of the Latino
19 community. It is essential to the city's revival.
20 We are grateful to the City Council for their
21 commitment to funding the Communities of Color
22 Nonprofit Stabilization Fund. Our network of 100
23 plus Latino community-based organizations are the
24 frontline service providers for neighborhoods and
25 communities throughout the city.

1
2 We thank the City Council for their continued
3 support of community-based organizations and trusting
4 us to continue facilitating nonprofit capacity
5 building. As the city begins planning for economic
6 recovery, City Council should prioritize investments
7 that expand the long-term economic prospects of
8 Latino's and immigrant workers. The following
9 workforce programs must be funded. The Bridge
10 Program for Workforce Development at \$850K, the
11 digital inclusion and Literacy Initiative at \$2
12 million. The Job Training and Placement Initiative
13 at \$5.7 million. These funds will help bridge and
14 will bridge the digital divide and elevate economic
15 livelihood of Latino's and minorities.

16 In terms of health, we want to make sure that New
17 York City must continue to fund the Vaccine for All
18 campaign. It has been great in terms of pushing to
19 broadcast the effectiveness and safety of vaccines to
20 combat mistrust and hesitancy in the Latino
21 community. The Immigrant Health Initiative must
22 continue at an appropriation of \$2 million to address
23 the growing health disparities among immigrants
24 resulting from the pandemic.

1
2 Immigrants serve as the backbone to the city's
3 economy. We want to make sure the City Council
4 should maintain funding for immigration legal
5 service, including \$28.4 million -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 JESSICA GUZMAN MEJIA: As we did last year for
8 CUNY citizenship now, the New York Immigrant Family
9 Unity Project and Immigrant Opportunities Initiative.
10 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify
11 today.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you for coming in and
13 giving testimony. We've been joined by Council
14 Member Van Bramer.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And we'll now hear from
16 Michelle DeMott followed by Nicole McVinua.

17 MICHELLE DEMOTT: Good morning Chair Dromm -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 MICHELLE DEMOTT: Op, sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Go ahead.

21 MICHELLE DEMOTT: Okay. Good morning Chair Dromm
22 and distinguished members of the City Council. I am,
23 Michelle DeMott and I am the Chief of Staff to
24 Mitchell Netburn, President & CEO of Samaritan Daytop
25

1
2 Village. I first want to thank you for your
3 continued support during these challenging times.

4 Samaritan Daytop Village is a nationally
5 recognized human services organization that provides
6 comprehensive services to more than 33,000 people
7 each year through a network of over 60 facilities
8 primarily located in the five boroughs of New York
9 City. We depend on funding from the City Council to
10 continue to safely provide these services to New
11 Yorkers in need.

12 The critical importance of mental health and
13 substance use services has never been clearer than at
14 this moment. It goes without saying that the
15 pandemic is not only a physical health crisis but a
16 behavioral health crisis. New York City faces an
17 unprecedented rise in the demand for behavioral
18 health services. The clients that we serve are the
19 most vulnerable New Yorkers, many of whom are low-to-
20 no income with complex medical and behavioral health
21 needs. The physical and emotional isolation as a
22 result of the pandemic has manifested into new and
23 increased feelings of anxiety, restlessness and
24 stress which can be triggers for those with
25 behavioral health and substance use disorders. As a

1
2 result of the increased need for our services, our
3 organization has submitted requests to the City
4 Council for continued funding as well as for one new
5 initiative.

6 Being mindful of the city's finances, Samaritan
7 has restricted our ask to the most needed service
8 areas which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.
9 Samaritan is requesting a total of \$640,000 to expand
10 and support the wide-ranging services we offer to
11 women, children, families, veterans and seniors-aging
12 adults. Our request includes funding to expand a
13 pilot for an afterschool zone, which is critically
14 needed to address educational barriers that
15 disproportionately affect homeless children;
16 employment readiness and training for veterans;
17 trauma informed services for veterans brought on by
18 the pandemic; health education and promotion
19 workshops to help combat the opioid epidemic, which
20 has been overshadowed by the pandemic; and support
21 wellness activities for seniors and aging adults.

22 Samaritan Daytop Village is grateful for your
23 consideration -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 MICHELLE DEMOTT: of this request. I thank you,
3 on behalf of Samaritan for allowing me to testify
4 today.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Michelle for coming
6 in and I've been working on your requests.

7 MICHELLE DEMOTT: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Nicole
9 McVinua followed by Jessica Cinque.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 NICOLE MCVINUA: Good morning Chair Dromm and
12 members of the Committee. My name is Nicole McVinua
13 and I am the Director of Policy at Urban Pathways.
14 Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and
15 supportive housing provider and last year we served
16 over 3,900 New Yorkers in need.

17 Throughout the pandemic, our doors have never
18 closed and our services have never stopped. At great
19 risk to their own health and that of their families,
20 our frontline staff continued to come to work to
21 ensure the wellbeing of our clients and residents.
22 Despite this commitment in the face of a global
23 pandemic, our staff receives poverty wages under our
24 city contracts. Our contracts only pay \$0.85 to
25 \$0.87 cents for every dollar of the actual costs to

1
2 run our programs and it is difficult to ensure our
3 staff receives the pay they deserve. This leads to
4 high staff turnover and we are currently facing a
5 critical staffing shortage at our organization. We
6 simply cannot run our services without our committed
7 workforce and well-funded city contracts.

8 After the City Council demanded the Indirect Cost
9 Rate funding in the FY22 Preliminary Budget response,
10 Mayor de Blasio announced the addition of \$57 million
11 to restore the FY21 cut and to baseline the full \$91
12 million to sustain the program for future years as
13 part of his FY22 Executive Budget. We thank you for
14 championing this issue and we must ensure that this
15 funding makes it into the final Adopted Budget.
16 However, the need for the FY22 budget to invest in
17 the essential human services workforce remains. We
18 also need the restoration of the Cost of Living
19 Adjustment on the personnel service line of all human
20 services contracts at the rate of 3 percent, at a
21 cost of \$48 million for FY22. And we also need a
22 plan for the administration to promote wage equity in
23 the public sector by correcting the pay disparities
24 the human services workforce experiences, as outlined

1
2 in the City Council's FY22 Preliminary Budget
3 Response.

4 If this years budget is truly going to reflect an
5 equitable recovery for the city, it must address the
6 inadequate wages and underfunding of the human
7 services workforce. 82 percent of whom are people of
8 color -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 NICOLE MCVINUA: And 82 percent of whom are
11 women. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
12 today.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jessica
14 Cinque followed by MJ Okma.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 JESSICA CINQUE: Good morning Council Members and
17 Chair Dromm. Thank you for hearing testimony today.
18 My name is Jessica Cinque, and I am a Policy Analyst
19 at FPWA. We are an anti-poverty and policy
20 organization with a membership of 170 community and
21 faith-based human services organizations in New York.

22 While the Executive Budget makes important
23 strides in the journey to full recovery, there are
24 still several initiatives that need more support.
25 For example, expanding access to childcare and youth

1
2 programming resources for families who need it the
3 most. We echo the call for \$45 million to create 3K
4 truly for all families.

5 Additionally, the new Summer Rising program is
6 set to launch in a matter of weeks. Asks more of
7 community-based organizations than ever before,
8 without providing the proper supports or adequate
9 funding. The sector is thrilled to see such
10 expansion and is honored to be a part of it but
11 without these resources, the program may not be
12 successful and CBO's are fearful that they will be
13 blamed. We encourage the city to invest an
14 additional \$45 million in funding for 3K for All and
15 to increase the rates for community-based Summer
16 Rising providers to reflect the true costs of the
17 program.

18 We also urge the city to invest in services for
19 older adults. Currently the DFTA budget needs an
20 additional \$16.6 million in funding in order to meet
21 the increased need for home delivered and culturally
22 competent meals.

23 Lastly, we support a three percent cost of living
24 adjustment for human service workers. Withholding
25 the COLA is ineffective way to reduce cost to balance

1
2 the budget. Since approximately 60 percent of those
3 working in New York's nonprofit human services sector
4 are utilizing or have a family member utilizing some
5 form of public assistance benefit such as Medicaid or
6 food stamps. Keeping wages this low only increases
7 the need of and costs of these public assistance
8 programs. That's why we are requesting \$48 million
9 for a three percent COLA for human services workers.

10 These measures will ensure that all New Yorkers
11 have better access to dignity, opportunity and upward
12 mobility. Thank you very much for the opportunity to
13 testify and we look forward to working closely with
14 you to ensure that New Yorkers receive the supports
15 they need in order to thrive.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
17 from MJ Okma followed Juan Pinzon.

18 MJ OKMA: Good morning my name is -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 MJ OKMA: Oh, good morning, my name is MJ Okma
21 with the Human Services Council, a membership
22 organization representing over 170 New York's human
23 services non-profits.

24 I wanted to start off by thanking the City
25 Council for demanding that funding for the Indirect

1
2 Cost Rate Initiative was restored. It was only after
3 the Council included this investment in your budget
4 response that Mayor de Blasio announced the reversal
5 of Fiscal Year '21 ICR cuts and higher baselined
6 funding to sustain the program and prevent future
7 cuts. We look forward with Standing United, with the
8 Council and the Administration on this issue to
9 ensure that it makes it into the Adopted Budget.

10 Unfortunately, as you know so well, cuts to
11 indirect funding are not the only crisis facing our
12 city's human services sector. The need for the
13 Fiscal Year '22 budget to invest in the essential
14 human service workforce remains. The Council's
15 budget response also included a call for \$48 million
16 to restore the COLA on the personnel service line of
17 all human services contracts at a rate of three
18 percent. And a plan to create and fund wage equity
19 for human services workers.

20 It is important that these investments make it
21 into the adopted budget. When the city drastically
22 underfunds human services contracts, it is being
23 dependent on low-wage workers to fill in those gaps.
24 This dangerous pattern has resulted in the average
25 annual income of \$32,700 for human services workers

1
2 in New York City. It is shameful that New York
3 City's Human Services Workforce were 82 percent women
4 and 80 percent people of color or one of our city's
5 lowest paid workforces.

6 While COVID-19 didn't create the crisis facing
7 these workers, it did exasperate it. Going forward
8 New York City must invest in these essential workers.
9 This means including \$48 million to restore the COLA
10 that expired last year during the height of the
11 pandemic and creating a plan to fund wage equity for
12 human services worker so they are finally paid fairly
13 under city contracts.

14 We look forward to continue advocating together
15 on these vital Fiscal Year '22 investments. Thank
16 you so much for your support and opportunity to
17 testify. I will also be submitting written testimony
18 for the record.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you MJ and it has been
20 a pleasure to work with you and continue to work with
21 you as we move forward. Thank you again.

22 MJ OKMA: Thank you so much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Juan
24 Pinzon followed by Christie Peale.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 JUAN PINZON: Good morning Chair Dromm. Thank
3 you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Juan
4 Pinzon, I am the Director of Health Campaigns and
5 more community engagement at the Community Service
6 Society. Our health programs as you said, just
7 reminder you of how New Yorkers enroll into health
8 insurance coverage through the Marketplace and also
9 access the healthcare system through our live-answer
10 helpline and also through our partnerships with more
11 than 50 community-based organizations throughout
12 State. Annually, we serve approximately 300,000 New
13 Yorkers, saving them over \$60 million dollars in
14 healthcare costs.

15 Today, I am testifying to urge the City Council
16 to increase funding for the New York City Managed
17 Care Consumer Assistance Program, which as you know,
18 is part of the Access Health NYC initiative. Despite
19 the financial hardships the city has faced in this
20 past year, I think that this is exactly the right
21 time to invest in programs, invest in programs like
22 MCCAP and Access Health. We need a program like
23 MCCAP and Access Health to address the health
24 inequities exposed by the pandemic to help New
25 Yorkers with the rising healthcare prices and

1
2 healthcare system that creates additional barriers to
3 health. MCCAP helps people understand insurance,
4 resolve the health insurance programs, give them
5 medical services that they need, access affordable
6 care for those who are uninsured, and address the
7 social determinants of health. We also serve as a
8 trusted advocate that provides reliable information
9 to marginalize communities of color COVID-19 vaccine
10 distribution, safety and effectiveness.

11 We also need an expanded version of MCCAP because
12 there are thousands of New Yorkers who need our help
13 this year navigating and accessing, enhance financial
14 assistance available to purchase ACA coverage to the
15 marketplace and Cobra Premium support available under
16 the new Federal American Rescue Plan Act.

17 MCCAP can make a significant difference because
18 of our community-based approach that provide
19 culturally and [INAUDIBLE 1:17:47] services to
20 people. We have CBO's that provide service to those

21 -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 JUAN PINZON: And you know, what we're asking
24 basically is to restore the 50 percent cut that was
25 cut for Access Health and increase MCCAP's allocation

1 from \$425,000 to \$750,000 in the Fiscal Year '22.

2 This is a time when the city should leverage every
3 dollar available to the Federal American Rescue Plan
4 to strengthen programs that directly help low income
5 immigrant New Yorkers and communities of color who
6 have been disproportionately effected by the
7 pandemic.
8

9 Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide
10 this testimony today.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
13 Christie Peale followed by John Baker.

14 CHRISTIE PEALE: Thank you Chair Dromm, Speaker -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 CHRISTIE PEALE: Thank you Chair Dromm, Speaker
17 Johnson, Finance Committee members for the
18 opportunity to testify today.

19 The Center promotes and protects affordable
20 homeownership in New York so that middle and working
21 class families are able to live in strong, thriving
22 communities. Affordable homeownership is a crucial
23 component of New York City's vibrant and diverse
24 neighborhoods. In the neighborhoods where the center
25 for New York City neighborhoods works, affordable

1
2 homeownership means families can build equity while
3 also benefiting from stable housing costs in a city
4 of rapidly increasing rents.

5 We all know the effects of COVID-19 on our black
6 and brown communities across the city. We're
7 concerned there's even more economic pain to come
8 with eviction and foreclosure moratoria set to
9 expire. Our experience has shown that foreclosure
10 prevention is the best way to help families keep
11 their homes and their equity.

12 With our network of housing counseling and legal
13 services organizations, we've assisted over 250,000
14 homeowners since our founding in partnership with the
15 Council back in 2008. We're desperate to avoid some
16 of the tragedies that we saw after the financial
17 crisis of 2008 and we recently seen that the number
18 Black homeowners in Queens declined by over 22,000
19 between 2007 and 2017.

20 Right now, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx all
21 have significantly higher levels of mortgage distress
22 than the rest of New York City. The specific numbers
23 are in our written testimony but I just wanted to
24 highlight that Bronx alone has nearly double the rate
25 of mortgage distress as the rest of the country. And

1
2 forbearances or mortgage holidays and the federal and
3 state foreclosure moratoria end, a huge number of New
4 York City homeowners will face foreclosure.

5 COVID-19 and the resulting job losses and medical
6 bills have left thousands of our neighbors in
7 precarious financial situations. In this year of
8 recovery, we are requesting that the center and the
9 City Council work to identify over \$8 million in City
10 Council initiative discretionary funding. Super
11 comprehensive services –

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 CHRISTIE PEALE: Thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify and your ongoing partnership and support.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from John
17 Baker followed by Jorge Velez.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 JOHN BAKER: Good morning, I am also from Center
20 for New York City Neighborhoods and I would like to
21 take just one second to add to what Christie just
22 spoke about. Our foreclosure prevention funding is
23 especially important this year because not only are
24 we worried about the many homeowners coming out of
25 foreclosure moratoria and forbearance but our work

1
2 will help these struggling homeowners avoid
3 foreclosure. Help them access federal aid as it
4 comes in and most of all, we wanted to work with
5 mortgage servicers to come to equitable solutions to
6 keep these families in their homes.

7 Thank you very much for the opportunity and I
8 yield the rest of my time.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jorge
11 Velez followed by Carlyn Cowen.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Jorge Velez? Can you accept
14 the unmute request? Okay, we'll circle back and next
15 we will hear from Carlyn Cowen.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 CARLYN COWEN: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
18 you so much Chair Dromm and members of the City
19 Council for holding this hearing today and for the
20 opportunity to testify.

21 My name is Carlyn Cowen, my pronouns are they,
22 them. And I am the Chief Policy and Public Affairs
23 Officer of CPC, the Chinese American Planning
24 Council. CPC is the nation's largest Asian American
25 Social Services agency serving 60,000 Asian American

1
2 immigrant and low-income New Yorkers throughout all
3 five boroughs each year.

4 As I am sure you will hear across the testimonies
5 today, our social services agencies have been hard
6 hit by the COVID-19 pandemic after decades of
7 systematic disinvestment leading up to that and we
8 are all struggling to recover.

9 That's why I am here before you today. You will
10 hear from my other colleagues throughout the day
11 about our specific programs and the community needs
12 that we have been seeing, which make the funding for
13 those programs incredibly urgent. Everything from
14 our community members facing eviction struggling with
15 job loss and unemployment. 70 percent of our
16 community members have lost jobs and incomes over the
17 last year and need a new variety of services from
18 eviction prevention to unemployment support
19 navigating remote school and more. At the same time
20 our human services organizations continue to struggle
21 to make ends meet. We have seen really important
22 strides forward through efforts like restoring the
23 indirect funding, continuing to restore funding for
24 social service but we need to see a much deeper
25 investment.

1
2 At the same time, we have not seen meaningful
3 reductions to the NYPD budget in a way that reduces
4 the policing of communities of color, immigrants and
5 low-income communities. We will continue to urge the
6 City Council to invest in our communities instead of
7 investing in policing them. We need to be funding
8 community based services. We need to be funding our
9 communities of color, our low-income communities and
10 our immigrant communities, both through community-
11 based organizations doing the work on the ground and
12 by providing a robust social safety net, housing,
13 employment and unemployment support and more. We
14 urge the Council to continue prioritizing -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 CARLYN COWEN: For these community-based
17 organizations, reduce funding for social safety net
18 programs, which you will hear about from my other
19 colleagues. Thank you for your time today.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Carlyn, good to see
21 you.

22 CARLYN COWEN: Good to see you too.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will now hear from
24 Jorge Velez followed Zaynab Tawil.

25 JORGE VELEZ: Good morning.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 JORGE VELEZ: Good morning. My name is Jorge
4 Velez, I am a Custodial staff and essential worker
5 for the Queens division of the Chinese American
6 Planning Council, which is also known as CPC. I have
7 been in this role since November of 2020. As a
8 Custodial Staff, I maintain the hygiene and safety of
9 our Queens Community Center. A ten-story building
10 located in Flushing Queens that once saw 1,000
11 community members daily.

12 Before this, I was a program participant or
13 student at CPC's Hotel Hospitality Careers Training
14 Program which is based in the same community center
15 and trains individuals to work in the hotel
16 hospitality industry. Through these various
17 experiences, I see first hand the way that essential
18 workers like myself have to respond to the many
19 changing demands of the pandemic to keep our facility
20 staff and community members safe and health.

21 For example, I have created a cleaning schedule
22 to sanitize elevator buttons, elevator core buttons,
23 door knobs, and main entrance door and glass. I also
24 sanitize the sink, kitchen and counter and microwave
25 area more frequently. We also had to close up the

1
2 fountains on every office floor. I am one of the
3 hundreds of staff at CPC and one of thousands of
4 staffs across the human services industry who is
5 working tirelessly to keep serving New Yorkers who
6 are hardest hit by the pandemic.

7 As you make your considerations regarding the
8 city's budget for the next Fiscal Year, I urge you to
9 preserve existing funding to support essential human
10 services staff like me and my colleagues, so that we
11 may continue to help underserved families. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE STAFF: We will now hear from Zaynab
15 Tawil followed by Joy Luangphaxay.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 ZAYNAB TAWIL: Hi, Chairman Dromm, members of the
18 Committee on Finance. I want to thank you for the
19 opportunity to testify before you here today. My
20 name is Zaynab Tawil and I am the Mental Health Case
21 Worker at the Arab American Association of New York.

22 2020 and 2021 have been some of the most
23 challenging years which our organizations and
24 organizations across the city have experienced. The
25 political economic and social upheavals of the last

1
2 year have taken a heavy toll on the communities we
3 serve and such our resources are spread thinner than
4 ever before.

5 At the same time service cuts necessitated by
6 last years city budget really impacted our ability to
7 provide the services we did for thousands of in need
8 families across New York City. Even as the direct
9 debt of COVID is lessening, the need of the Arab and
10 Pan Asian community in New York is still incredibly
11 high. Families are still out of work; students are
12 still isolated from resources and there is no end in
13 sight to the wave of anti-Asian and anti-Arab bias
14 crimes in our city.

15 Organizations like AAA and YN need resources is
16 we are going to provide the services our communities
17 need to make it through the continuing crisis and
18 ensuring that the upcoming budget for next year
19 accommodates these services and can change countless
20 lives.

21 Over the past year we've seen at least a 20
22 percent increase in demand for mental health services
23 across the Pan Asian American community due to COVID-
24 19. An alarming uptick in these cases and a surge in
25 anti-Asian violence that continues unabated. This,

1
2 during a time when our community-based organizations
3 experience city funding cuts from 15 to 30 percent
4 for the Fiscal Year.

5 The cultural competency that organizations like
6 mine provide to our clients is a critical factor.
7 While obviously the stigma surrounding mental
8 healthcare is a huge barrier to members of the
9 community, the importance of culturally sensitive
10 programming extends far beyond that. We serve
11 hundreds of women who come to us looking to build
12 their English language skills, but for culturally
13 reasons, may not continue to learn if classes aren't
14 offered in a culturally sensitive environment.

15 Our youth programs serve a demographic facing a
16 unique set of challenges and issues due to COVID-19
17 and our countries political climate that requires
18 special attention and advocacy has come to hurdles
19 when working with legislatures and a public that
20 often cannot see beyond the job.

21 I'm on my last paragraph, so it will be like ten
22 seconds.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 ZAYNAB TAWIL: To the city's credit, there have
25 been public commitments to providing these services

1
2 but because of last year's highly restricted budget,
3 much of the mental health and community outreach
4 programs proposed are still underfunded and
5 incomprehensive. Furthermore, city funded programs
6 like Thrive NYC do very little to address these
7 issues of cultural competency. And rather than
8 supporting CBO's doing the actual work, the city is
9 funding new programs that simply do not meet the
10 marks for ours and other Asian Communities.

11 Nonprofits need support to address the immediate
12 crisis and build long term community resilience.
13 Programs like Hope Against Hate Campaign created by
14 the Asian American Federation, need to be a priority
15 for the city's budget not an afterthought.

16 Unless action is taken by the city to fund
17 organizations doing the actual work on the ground and
18 to protect our communities, we risk these stressors
19 becoming causing long-term damage. Thank you for
20 your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What did you say was the tab
22 on that?

23 ZAYNAB TAWIL: Excuse me, repeat your question.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What did you say was the
25 amount of money that you are requesting?

1
2 ZAYNAB TAWIL: Asian American Federation will
3 speak on it more if you are specifically talking
4 about the Hope Against Hate Campaign.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes. Okay, thank you.

6 ZAYNAB TAWIL: Of course.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Joy
8 Luangphaxay followed by Olivia Duong.

9 JOY LUANGPHAXAY: Good morning, my name is Joy
10 Luangphaxay –

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 JOY LUANGPHAXAY: Oh, good morning, my name is
13 Joy Luangphaxay, I'm an Assistant Executive Director
14 for Behavioral Health Services at Hamilton Madison
15 House or HMH.

16 First, I would like to thank the City Council
17 Committee on Finance for this important hearing on
18 the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget. HMH is a
19 multifaceted community service organization operating
20 in Chinatown on the lower east side; however,
21 provides services citywide. We have an early
22 childhood program, senior services and behavioral
23 health. HMH specializes in providing behavioral
24 health services to all communities. However, we're
25 the largest outpatient behavioral health provider for

1
2 the Asian community on the east coast. Currently, we
3 operate five mental health clinics, a pros program
4 and a supportive housing program for a adults coping
5 with experimental illness.

6 Our staff are all bilingual and languages spoken
7 among them are Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian
8 and Vietnamese. The large majority of these we serve
9 are first generation immigrants of low-income status
10 and many are receiving therapy for the first time.
11 Consistently they share that their mental health
12 symptoms relating to difficulties with employment,
13 finances, housing, immigration status and health.

14 In the past year, we have seen a drastic increase
15 of high risk clients seeking mental health due to the
16 effects of COVID and the anxieties and fears
17 associated with the anti-Asian hate. The recent
18 report released by Stop AAPI Hate revealed nearly
19 3,800 incidents were reported over the course of
20 roughly a year during the pandemic and we believe
21 this is a tiny fraction of the total.

22 HMH has seen an increase of individuals seeking
23 support in mental health services by 10 percent in
24 the last three months and 25 percent among the pan-
25 since the pandemic. They express fears of being

1
2 attacked, increased anxiety and depression as common
3 reported issues.

4 For all those reasons, we believe it is
5 imperative the City Council makes it a priority to
6 fund initiatives and work with community
7 organizations and mental health providers to tackle
8 anti-Asian violence and further expand mental health
9 services. We need funding for the Hope Against Hate
10 Campaign for a minimum amount of \$10 million in a new
11 initiatives funding, so that the nonprofits who are
12 leading the work such as –

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 JOY LUANGPHAXAY: And providing direct services
15 can get the funding they need. We are strongly
16 urging the Committee of Finance to not forget about
17 us and address these growing issues and allocate the
18 appropriate funding to increase mental health
19 resources in the Asian community.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Olivia
22 Duong followed by Anya Mukarji-Connolly.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 OLIVIA DUONG: Hello and good morning Chairperson
25 Dromm and fellow Council Members. I believe this may

1
2 be the first testimony that NYPD Scientists will
3 give, so I thank you for the opportunity.

4 My name is Olivia Duong and I am President of
5 Local 3778 of DC 37 representing 300 civilian NYPD
6 professional titles such as criminalists, city
7 research scientists, architects and engineers. I am
8 here to highlight the hard work of NYPD civilians and
9 to voice our support to further civilianize the
10 department.

11 The Criminalists of the Police Laboratory are
12 forensic scientists who analyze different types of
13 evidence involved in an alleged crime such as
14 controlled substances, latent fingerprints and
15 firearms. Our job is to remain objective, impartial
16 and unbiased while conducting analysis using an
17 accredited scientific methods.

18 Criminalists testify in court as expert witnesses
19 to the results of our analyses. Our testimony
20 educates juries to make informed and fair verdicts.
21 Throughout the pandemic, criminalists were deemed
22 essential workers for our critical role in public
23 safety and we answered the call.

24 With the scrutiny of the NYPD's budget, what our
25 members have experienced is that the civilian units

1
2 are the first areas in which the budget is cut. We
3 are in agreement with the Finance Committee that more
4 oversight is needed in exactly where and how money is
5 spent within the department.

6 Civilians can play a larger role in support roles
7 for policing. I would like to point out a few
8 examples of some areas where there could be cost
9 savings in the NYPD: For one, the Firearms Analysis
10 Section of the lab, which is currently a hybrid
11 uniformed civilian section. It is typical for many
12 detectives to leave the lab when they are called in
13 for detail, which leaves the laboratory short-staffed
14 for our own essential work. Having more civilians in
15 this unit would be an added advantage to the city
16 without compromising the quality of forensic work.
17 Another area worth looking into for further
18 civilianization is the -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 OLIVIA DUONG: Chairman, if I may continue for 30
21 more seconds?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes please.

23 OLIVIA DUONG: Thank you. Another area worth
24 looking into is the Evidence Control Section of the
25 Police Laboratory, which is responsible for 24/7

1 intake, security and storage of forensic evidence.

2 This section is traditionally staffed by 100 percent
3 uniformed members. Due to recent massive retirements
4 by these officers, criminalists have stepped up to
5 the plate and filled in those positions for over half
6 a year.

7
8 It is evident that these roles do not require
9 someone with extensive police training and can be
10 filled by civilians. In addition, there are many
11 sections within the PD that carry out solely
12 administrative duties and the majority of those units
13 are supervised by uniformed members. We have
14 civilian City Research Scientists working alongside
15 Sergeants and Lieutenants in strategic research units
16 that analyze and evaluate Department policies,
17 programs and resources. The Scientists have advanced
18 degrees in physical and social sciences but are
19 supervised and evaluated by uniformed members.

20 So, we also believe that having civilians in
21 higher positions within the police department will
22 help to lead to meaningful changes to police
23 policies, which reflect what the civilian public
24 wants to see.

1
2 In summary, there are more areas where we can
3 further civilianize the NYPD and the union applauds
4 the City Council for pushing the initiative. I do
5 not believe that the public wants a reduction in
6 forensic science or less internal oversight of the
7 NYPD. We understand the city will be facing
8 difficult economic times ahead, but without stringent
9 oversight, the budget will inevitably be balanced on
10 the backs of the civilian workforce.

11 Mr. Chairman, I will submit my written testimony
12 for the record and I thank you for the opportunity to
13 speak today. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. Can you
15 also submit your written testimony to me at
16 dromm@council.nyc.gov?

17 OLIVIA DUONG: Certainly, thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'd like to review it. Thank
19 you and I know that Council Member Adams has a
20 question. Thank you for the suggestions as well.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you so much Mr.
22 Chair. Olivia, I just want to thank you so much for
23 your testimony this morning and I just, I'm giving
24 you a virtual high five. You know I Chair the
25 Committee on Public Safety. I would appreciate very

1
2 much your testimony as well. You can email it to
3 aeadams@council and I would appreciate it. This has
4 been something that I've been you know for quite
5 awhile now as far as civilianization of the NYPD and
6 everything that you said is so very valuable. Pardon
7 the pun but I think that it will indeed help to put
8 budgetary items as far as NYPD is concerned into
9 their proper place and proper perspective.

10 So, I just wanted to say thank you so much for
11 your testimony, I really appreciate it.

12 OLIVIA DUONG: Thank you so much, I will.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you.
14 Counsel?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we will now hear from
16 Anya Mukarji-Connolly followed by the Queens Borough
17 President Donovan Richards.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 ANYA MUKARJI-CONNOLLY: Thank you. My name is
20 Anya Mukarji-Connolly and I am the Associate Director
21 of Policy at the Brooklyn Defender Services. Thank
22 you to the City Council Committee on Finance and
23 Chair Dromm for this opportunity to testify about our
24 work and the importance of funding for indigent
25 defense providers in New York City.

1
2 BDS provides multi-disciplinary and people-
3 centered criminal, family and immigration defense, as
4 well as civil legal services, social work support and
5 advocacy to nearly 30,000 people and their families
6 in Brooklyn every year. Our criminal and family
7 defense is funded by the MOCJ, but unfortunately
8 these contracts do not fund the entirety of our
9 programs or our unique wrap around services.

10 While we rely on this funding, the Mayor's office
11 has created extraordinary challenges that have
12 resulted in the city owing BDS in excess of \$12
13 million. Mostly because of delays in contracts that
14 go back years at this point.

15 We respectfully request that the City Council
16 continue to insist that the city fully fund criminal
17 and family defense and that the Council hold the
18 Mayor's Office accountable for moving our contracts
19 through the process in an expeditious manner.

20 On the City Council side of the budget, we are
21 extremely grateful for the support that the Speaker
22 and the Council have shown defender organizations
23 across the city. This Council has been responsible
24 for legislating and funding groundbreaking programs
25 that meet the needs of communities. They are highly

1
2 surveilled but are not reached by other service
3 providers.

4 These essential programs include the New York
5 Immigrant Family Unity Project, which ensures
6 universal representation to immigrant New Yorkers
7 facing deportation through the NIFUP Initiative. We
8 have requested \$16 million for this initiative to be
9 shared equally amongst the providers.

10 The Right to Family Advocacy Project, which
11 provides advocacy to parents and caregiver are being
12 investigated by the Administration for Children
13 Services through the Family Advocacy and Guardianship
14 Support Initiative and we've requested \$750,000 for
15 this initiative.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 ANYA MUKARJI-CONNOLLY: If I just may briefly
18 state that both of these programs were first in the
19 nation are being replicated in other parts of the
20 country and it's something New York City should be
21 very proud of.

22 Finally, we're requesting immigrant opportunity
23 initiative funding for our Immigrant Community Action
24 Project as well as alternatives to incarceration and
25 DOVE funding for our comprehensive services.

1
2 Thank you to the Committee on Finance for time to
3 testify today and for your ongoing support of BDS.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from the
7 Queens Borough President Donovan Richards followed by
8 Amber Khan.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 DONOVAN RICHARDS: Thank you. Thank you and
11 thank you to the members of the Finance Committee and
12 great to see you Chair Dromm and I don't have to say,
13 I miss all of you all down at the Council to the
14 Sergeants, how are you all doing? Sorry I didn't get
15 to say goodbye but I am here.

16 But good morning everybody, good morning Chair
17 Dromm and members of the Finance Committee. This
18 certainly feels like a homecoming for me. It is
19 great to see you all again.

20 For the purpose of the record, my name is Donovan
21 Richards and I have the honor of serving now as the
22 President of the great Borough of Queens. Queens is
23 proudly the most diverse county in New York City and
24 thus we have many diverse needs within our borough.
25 Each community represents a unique constituency and

1
2 requires tailored programming, which my office hopes
3 to accommodate moving forward. Therefore, I am
4 respectfully requesting additional funding be
5 allocated towards the Office of the Queens Borough
6 President. And my does it feel different to be on
7 this side, begging for more money from my colleagues
8 when I was just on the other side like last year some
9 time.

10 Unlike at the City Council, Borough Presidents
11 are not allotted a certain amount of discretionary
12 funds for organizations, instead Borough Presidents
13 can choose to award expense funding to CBO's from our
14 own agencies budget. I am requesting additional
15 funds be allocated to the Borough Presidents Office,
16 so that I can award more funding to deserving
17 organizations in Queens.

18 As you know, Queens was hit hard by the pandemic
19 and local nonprofits were and continue to be the life
20 blood that kept many underserved communities afloat.
21 I am eternally grateful for the work that these
22 nonprofits have done and with the right resources,
23 they can do more. That's why I am here. To do
24 anything I can to help these organizations get more
25 resources to continue their important work.

1
2 In addition, I am respectfully requesting that
3 the Borough Presidents Discretionary Funding
4 Restoration Initiative be restored. Last year, I was
5 a member of the City Council and can personally
6 attest to last years budget challenges. This
7 allocation -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 DONOVAN RICHARDS: To support its senior services
10 with items such as meals, case management, homecare,
11 senior transportation and more. Queens historically
12 received almost \$325K to designate the senior service
13 groups in Queens and in Fiscal Year 2021, these funds
14 were completely decimated. Seniors has an especially
15 tough time throughout the pandemic and most are
16 wholly dependent on the services provided by these
17 senior groups.

18 In conclusion, I would also be remiss if I did
19 not mention other priorities such as reinvesting in
20 our CUNY's health services, cultural initiatives like
21 CASA. Immigrant service initiative, such as CUNY
22 Citizenship Now. Youth initiative SYEP improved
23 programs such as food pantries, which are all
24 important and serve the Borough of Queens. I
25 understand the infinite asks that come to each of you

1 and the finite number of dollars we have to allocate.

2 I thank you for hearing me out and for taking this
3 request under consideration.
4

5 And once again, I want to thank you all for your
6 partnership already in what we're achieving across
7 Queens as we build a more just Queens coming out of
8 this pandemic.

9 So, great to see you all. Thank you Danny and
10 thank you to the Sergeant at Arms for being so kind
11 to me. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Mr. Borough
13 President. It was great to see you last night at our
14 Queens LGBTQ pride event. Thank you for showing up
15 and for being so inclusive of our community and I
16 know and you know that Queens has not gotten its fair
17 share of tax dollars. And that's something that
18 we're going to continue to fight for as we move
19 forward toward allocation, toward adoption in the
20 budget process.

21 So, thank you for coming in and for giving your
22 testimony. Much appreciated, thank you.

23 DONOVAN RICHARDS: Thank you so much Danny.
24 Thank you, thank you for your support and thank you

1
2 to the delegation, the best delegation in the
3 Council, the Queens delegation. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We have also been
5 joined by Council Members Gibson and Menchaca and we
6 will now hear from Amber Khan followed by M'Ral
7 Broodie-Stewart.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 AMBER KHAN: Thank you. Good morning, thank you
10 to the Chairperson and the Committee for the for the
11 opportunity to present testimony today regarding the
12 budget. And I am going to speak specifically about
13 the need to wholly transform how New York City
14 responses to mental health crisis. We urge you and
15 the City Council to authorize the Mayor's allocation
16 of \$112 million and create a nonpolice response to
17 mental health crises.

18 My name is Amber Khan and I am the Director of
19 the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for
20 the Public Interest or NYLPI.

21 NYLPI is an active member of Correct Crisis
22 Intervention today New York City or CCITNYC for a
23 coalition of more than 80 mental health advocacy and
24 other mental advocacy and other community
25 organizations. CCITNYC applauds the proposed

1
2 allocation of this money to fund a citywide mental
3 health crisis response system.

4 However, at the same time, the City Council must
5 ensure that individuals who experience a mental
6 health crisis receive appropriate service, which will
7 deescalate the crisis and ensure their wellbeing and
8 the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those
9 who are trained in de-escalation practices should
10 respond to mental health crisis and the most
11 appropriate individuals to respond are peers, those
12 with lived mental health experience and healthcare
13 providers.

14 Police who are trained to uphold law in order are
15 not suited to deal with individuals experiencing
16 mental health crisis. In New York's history of
17 police killing individuals who are experiencing
18 crisis is a sad testament to that.

19 In the last five years, New York alone, police
20 have killed 18 individuals when responding to their
21 crisis. Eliminating the police as mental health
22 crisis responders has been shown not only to save
23 lives but to result in quicker recovery from crisis,
24 greater connections with long-term healthcare
25

1
2 services and other community resources and averting
3 future crisis.

4 CCITNYC has developed a proposal in consultation
5 with effected communities and modeled [INAUDIBLE
6 1:47:32] crisis assistance -

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 AMBER KHAN: Helping out on the streets. Thank
9 you, if I may just finish briefly.

10 The program is based in Eugene Oregon and of
11 critical not is that the Cahoots Program has
12 successfully operated for over 30 years without any
13 major injuries to respondents or responders, let
14 along deaths. And it's also being adopted around the
15 country. The main hallmarks quickly of this proposal
16 are that police are removed as responders. Calls are
17 routed to a number other than 911, which is actually
18 in line with one of the City Council's proposed laws.
19 And the response teams include trained peers and
20 emergency medical technicians. Response teams are
21 employed and dispatched by culturally competent
22 community organizations and there is an oversight
23 board. And that response times are comparable to
24 those of other emergencies.

1
2 Again, I want to thank you for this opportunity
3 to speak today and I urge the New York City Council
4 to take immediate action to fund nonpolice responses
5 to mental health crisis to protect the estimated 20
6 percent of residents who are likely to experience a
7 mental health disorder in any given year. Thank you
8 again.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
10 from M'Ral Broodie-Stewart followed by Terry Lawson.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 M'RAL BROODIE-STEWART: Hello, my name is M'Ral
13 Broodie-Stewart and I am the Senior Staff Attorney in
14 the Access to Education Project at Staten Island
15 Legal Services, part of Legal Services NYC. We
16 provide free legal representation to low income New
17 York City residents. I thank you for the opportunity
18 to testify today.

19 Over the last year, our education practice has
20 focused on ensuring our clients are connected to
21 remote learning and to their special education
22 services.

23 In testimony, I will submit or provide details on
24 some of the cases, LSNYC has handled during the
25 COVID. The pandemic has hit students in vulnerable

1
2 populations significantly hard. These students
3 include those with disabilities, those in families
4 where English is not their first language and those
5 in homes where technology is not available.

6 Our recommendations on the New York City budget
7 around these communities and are rooted in equity.
8 We recommend that the budget expand the systems to
9 students with disabilities and other students who
10 have fallen behind grade level to receive
11 compensatory educational [INAUDIBLE 1:50:02]
12 tutoring.

13 It should also expand the systems to students who
14 have experienced trauma and will need social
15 emotional support. The pandemic has highlighted the
16 need to invest in a whole school approach that is
17 centered on healing. LSNYC wants to expand our
18 advocacy on healing centered schools for the many
19 students coming back who have suffered trauma in the
20 past year due to the pandemic and its many stressors.

21 We also want the budget to expand assistance to
22 students and parents who do not speak English as
23 their first language and also, expand assistance to
24 students and resources for schools to prevent the
25 schools to prison pipeline.

1
2 We currently represent a student inappropriately
3 handcuffed in school prior to the pandemic. We want
4 such practices to end.

5 And lastly –

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 M'RAL BROODIE-STEWART: It should expand
8 resources – let me just finish for a second. Expand
9 resources to eliminate the technological divide even
10 when students are back in the classroom, this
11 inequity cannot continue.

12 Statistics show that the lack of devices and Wi-
13 Fi have led to unequal academic achievement for low-
14 income students prior to the pandemic.

15 LSNYC is working hard on these issues and we ask
16 that you provide \$500,000 in the budget to support
17 our Access to Education Project. Legal Services is
18 designed to help children, so that they are not
19 further burdened by this pandemic. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
21 from Terry Lawson followed by Dariel Infante.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 TERRY LAWSON: Good morning. My name is Terry
24 Lawson and I am the Executive Director of UnLocal, a
25 community-centered non-profit organization that

1
2 provides direct community education, outreach and
3 legal representation to New York City's undocumented
4 immigrant communities.

5 I am also the co-founder and steering committee
6 member of the Bronx Immigration Partnership. I am
7 here today to ask the City Council to expand funding
8 for immigration legal services, community education,
9 outreach and organizing. UnLocal provides free high-
10 quality legal services for New York's most vulnerable
11 immigrants, many of whom are essential workers, who
12 are seeking employment authorization, asylum, DACA,
13 SIJS, lawful permanent residency and much more.

14 Last year, our legal team handled 1,000 cases for
15 people across New York City and in parts of Long
16 Island and upstate. Our Queer Immigrant Justice
17 Project works with LGBTQ+ immigrants who are seeking
18 asylum and the director of that project was just
19 named one of the best LGBTQ+ Lawyers under 40 by the
20 National LGBT Bar Association. UnLocal is also part
21 of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, along with
22 Make the Road New York and NYLAG and the lawyers,
23 paralegal, and social worker who serve on our Rapid
24 Response team have been fighting tirelessly during
25

1
2 this pandemic to stop deportations and get people out
3 of detention.

4 Our rapid response work shows just how entangled
5 ICE and law enforcement are and continue to be,
6 despite the efforts of advocates and community
7 members to explain to our city lawmakers how local
8 policing feeds the deportation pipeline. We have
9 been raising the alarm about the dangers and
10 continued harms of city officials collaborating with
11 ICE by telling the story of one of our clients,
12 Javier Castillo Maradiaga, a 27-year-old Bronx man
13 who came here when he was seven, was turned over to
14 ICE by this city and after tireless community
15 organizing and legal strategizing, was finally
16 released from ICE custody in March.

17 Over the past year, our education and outreach
18 team has been busier than ever partnering with 140
19 community-based organizations and schools throughout
20 the city, hosting monthly partner calls on rapidly –

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 TERRY LAWSON: Changing law and policy,
23 conducting 68 community events, 47 of which were
24 virtual and has reached 8000 attendees. And posting
25 online resources in topics ranging from the Fund for

1
2 Excluded Workers, DACA, the New York State Dream Act,
3 and more. We recognize that only by providing
4 accurate up-to-date information are we able to
5 counteract the predatory practices of those taking
6 advantage of the confusion and anti-immigrant
7 rhetoric pervading our culture. Under the new
8 administration, laws and policies continue to change
9 at a dizzying pace and we keep the public informed.

10 In an era where the Biden Administration
11 continues to detain and deport people, UnLocal calls
12 on the City Council to expand funding for immigration
13 legal services and community education.

14 And specifically asks for the City Council to
15 enhance funding for the Immigration Opportunities
16 Initiative to allow additional legal services
17 providers like UnLocal, to partner with the City
18 Council going forward. Thank you so much.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Before we move
20 onto the next panelist, I just want to remind
21 everyone and to advise everyone who may have just
22 joined us, that you will be on mute until it is time
23 for you to testify. At which time, your name will be
24 called and you will be unmuted by the Zoom host.

1
2 Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell you
3 when your time begins and then they will let you know
4 when your time is up and everybody has two minutes
5 for their testimony. And after you have finished
6 testifying, you will be removed from the Zoom meeting
7 but you can continue to watch the hearing live at
8 council.nyc.gov/livestream. And we will now hear
9 from Dariel Infante followed by Jocelyn Palafox Diaz.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 DARIEL INFANTE: Thank you. My name is Dariel
12 Infante and I am a Youth Leader with Future Of
13 Tomorrow and Urban Youth Collaborative. I am 17-
14 years-old and I am a New York Student attending
15 Multicultural High School.

16 As a Youth Leader, I take responsibility in
17 advocating for the rights and safety of other
18 students. Last week, the NYPD Deputy Chief of the
19 School Safety Division stated that their agency has
20 lost 554 school police positions over the course of
21 the pandemic. Today, I am here to demand that the
22 New York City Council will not hire to replace these
23 positions and instead reinvest the \$50 million in
24 student support staff and programs.

1
2 I want police free schools and investments in
3 guidance counselors, nurses, restorative justice
4 programming and school infrastructure.

5 As an immigrant student in NYC, I attend a public
6 school where my peers and myself will greatly benefit
7 from the reinvestment of \$50 million dollars into our
8 school and co-located campus over the course of the
9 next school year. As students, we are going to
10 return to campuses where our peers, teachers and
11 faculty are gravely traumatized by the COVID, social
12 unrest and the increased awareness of police
13 brutality against Black and Brown immigrant
14 communities.

15 Cops in our schools criminalize students along
16 racial lines at disproportionate rates with zero
17 consequences. More schools with Black and brown
18 students have an increased police presence in our
19 environment. The last thing I, and the other 1
20 million plus students in attending New York City
21 public schools need, are more police officers and
22 systems that continue to see us as targets and
23 criminals unworthy of simply existing.

24 In NYC public schools, this decrease

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 DARIEL INFANTE: In officer count is only the
3 start of our campaign efforts to abolish the school
4 to prison pipeline and achieve police free schools.
5 But as the City Council approaches budget asks and a
6 vote for the 2022 budget, we urge you to push for
7 police free schools through not rehiring the 554 lost
8 school safety agents and reinvesting \$50 million back
9 into our youth. Thank you so much.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jocelyn
11 Palafox Diaz followed by Juan Torres.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 JOCELYN PALAFOX DIAZ: Good afternoon. My name
14 is Jocelyn Palafox Diaz, I live in Staten Island, I
15 am in 11th grade and I am a Youth Leader at Make the
16 Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I
17 am here today testifying because for years NYC youth
18 have called for police free schools and the
19 divestment of School Safety Division's entire \$450
20 million budget and to reallocate that money into
21 guidance counselors, social workers and restorative
22 justice practices.

23 It is a slap in the face to learn from previous
24 hearings that the city keeps planning to spend
25 millions and millions of more dollars to hire new

1
2 school cops. My sophomore year was a rollercoaster
3 with the pandemic. My school, like the rest of
4 public schools, were not prepared to deal with the
5 situation. In the mix of confusion, my teachers
6 instead of asking us how we were feeling, they were
7 giving us a bunch of work while they were trying to
8 also figure out technology. I as many other students
9 were not informed by any staff about emotional
10 support to deal with my stress from the pandemic.

11 I became aware that there is lack of funding for
12 social, emotional and mental health support for
13 students. My school is a community school. This is
14 important to me because community schools are more
15 important than ever in providing the support students
16 and families need as we return. This is where the
17 city should fully invest resources, not on policing.
18 What does it say to me and other students about where
19 the city is investing the money? Policing me or
20 supporting me to succeed?

21 At the Public Safety Committee budget hearing on
22 May 11th, the NYPD Deputy Chief of the School Safety
23 Division stated that 454 school police have left the
24 department since January of 2021, equal to nearly \$50
25 million worth of salary funding. We have to stop

1
2 spending money on policing schools. Hiring new
3 school safety agents is not what young people like
4 myself want. For years we have been extremely vocal
5 about removing all police from schools. We have been
6 demanding to reallocate that funding from policing
7 students to social, emotional and mental health
8 supports.

9 This \$50 million presents a perfect opportunity
10 for the City Council to invest significant funds in
11 the services and staff that will actually create
12 safety –

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 JOCELYN PALAFOX DIAZ: And put students on the
15 path to succeed. I'm a couple months away from my
16 senior year and after this stressful Sophomore and
17 Junior year and I would love to be welcomed to my
18 last high school year with more resources for
19 students and no police.

20 Now, more than ever we need everyone to listen
21 and stand by us. Our demands are clear and that means
22 that the city making this commitment. Do not hire
23 more school police and use the \$50 million dollars to
24 instead invest in an equitable future for all New
25 York City youth. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Ms. Diaz for coming
3 in and I just want to assure you that I am fighting
4 for additional resources for social emotional
5 learning and of course support for students,
6 particularly behind this pandemic. So, thank you
7 very much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Juan
9 Torres followed by Maria Bautista.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 JUAN TORRES: Hello everyone. My name is Juan
12 Torres, I am a Youth Leader at Sisters and Brothers
13 United and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I live in
14 Council District 15 in the Bronx. I am an 8th grader
15 at Jonas Bronck Academy.

16 As someone who attends a school that does not
17 have metal detectors and which has a lot less police
18 presence than the surrounding schools in the Fordham
19 area, I know it is not hard to achieve school
20 environments free from police. And it is not hard to
21 create schools that see students in their lived
22 experiences with compassion and a real investment in
23 their healing and the need for growth as opposed to
24 seeing them as criminals.

1
2 Today, I am here to urge the City Council to make
3 it your priority this year to completely divest from
4 police and policing practices in school. In the
5 past, the Council has pushed back against this ask
6 from Black and Brown young people like myself because
7 Black and Brown women would be out of jobs. However,
8 this year, the Council has the opportunity to make an
9 obvious decision to cut \$50 million from the school
10 safety division. These funds would have been used to
11 replace 554 school police in our schools.

12 What I call on the Council to do is reinvest
13 these funds and to hire more social workers, guidance
14 counselors and mental health workers in our schools
15 who are from our community. Many of you on this
16 Council will no longer be in these seats next year.
17 I call on you to leave a legacy behind that
18 reimagines safety cultivated by young peoples vision
19 for police free schools. In order for the students
20 to be supported, we need you all to vote for a budget
21 that moves in the right direction.

22 Before I close, I want to turn all the Bronx
23 elected officials, Council Members Ayala, Cabrera,
24 Gibson, Diaz Sr., Riley, Feliz, Dinowitz, Gjonaj and
25 Salamanca. It is beyond important that you all vote

1
2 for a budget that will transform our schools into a
3 truly safety and supportive spaces that goes hand and
4 hand with the need to transform our communities in
5 the Bronx.

6 Real safety means the capability to walk the
7 hallways without feeling antagonized and constantly
8 anxious by the presence of cops. It is vital for
9 schools to have counselors who possess proper training
10 in deescalating problems and social workers with the
11 capacity to support students and their families. We
12 cannot allow the Bronx to continue to be in a cycle
13 of disinvestment. The Bronx burned in the 70's.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 JUAN TORRES: We are still feeling the effects.
16 You can push for a budget that truly invests in our
17 vision. Cut \$50 million from the School Safety
18 Division, invest those funds in schools in the Bronx
19 because we deserve better. Because it's whose Bronx?
20 Our Bronx. The Bronx gets things done, so we hope
21 you get this done. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and also,
23 thank you for coming in and we are fighting, I am
24 fighting for more funding for restorative practices.

1
2 I think that's very important and thank you for
3 mentioning that in your testimony.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Maria
5 Bautista followed by Keyanna Bernard.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 MARIA BAUTISTA: Hi all, my name is Maria
8 Bautista, a Campaign Director at the Alliance for
9 Quality Education and a member of New Yorkers for
10 Racially Just Public Schools.

11 I am really excited to be here and give testimony
12 today because we finally have the resources to begin
13 the process of addressing deep and systemic
14 inequities in our public school system and it's
15 critical that we get this right. Organizationally
16 AQE has been fighting for the full financing of our
17 schools for 21 years. Before the pandemic, we called
18 out the lack of resources plaguing our schools. And
19 during the pandemic, the lack of equity became
20 painfully undeniable.

21 Our children have been carrying the weight of
22 immoral budgets for decades and after this tremendous
23 win at the state and federal level, we organize a
24 series of accountability events to hear from
25 stakeholders, what was needed to begin to address

1
2 these inequities. We held town halls, two town
3 halls, a roundtable conversation and surveyed over
4 1,000 parents. We hold deep that those closes to the
5 problems have all the solutions and P10 is a
6 reflection of the brilliant folks who contributed to
7 this work and the final document that summarizes
8 these demands.

9 We organize our demands in a series of buckets
10 that include tech and infrastructures, school
11 climate, culturally responsive education, to name a
12 few. One of the most pressing concerns that surface
13 in all of our conversations was the immediate need to
14 reduce class size. And this feels especially
15 important during the ongoing pandemic.

16 Participants also share the social emotional
17 supports for students and culturally responsive
18 education are critical to reopening. Equity and
19 equitable distribution of resources was also key in
20 all of our conversations. It's critical to center
21 students whose needs have been ignored and neglected.
22 This includes our special needs students, English
23 language learners, students in foster care and those
24 experiencing homelessness.

1
2 We lay out how to support all of these students
3 in our demands. Lastly, we urge New York City to
4 center the budget in racial justice and adjust basic
5 rights. We are calling for a full removal of police
6 in our schools and instead a true investment in
7 restorative justice programs and social emotional
8 support. Every school must have a permanent nurse
9 and librarians. These are all mandated.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 MARIA BAUTISTA: And yet New York City is in
12 violation. Just one more thing to close up. AQE has
13 submitted all of these collective demands as part of
14 our testimony and will continue to advocate with our
15 allies and partners, so we can finally have a budget
16 that meets the needs of our students and school
17 communities. And truly appreciate that allyship and
18 your work on this Council Member Dromm. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to testify today.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Maria and I want to
21 say what a pleasure it has been to work with you and
22 everyone at AQE on these issues. I look forward to
23 continuing that. It's sad it's my last budget
24 hearing but I have truly enjoyed working with you.
25 Thank you for coming in and giving testimony.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Keyanna
3 Bernard followed by Alejandra Teresa Vazquez Baur.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 KEYANNA BERNARD: I'm sorry, can you hear me now?
6 It wasn't letting me unmute.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you now Ms.
8 Bernard, please.

9 KEYANNA BERNARD: Okay, sorry. Hello everyone.
10 My name is Keyanna Bernard, I am 16-years-old and a
11 Youth Leader from Make the Road New York. Ma'Khia
12 Bryant age 16, Adam Toledo age 13, Daunte Wright age
13 20, who were recently murdered by police and Anthony
14 Thompson Jr age 17., who was recently murdered by
15 police in his school bathroom. These four people
16 were youth just like me, with so much life ahead of
17 them. The police target, harass and brutalize Black
18 people in our communities.

19 Imagine how I feel when the first thing I see
20 when I get to my school building are NYPD school
21 safety agents. Then I join a line of students
22 wasting valuable time that could be spent in the
23 classroom waiting to go through a metal detector.
24 Instead of enhancing our education, school police and
25 metal detectors create an unwelcoming environment. I

1
2 have been late to many classes and missed out on
3 information and announcements because I'm waiting in
4 a line to go through scanners.

5 The last thing I see when I leave my school are
6 police officers. I feel angry and disappointed that
7 this is my everyday experience and that students are
8 constantly policed and Black and Brown youth are
9 pushed into the school to prison pipeline. We've
10 heard from previous testimonies at a New York City
11 budget hearing that there are currently 554 vacant
12 school cops positions. This equates to \$50 million
13 dollars. These positions should stay that way. They
14 should be eliminated. Instead of wasting money on
15 school cops and policing, the money should be
16 invested in students' futures.

17 In a survey of New York City students done by the
18 Center for Popular Democracy and the Urban Youth
19 Collaborative. 81 percent of students said they saw
20 police in their school every day. Yet only 7 percent
21 said they had daily interactions with a guidance
22 counselor, social worker or school nurse. That is
23 not right. I am asking you, no, I am demanding you
24 divest from school cops and invest in mine and my
25 peer's future.

1
2 Start today by committing to no new hires for the
3 school safety division. But don't stop there. We
4 should disband the school safety division and invest
5 the \$450 million used to police -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 KEYANNA BERNARD: Black and Brown young people
8 into more guidance counselors, student success
9 centers and restorative justice services. Police
10 don't make schools safe, well-resourced communities
11 do. There is still time to change direction. Use
12 this budget to begin the transformational change us
13 youth need and rightfully deserve. Do not hire new
14 school police and use the \$50 million to instead
15 invest in an equitable future for all NYC youth.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you again Ms. Bernard.
18 It's particularly important that we hear from youth
19 who are directly impacted by the policies of the
20 Department of Education and the NYPD. I appreciate
21 your testimony very much and look forward to
22 continuing to work with you and the other youth
23 groups as well. Thank you again for coming in.

24

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
3 Alejandra Teresa Vazquez Baur followed by Chrissy
4 Word.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 ALEJANDRA TERESA VAZQUEZ BAUR: Good afternoon
7 and thank you for having me. My name is Alejandra
8 Vázquez Baur, and I represent the New Yorkers for
9 Racially Just Public Schools Steering Committee and
10 the New York Immigration Coalition.

11 We are here to demand the transformational budget
12 that meets the needs of our most systematically
13 excluded and under-resourced students, including
14 immigrant students, students with disabilities,
15 students in temporary housing and foster care and
16 students in racially and economically marginalized
17 communities.

18 The city has a critical opportunity with this
19 budget to transform the damaging status quo of
20 transitional education funding practices. Over a
21 dozen community organizations and hundreds of parents
22 in the RJPS Coalition informed our consolidated New
23 York City Education budget demands.

24 To highlight a few, we demand that the city
25 invest \$559 million for supportive schools by

1
2 expanding community schools and eliminating school
3 policing. Allocates \$1 billion for Culturally
4 Responsive Schools, including funding for Ethnic
5 studies curricula. And allocates \$1 billion for
6 Inclusive Schools, which includes \$350 million over
7 three years for ELLs and immigrant families and
8 \$500,000 for data disaggregation.

9 Ensuring ELLs and immigrant families, students
10 with disabilities and other historically marginalized
11 populations are centered and priorities and education
12 policy is a pivotal tenant of the RJPS platform.
13 Therefore, the RJPS inclusive schools budget demands
14 include \$350 million investment to address immigrant
15 students and families unique needs as they have
16 historically and consistently been neglected.

17 In order to ensure our immigrant students and
18 families finally have what they need to thrive, we
19 demand that the city urgently develops and implements
20 a plan for catching up ELLs, ELLs with disabilities
21 and students with limited English proficient parents.
22 Offer \$60 million grants over three years to
23 community-based organizations while positioned to
24 support ELLs and immigrant families. Fully fund and
25

1
2 implement the NYC Education collaborative
3 communication plan.

4 According to 2020 data, ELLs continue have the
5 highest dropout rate of 23 percent of any subgroup in
6 New York City.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 ALEJANDRA TERESA VAZQUEZ BAUR: It is time to
9 transform our schools and end dysfunctional dynamics
10 for immigrant children and families. Thank you for
11 this opportunity to testify.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can I ask you, what did you
13 say about disaggregated data? I missed that.

14 ALEJANDRA TERESA VAZQUEZ BAUR: Alright, sorry,
15 the mute was taking a second. Thank you Chair Dromm
16 for your question. We were asking for \$500,000 for
17 data disaggregation which is a part of our inclusive
18 schools budget. The total inclusive schools budget
19 we're asking for is \$1 billion, including funding for
20 ELLs and immigrant families and data disaggregation.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just explain to me
22 what you mean by data disaggregation?

23 ALEJANDRA TERESA VAZQUEZ BAUR: Yes, of course.
24 Data disaggregation is really important because when
25 you collect data about students of color and you keep

1
2 it really general, we don't know the exact needs that
3 are needed for specific students. So, for example,
4 if you collect information about Hispanic students or
5 about Asian students and we don't break it down,
6 disaggregate by country of origin or by specific
7 communities, then we don't actual have - we're not
8 able to allocate the right resources to the right
9 communities that have those specific needs.

10 So, we're asking for \$500,000 to disaggregate the
11 data so that we know exactly how to target the
12 funding to meet the needs of the specific communities
13 that are at risk.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good, I'm glad to hear this.
15 I have been fighting for LGBT data collection, which
16 I passed a law and still, we haven't gotten a
17 satisfactory response from the Department of
18 Education.

19 So, I hope that in your campaign also, you'll
20 include LGBT data collection and there are things
21 that we can also identify who are the LGBT students.
22 Of course voluntarily, I don't want anyone to be
23 outed or anything like that but I think that data is
24 very, very important to know the needs.

1
2 We also, passed legislation in the City Council
3 to break down the agents of groups which has also
4 been very difficult to get the administration to
5 enforce. We passed a law on it and mixed race
6 groups.

7 So, I am glad to hear that was in your testimony
8 and I fully understand why it is so very important.
9 Thank you.

10 ALEJANDRA TERESA VAZQUEZ BAUR: Absolutely, thank
11 you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Chrissy
13 Word followed by Jody Drezner Alperin.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 CHRISSY WORD: Hi, this is Chrissy Word, I'm
16 Director of Education at City Parks Foundation. Can
17 you hear me?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

20 CHRISSY WORD: Okay, thank you. I am a veteran,
21 educator in New York City working with public school
22 students both in a formal aspect in my career
23 starting out as a public school teacher. And for the
24 past 18 as an educator in the nonprofit sector.

1
2 At City Parks Foundation, I work with a number of
3 public schools and also, I have a son in public
4 school who is 12-years-old. I am - I wanted to
5 testify today to encourage the Council to please
6 dedicate as much funding as possible to the public
7 school system to do a number of things. One, reduce
8 class sizes. As a veteran educator who has been
9 inside the classroom and also interacted with youth
10 of all ages in [LOST AUDIO 2:15:46].

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Word? It appears that
12 we've lost connection Ms. Word, we'll circle back and
13 move forward to the next one who is Jody Drezner
14 Alperin.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 JODY DREZNER ALPERIN: Hi, my name is Jody
17 Drezner Alperin. Thank you, thank you for the
18 opportunity to address the Committee today.

19 I sit on the Advisory Committee of New York City
20 Opt-Out. I am a parent of two New York City public
21 school students and I am here today in support of the
22 work of AQE. I want to urge the Council to adopt a
23 budget that centers equity in education and listens
24 to the voices of students. The very stakeholders for
25 whom the system is built.

1
2 To make our classrooms truly inclusive and
3 equitable, I ask that you fund citywide restorative
4 justice in the amount of \$225 million. Please direct
5 this funding towards the hiring of restorative
6 justice coordinators in every middle and high school.
7 Ongoing training for all school staff that uses an
8 anti-racist approach. Enables it to be school led
9 pass through funding to community partners to support
10 implementation and learning.

11 As we move to this restorative justice
12 environment, it is imperative that we eliminate
13 school policing. As we have heard by so many
14 passionate students here today, by disbanding the
15 school safety division, eliminating the youth
16 coordination officer position and fully divesting
17 from metal detection equipment and camera
18 surveillance technology.

19 Instead, please earmark \$177 million to expand
20 access to social and emotional supports that our
21 students are telling us clearly and unequivocally are
22 what they need, rather than policing. For Fiscal
23 Year '22, we must fund the hiring of new social
24 workers and school counselors to continue working to
25 a ratio of one to 150 for all school and one to 50

1 for high need schools over the next five years.

2 Prioritizing the hiring of those people from Brown
3 and Black communities.

4
5 Additionally, as we start imagine a post-COVID
6 school system, it is imperative that we have smaller
7 class sizes, so that teachers can truly build
8 meaningful relationships with each and every student,
9 so there can really be trauma informed instruction
10 and it can be effectively delivered.

11 Please fund \$250 million to reduce class size,
12 centering the needs in schools with the students most
13 impacted by our current crisis. I urge you to
14 support -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 JODY DREZNER ALPERIN: Of AQE and the New Yorkers
17 for racially just public schools in this budget and
18 thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and thank
20 to the work you've done in Opt-Out. I am a big
21 supporter. I have held a number of press conferences
22 on it as well.

23 JODY DREZNER ALPERIN: Yes.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I really do not like to
3 see standardized tests, in addition to everything
4 else that you said, so thank you.

5 JODY DREZNER ALPERIN: And we are big – thank you
6 for your support. We have been appreciative of your
7 support over the years and as you know, as we come
8 back into school buildings, it's going to be a
9 continued fight to give our kids what they really
10 need and not to have money go towards funding that
11 testing machine. So, we are grateful for your
12 support over the years.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
15 Paullette and Lucas Healy followed by Kaveri
16 Sengupta.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 PAULLETTE HEALY: Hi, if it's okay, Lucas is
19 going to speak first and then I will do my testimony
20 after. Is that alright?

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, that's fine.

22 PAULLETTE HEALY: Thank you.

23 LUCAS HEALY: My name is Lucas Healy and I'm a
24 D75 student. I am here today to ask you to please
25 make sure students like me with learning challenges,

1
2 please be supported by funding more specialized
3 programs like AIMS, ACES, ASD Horizon and NEST
4 programs along with funding so there can be a D75
5 program for not only K to five but for middle school
6 and high school in every district.

7 I also ask that we hire more counselors, social
8 workers, nurses and related service providers
9 especially bilingual related service providers and
10 stop putting millions of dollars into high stakes
11 testing. These tests don't help teachers support
12 students who are struggling and only shining light on
13 how students like me don't fit into a DOE box and
14 therefore are not worth educating. Students with
15 IEPs have voices too and we want you to hear us.
16 Please fully fund special education. We are worth
17 the attention and investment. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow, you certainly [INAUDIBLE
19 2:22:05] and I think that your testimony was
20 fantastic and I don't know Lucas is you know but I
21 used to be a fourth grade teacher. What grade are
22 you in? I can't hear you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're unmuting right now.

24 LUCAS HEALY: Well, I am going into high school
25 and I am eighth grade.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, you are in eighth grade
3 going into high school and you can come on a Zoom and
4 read like that. Boy, it took me until I was 35-
5 years-old to be able to stand up and speak that well
6 in public, so congratulations to you and thank you so
7 much. That is so meaningful and I am very grateful
8 for your testimony. Is that your mother?

9 Yes, is your mother helping you? That's great
10 and mom, did you want to speak also.

11 PAULLETTE HEALY: Yes, I have my own testimony as
12 well.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

14 LUCAS HEALY: Thank you sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, thank you. That was
16 fantastic.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 PAULLETTE HEALY: Thank you for the time. My
19 name is Paullette Healy and I am a member of the
20 Citywide Council on Special Education along with a
21 Steering member for PRESS NYC, that stands for
22 Parents or Responsive Equitable Safe Schools.

23 I want to applaud all the speakers that came
24 before me, Maria Bautista from ACQ, Michael Mulgrew
25 from the UFT, Mark from the CSA and all of the

1
2 wonderful youth speakers. Our Citywide Council on
3 Special Education actually released a letter of
4 budget recommendations earlier this month, which we
5 did send to City Council and I will attach to my
6 testimony.

7 But to highlight some of the things that we were
8 recommending was also pay parity for our special
9 education Pre-K teachers who are in both 410 schools
10 and 846 schools, along with making sure that the
11 expansion of Pre-K also includes special education
12 supports as related service providers. And that we
13 do not see another 2,000 seat deficit, like we did
14 during COVID.

15 I also want to amplify the need for a citywide
16 literacy curriculum because if our children are
17 learning to read in prison and not in our schools,
18 what does that say about us as a society? We also
19 ask that a sustainable childcare option be put into
20 place. Learning Bridges was poorly executed. It did
21 not deliver on the 100,000 seats that were promised
22 by the Mayor and it was grossly overspent in terms of
23 budget.

24 We encourage the City Council to use the powers
25 within your oversight budget to make sure going

1
2 forward with the foundation fund that's coming to our
3 schools, that the DOE does not squander it and misuse
4 it as they did with Learning Bridges. Or the misuse
5 of OPT, Office of People Transportation that has
6 already spent \$1.4 billion on buses this year, when
7 they are only servicing just a portion of our
8 students.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 PAULLETTE HEALY: Can I just have two more
11 seconds?

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

13 PAULLETTE HEALY: To finish up?

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, yes.

15 PAULLETTE HEALY: Thank you. I also wanted to
16 amplify that with the Mayor's reopening plan that he
17 announced yesterday that is no longer providing a
18 remote option for parents, you are shutting the door
19 on education for those who are medically fragile and
20 for families who just cannot have another option
21 other than a remote option. The COVID vaccine only
22 protects from the virus, it does not erase a heart
23 condition or leukemia and we cannot afford to lose
24 potentially thousands of families to charters or to
25

1
2 leave New York all together in search of a safer
3 educational option.

4 Organizations such as PRESS NYC and AQE and CEG
5 have options already in place that we could suggest
6 to the DOE, in terms of a sustainable, equitable,
7 centralized remote option, so that we don't neglect
8 these families and lose more families. And I also
9 encourage that please center trauma centered
10 trainings for all staff, not just guidance counselors
11 and social workers as my son had asked for in his
12 testimony. Because recently, we had a ten-year-old
13 boy from Haiti die because of violence that was
14 executed upon him and he was a subject of bullying in
15 the school that was left unaddressed, when there was
16 only a small portion of children in-person.

17 So, what chance do our children have if we all
18 have to go back in September and trauma centered
19 supports are not there and cyber bullying and actual
20 bullying is not being recognized? You know respect
21 for all should not just be words on a poster in a
22 hallway. It needs to be implemented safely. Our
23 schools need to be held accountable and we do not
24 want anymore death of our children because these
25 things were not recognized. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Ms. Healy
3 for coming in and for allowing your son also to
4 speak. It's really very, very moving testimony to
5 hear him. And also, all of the issues that you
6 brought up. You know, I came out as an openly gay
7 teacher in 1992, specifically to address the issue of
8 bullying. Particularly of LGBT students at that time
9 but really for all students as well or anybody who is
10 different and suffers discrimination at the hands of
11 other folks, especially in our school system.

12 So, this is very meaningful testimony and I am
13 very, very appreciative of you coming in. Thank you
14 so much and we're going to fight as we move forward
15 for the issues that you brought up here today. You
16 and Lucas. Thank you Lucas.

17 LUCAS HEALY: Thank you.

18 PAULLETTE HEALY: Thank you. Thank you
19 Councilman, we really appreciate and you have been an
20 amazing ally in all of these initiatives and we know
21 that even though this may be your last budget
22 hearing, we're going to see you in the streets
23 marching with us as we have been all these years.
24 So, we appreciate -.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's right.

1 PAULLETTE HEALY: Your services.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I came from the streets and I
3 will return to the streets.
4

5 PAULLETTE HEALY: That's right. Thank you so
6 much for that. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Kaveri
9 Sengupta followed by Matthew Malendez.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
12 Kaveri Sengupta, I am the Education Policy
13 Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American
14 Children and Families or CACF. Thank you so much to
15 Chair Dromm and the members of the Committee on
16 Finance for giving us this opportunity to testify.
17 CACF is the nations only Pan Asian children and
18 families advocacy organization. We lead the fight
19 for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding
20 and services.

21 Asian American students comprise 16.2 percent of
22 the New York City student population. They attend
23 over 95 percent of our public schools, make up almost
24 one in four English Language Learners and over 15,000
25 have an IEP. Many attend overcrowded and underfunded

1 schools and the majority of Asian American students
2 in New York City have stayed in remote learning.
3 Many parents remain fearful of sending their children
4 back.
5

6 Language barriers and lack of visibility in our
7 curriculum data collection endure. We can begin to
8 address these issue by targeting funding for these
9 specific needs. We're pleased to see many important
10 investments in the Executive Budget but still there
11 are necessary pieces that are left out. So, as
12 steering committee members for New Yorkers for Racial
13 Just Public Schools, we would like to emphasis some
14 RJPS demands that will benefit Asian American student
15 immensely and by extension, all students and we're
16 hoping that City Council will fight for these
17 priorities.

18 So, first off, I wanted to talk a little bit more
19 about the data disaggregation point Chair, if that
20 works. So, at least \$500,000 for DOE to really fund
21 proper data collection and data disaggregation.
22 Ethnic groups to identify those and address those
23 inequities across groups. As you know for Asian
24 students this ultimately works to fight the model
25 minority myth and despite the passage of L0126; thank

1
2 you so much for championing that legislation a few
3 years ago.

4 As you know, Asian American students really
5 remain lumped together and averaged out in all
6 consequential daily data. Which erases their rich
7 diversity and renders the challenges of many pockets
8 of the community invisible, especially those most
9 marginalized.

10 So, we're calling for this funding to change
11 internal data collection processes in the DOE. For
12 stakeholder engagement, collect data, collecting data
13 and multiple enrollment points for internal rollout
14 and training for staff as well as public service
15 announcement series to explain those changes being
16 collected to families.

17 We are also calling for \$1 billion for culturally
18 responsive sustaining education -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Alright, I will just quickly
21 wrap up, if that's fine?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, of course.

23 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Thank you. To educate and
24 honor all communities, especially the contributions
25 of Asian Americans who have been overwhelmingly

1 invisible in our curricula. \$177 million to expand
2 access to social and emotional supports. This is
3 something that our parents and families have really
4 been bringing up as concerns for their children and
5 they want to see mental and emotional health really
6 directly addressed in our school buildings. And
7 finally, \$350 million over three years to support
8 English Language Learners and immigrant families with
9 targeted support.
10

11 Finally, I just quickly wanted to mention that
12 CACF's Budget Equity Campaign 15 percent and growing.
13 We are calling for the inclusion in the Adopted
14 Budget of a new \$4 million citywide initiative to
15 support culturally competent, linguistically
16 appropriate direct service programs by Asian led and
17 serving communities organizations called, Recovery
18 and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers.

19 Some of my colleagues will be speaking about that
20 in a couple of panels but I wanted to make sure to
21 highlight it as a priority for us. So, thank you so
22 much for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Kaveri. It's been
24 such a pleasure to be able to work with CACF over the
25 years. Starting from my introduction I guess, with

1
2 ASAP back when I was first elected to the City
3 Council and Mitch was running the program at the
4 time, so that's been great.

5 I just want to go to the data disaggregation
6 again.

7 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you say \$100,000 or
9 \$500,000?

10 KAVERI SENGUPTA: \$500,000.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: \$500,000, okay.

12 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And also, can you get me more
14 information, just forward that to me on the
15 [INAUDIBLE 2:31:52] -

16 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Certainly.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because I think that's so
18 really important and I am really glad to hear you
19 advocating for that because it is desperately needed
20 and has not really been implemented in a way that we
21 had hoped it would be. So, thank you.

22 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Thank you so much. Yes, I will
23 email it directly to you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thanks, yeah.
25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Matthew
3 Malendez followed by Kaliris Y Salas-Ramirez.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MATTHEW MALENDEZ: Hello everyone. My name is
6 Matthew, I am Youth Leader at Sisters and Brothers
7 United and Urban Youth Collaborative. I live in
8 Council District 8 in the Bronx and I am in the 7th
9 grade. I attend James CUNY in Junior High School.

10 My vision for this school - for schools in the
11 Bronx is for schools to feel safe. That means
12 completely remove cops in schools and implementing
13 more support for students.

14 Students should be focused on the academic
15 success of students as well as their social and
16 emotional wellbeing in and outside of schools. Today
17 is May 25th, which is the one year anniversary of
18 George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis. One year ago,
19 we saw the city's rise across the countries, in
20 particular, New York City.

21 We took over the streets calling for you all -
22 uh, wait a second. Our city officials to defund
23 police last year. I actually want to divest \$1
24 billion from the NYPD. Those of you that are on this
25 call gaslighted us. Not only was the \$1 billion not

1
2 cut, we were delivered a decision for school police
3 to be transferred from the NYPD to the DOE instead.
4 Which, therefore, there was still a strong opposition
5 to this plan. By changed the supervision does not
6 change the fact that these cops are in our school
7 still. Cops who do not make me feel secure nor safe
8 in my schools in my neighborhood – nor my
9 neighborhood.

10 I have seen from personal experience how they
11 treat me and my peers on my way to school, in front
12 of my school and in the entry ways and also in the
13 hallways.

14 As a student in a music class, I have to bring a
15 guitar home to practice and there was this one
16 incident when I went to school and a couple SSA's
17 said that they would not let me inside unless they
18 check my bag and my guitar case for a gun.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 MATTHEW MALENDEZ: I got scared. I wanted to cry
21 as they accused me as an 11-year-old at the time,
22 being harshly judged at the door. Being treated like
23 a criminal. Seeing them all over my school just
24 reminds me when I used to visit my family member at
25 Rikers. The constant surveillance, the pat downs at

1 the door, the bag searches. It felt exactly the same
2 as I went to class school.

3
4 Today, I call on you all to do what is right and
5 pass the budget that will make real investment in
6 students like me. I call on you to invest the
7 meaningful restorative justice in schools. We need
8 \$118.53 million to adequate fund RJ and 500 high
9 schools this year. We call for adequate funding for
10 social workers and guidance counselors. We need \$162
11 million to begin hiring workers at a ratio of one
12 guidance counselor per 150 students in most schools
13 and one guidance counselor per 50 students in schools
14 for high need schools.

15 We also call for funding of mental health
16 continuum for New York City to invest \$50 million for
17 those thorough support and service. Lastly, we call
18 on you to completely divest from school policing in
19 schools. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much Matthew.
21 What grade did you say you were in?

22 MATTHEW MALENDEZ: I am in 7th grade.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wow, so you're well on your
24 way to being successful and really incredible that

1
2 you would come in and give testimony even being in
3 7th grade. Thank you very much for your testimony.

4 MATTHEW MALENDEZ: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Kaliris
6 Salas-Ramirez followed by Leonie Haimson.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 KALIRIS SALAS-RAMIREZ: Good morning Chair Dromm.
9 My name is Kaliris Salas, I am the President of CEC 4
10 but I am here as part of the Steering Committees for
11 Racially Just Public Schools New York City Opt-Out,
12 Black Lives Matter at Schools, as well as PRESS NYC
13 Parents for a Responsible Equitable Safe Skills.

14 I think you've heard from a lot of youth and us
15 parents and teachers of the things that we should not
16 be investing in. We should not be investing in more
17 police in our schools. We should not be investing
18 \$500 million on testing but there are so many things
19 that we do need to invest in.

20 In terms of academics and pedagogical practices,
21 we want you to invest in culturally responsive
22 practices, at least \$1 billion to provide the
23 appropriate training for educators and for our staff
24 in order to support all children. We want you to
25 also support authentic assessment in our schools.

1
2 Something that we've kind of forgotten and you
3 yourself stated at City College, where I actually
4 work. These are the things that we talk about. How
5 do we really assess children and how do we move them
6 along knowing where they are and knowing who they
7 are?

8 And so, with that, we also have to support
9 language justice and support for our immigrant
10 families as well as our English Language Learners.
11 We have to support structured literacy and screening
12 for our dyslexic students that are not served within
13 our public education system. And there are bills out
14 in the assembly, JoAnn Simon is a strong advocate as
15 well as Brad Hoilman(SP?). And so, we need to
16 elevate those and move those forward in public
17 education.

18 Healing centered schools are important. Trauma
19 responsive practices, social workers, counselors, two
20 RJ practitioners in every school, as well as social
21 emotional learning and we have to be really concerned
22 about prepackaged social emotional learning
23 curriculum and also integrate anti-racist practices
24 in that.

1
2 But we don't want to forget that we're still in
3 the middle of a pandemic and we still need to uphold
4 safety. There are 500 slots for registered nurses in
5 our school.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 KALIRIS SALAS-RAMIREZ: We need to have - okay,
8 I'll finish in one second. We need to have schools
9 that provide wrap around services, so our school
10 nurses will be the ones that are responsible for
11 maybe rapid testing for COVID, providing appropriate
12 PPE in our schools and also vaccine delivery. We
13 need to support our school communities and
14 understanding juvenile diabetes, food allergies,
15 asthma and in the case of how to detect head
16 concussions and other consequences of different
17 adverse interactions between children.

18 This can only be provided with health
19 professionals and we must have nurses in our schools.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much for your
22 testimony. I really appreciate it. You know, these
23 are all things that I have been fighting for and will
24 continue to fight for as we go through this process
25 and you know hopefully, we'll come out better off

1
2 than we've seen in the Proposed Budget and I look
3 forward to continuing to work.

4 KALIRIS SALAS-RAMIREZ: Let us know, we'll show
5 up wherever you need us.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Towards adoption. Yes, thank
7 you. I know you will. I know you will. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Leonie
9 Haimson followed by Heather Clarke Mackin.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 LEONIE HAIMSON: Hello Council Member Dromm, I
12 just wanted to thank you tremendously for your
13 advocacy, your leadership for better schools and
14 especially for the \$250 million to be spent on lower
15 class size next year. My name is Leonie Haimson, I
16 am Executive Director of Class Size Matters. New
17 York City children have needed smaller classes for
18 more than a generation but they will need them more
19 next year than ever before and now we have the
20 resources to pay for this. It's just the perfect
21 opportunity to do this.

22 Last Saturday, we held a parent action conference
23 sponsored with – co-sponsored with New York City Kids
24 Back and Teens Take Charge focused on how the
25 additional funds should be spent. We also had an

1
2 online survey asking respondents to rank their
3 priorities among 14 choices.

4 The overwhelming consensus was that class size
5 reduction was the top need for our children,
6 especially now. Smaller classes have also been a top
7 priority of New York City parents with children in
8 grades K-12. When asked, what change they would most
9 like to see in their schools since the DOE began
10 administering parent surveys in 2007. Since our
11 schools are finally due to receive their total
12 foundation funds, as a result of the CFE cases, it's
13 only right that some of these funds spent
14 specifically on hiring additional teachers to lower
15 class size, which was a key issue in the CFE lawsuit
16 and the judges decision that New York City children
17 were denied their constitutional right to a sound
18 basic education and yet, since that decision was
19 delivered, class sizes have gone up and not down.

20 I really want to second the opinion and the
21 testimony of Mark Cannizzaro, the President of the
22 CSA that this funding stream be separate from fair
23 student funding or else we will never see the results
24 that we need. First that fair student funding
25 formula is designed to incentivize principals to

1
2 overcrowd their schools and classrooms since it is
3 linked to how many students are enrolled in the
4 school.

5 If the funds are simply injected -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 LEONIE HAIMSON: So, I just wanted to have a
8 specific proposal that there be reporting
9 requirements along with the \$250 million so that we
10 see which additional teachers have been hired in
11 which schools to lower classes in specific grades and
12 subjects. And I think this could go a long with the
13 class size reporting that's due every year on
14 November 15th. Again, I want to thank you for your
15 leadership. I am so sad that you are leaving the
16 Council in January but I know that you will fighting
17 with us as Paullette said, every single day for
18 better schools. Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Leonie. Thank you
20 for your kind words. I really appreciate it. It's
21 been a pleasure to work with you over these last 12
22 years. I've always admired and looked up to you and
23 the work that Class Size Matters does. You really
24 get it and you know, I always say, why doesn't the
25 DOE try the one thing that they never really tried

1
2 that we know that works, which is to reduce class
3 size. If you want to get better results, that's what
4 you do. They do know that in terms of special
5 education if you want to work with special education
6 students, the way to get to them is to have smaller
7 class sizes.

8 So, if it works there, it works in other places
9 as well. I am going to continue to fight to get that
10 \$250 million and I look forward to having you as an
11 ally in that battle moving forward. Thank you so
12 much for everything, I very much appreciate it.
13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Heather
15 Clarke Mackin followed by Natasha Capers.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 HEATHER CLARKE MACKIN: Hello, my name is Heather
18 Clarke Mackin. I'd like to say good afternoon and
19 thank you to Council Chair Dromm and everyone else
20 and the members who are here.

21 So, I'm representing organizations AQE and Arise
22 Coalition. I am a parent disability advocate and
23 also a Black diverse mother and early childhood
24 special educator and I work at Early Intervention and
25 to the matter of class size, I just want to take it

1
2 aside and say, when talking about class size, I want
3 to talk about inclusivity because it's not enough in
4 terms of talking about special education students.

5 We really need to have trained special educators who
6 know how to work with neurodiverse children and
7 children with disabilities in the right appropriate
8 way. And know how to work in an inclusive manner.

9 So, one of the things that I really want to focus
10 on is divesting all the money that's going to safety
11 police officers in schools. Take that money away
12 from the NYPD budget and to standardized testing and
13 put that to really making 3K for All and 4K for all
14 and making it to include our special education
15 students, our preschoolers with disabilities who have
16 been completely ignored for the past few years. We
17 know that at least 20 percent of our preschoolers
18 have disabilities and they have not been included in
19 this discussion. So, considering that the majority
20 of our students with disabilities go to schools in
21 their neighborhoods, I would like to see that the 3K
22 for All and the 4K for all have inclusive
23 collaborative team teaching classrooms.

24 In addition, I would like to see that in our
25 Black, Brown immigrant neighborhoods that we open up

1
2 specialized pre-K for students, preschoolers with
3 severe disabilities who have to go to schools like
4 stepping stones or other District 75 preschool
5 centers. I want to see those in high marginalized
6 neighborhoods, so that parents don't have to take
7 their children to -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 HEATHER CLARKE MACKIN: All over the city. Just
10 let me continue my thought for one more second.
11 Additionally, we have a lot of parents who are
12 traveling all around the city to go to a speech
13 therapist, occupational therapist, physical
14 therapist, counselors, all of these specialized
15 therapists should be in the preschool centers, so
16 that all these services are located within the
17 preschool, so it really is a 3K for all or a 4K for
18 all, which currently they are not.

19 So, that's another thing that you know, the money
20 should be right there. The center should be right
21 there for those students. So, that's something that
22 I am going to include in a letter to you. I would
23 like to just like make that one of the key things
24 that's not been in the discussion. When the Mayor
25 talks about 3K for All, 4K for All, it's completely

1 ignored. Our students, our preschoolers with
2 disabilities.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely and I think that
5 as a former educator, what I have learned is that
6 intervention at an early age, the earlier you get it,
7 the better off that student is. So, making that
8 investment in early childhood special education pays
9 off in the long run and it's well worth it for the
10 city to invest in that type of program. Thank you.

11 HEATHER CLARKE MACKIN: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Natasha
13 Capers followed by Inshirah DuWors.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 NATASHA CAPERS: Hello, I am Natasha Capers,
16 Director of the New York City Coalition for
17 Educational Justice and a steering member of New
18 Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools as well as a
19 public school parent.

20 85 percent of New York City public school
21 students are Black, Latinx or Asian. Yet the
22 curriculum used in our schools do not reflect them in
23 the books they read or the information they learn.
24 New York City has put zero dollars into the education
25 budget for culturally response sustaining education,

1
2 yet everyone talks about how it is a priority but
3 where?

4 The Mayor plans to expand PreK but has made now
5 shifts in the curriculum which has nearly zero
6 representation of people or characters or authors of
7 color. For example, of the 121 authors in the
8 Mayor's 3K curriculum, only one is Latinx and three
9 are Black. Of the 42 authors in the Mayor's PreK for
10 All curriculum, there are zero Black, zero Native
11 American and zero middle eastern authors. There are
12 only one Latinx and one Asian author. The other 40
13 are White.

14 Recently, the Chancellor and Mayor announced
15 changes from the change from Columbus day to
16 Indigenous People day/Italian American Heritage day.
17 But once again, there has been nothing said about
18 what the shifts to curriculum will be, about who
19 Columbus truly was or the lies that are taught to our
20 children annually about him.

21 Juneteenth has also been announced as a holiday,
22 although students will not get that off for several
23 years but nothing has been announced about what will
24 be taught in classrooms about the significance of
25 Juneteenth or what it even is.

1
2 It is time that everyone puts their rhetoric
3 where their mouths – stop putting their rhetoric in
4 their mouths and start putting the money to invest in
5 this. It is time to invest the \$1 billion into the
6 education budget for culturally responsive and
7 sustain the education.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 NATASHA CAPERS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hi Natasha, it's Danny. Can
11 you see me?

12 NATASHA CAPERS: Yes, I can see you. I can hear
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, good. When you say
15 there have been no money for culturally responsive
16 education, I thought originally we had funding in
17 there due to your advocacy. Has it been taken out
18 now?

19 NATASHA CAPERS: When we looked at the budget and
20 when we asked the Department of Education and the
21 Chancellor this question directly, no one could give
22 a single dollar amount for how much they are putting
23 into the budget for culturally responsive education
24 or where that money is living. There is speculation
25 that it is living between teaching and learning and

1
2 that \$500 million for learning recovery but there is
3 not anything specifically earmarked for culturally
4 responsive education or for new curriculum to go
5 along with it.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, that's really, really,
7 really upsetting. I know that we have been in this
8 battle with them for years and this is a step
9 backward and we're going to have to work on that.
10 You know it's just, it's mindboggling your numbers
11 and the statistics and the books and authors and it's
12 really not a good thing.

13 So, I am going to check it out and I know, I
14 think I have a meeting with you coming up soon. So,
15 we'll figure out a strategy there as well.

16 NATASHA CAPERS: I'm here for it.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And finally, may I say one
18 other thing? I love that hair. I love that hair.
19 It's perfect, perfect for the moment. Thank you
20 Natasha.

21 NATASHA CAPERS: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Dromm, we have a
23 question from Council Member Adams.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Good afternoon. Natasha I
3 had to cosign with Council Member Dromm, our Chair
4 Dromm. I will be at the budget negotiating table
5 once again this year and this is my issue. The lack
6 of curriculum for Black and Brown children in our
7 schools. It's unbelievable. I have also brought it
8 up to Chancellor Porter as well.

9 So, I just want to let you know that we will
10 continue this fight. It seems that we're getting a
11 lot of lip service all the time but I do have hope
12 and just know that you've got another fighter at that
13 table, looking for the curriculum that our children
14 deserve. And hopefully will finally, finally get.
15 So, thank you Natasha for all of your work. If you
16 need me, just holler.

17 NATASHA CAPERS: I'm going to holler. Thank you,
18 we'll be having a Juneteenth action. You are always
19 invited and it's going to be amazing.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you.

21 NATASHA CAPERS: And so, thank you for your
22 advocacy and your work.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Alright.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
25 Inshirah DuWors followed by Grisel Cardona.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

INSHIRAH DUWORS: Good afternoon. My name is Inshirah DuWors, I am a mother to three public school children. I am here on first and foremost on behalf of the them but also in allyship with the coalition for Educational Justice and also the Alliance for quality education.

I am here, I am going to backpack off of Natasha for the importance of culturally responsive sustaining education and how we know representation matters. My children are biracial and they have fought to see themselves in the curriculum. I am a teacher and an educator. I think that I've, because of my background been able to help the curriculum that they lack in school at home and I have found myself going to several bookstores trying to get all the books that they can see themselves inside of. And in addition, see other people and trying to help them be empathetic, children and also learning about others.

We all know and I appreciate your support for culturally responsive education but we know that the DOE is maybe on board and maybe not. We don't know where the funding is and we want it fully funded. We

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2 know how representation; how important it is. I
3 enjoy hearing you speak on your thinking.
4 Antibullying is important and we also know that you
5 know some people who are bullied are underrepresented
6 populations and imagine if you put in the curriculum
7 how we learn about immigrant families, immigrant
8 children -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 INSHIRAH DUWORS: Asian American children, Black
11 children, children with disabilities, children who
12 don't speak English as their first language. Imagine
13 the empathy that all of our children will get through
14 that curriculum.

15 And the last thing I will say is we, you know we
16 all grew up with all this African American history
17 and Asian American history but we just know that it's
18 one, American history. We need to put all of those
19 things together and we want the Department of
20 Education to fund what we know is important and our
21 children all need throughout this school district,
22 the city. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much for
24 coming in. I really appreciate it.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will hear from Grisel
3 Cardona followed by Aakriti Khanal.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 GRISEL CARDONA: Hi everyone and thank you
6 Council Member Dromm for having and hosting this.
7 So, I am a public school mom with three children, all
8 with IEP's. I am a part of the Parent Action
9 Committee as well as a Parent Leader with the
10 Coalition for Educational Justice. So, I am asking
11 that we and to back up what Natasha said, to invest
12 \$1 billion into the budget for culturally responsive
13 sustaining education. You know for children to see
14 themselves in the curriculum. To have resources if
15 it is so much needed. You know, one part of the
16 borough, they will have all the resources, in the
17 other part of the borough, we don't have you know any
18 resources at all and we have to figure out how to get
19 them.

20 You know, we have a leader that wants to make it
21 happen. Let's just give her the tools and the
22 resources and the funding to make it possible now.
23 And DOE has eliminated Columbus day but has not shown
24 any evidence that they are making any significant
25 shifts to curriculum to teach that period of history

1
2 in a way that history historically accurate and
3 provide accurate representation of the indigenous
4 people past and present.

5 So, I'm asking that uhm, that we really invest in
6 culturally responsive sustaining education. Our
7 children need it now more than ever. I know that
8 teachers talk and say, yeah, we're doing it but we're
9 not seeing it. So, please, please, please, let's
10 just make sure that we provide the necessary
11 resources so that we can move forward, especially
12 with ethnic studies and civics. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, I really agree with
14 that and I also think that implicit bias training has
15 to go hand and hand with it as well. So, thank you
16 for coming in and giving testimony. Appreciate it.

17 GRISEL CARDONA: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Aakriti
19 Khanal followed by Diya Basu-Sen.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 AAKRITI KANAL: Sorry, I was having a hard time
22 unmuting. Thank you Chair Dromm and other members of
23 the Finance Committee. I am here representing
24 Adhikaar today. Adhikaar is an immigrant women-led
25 organization based in Woodside, as the only social

1
2 justice organization serving and mobilizing the
3 Nepali-speaking community. We serve an estimated
4 10,000 members yearly. Often referred to as our
5 community's 911 and 311 line, most of our members are
6 nail salon workers, domestic workers, taxi drivers
7 and working in other informal sectors. They largely
8 live in Queens and Brooklyn and many are women
9 identifying on temporary visas or undocumented and
10 have limited literacy. Too often their struggles are
11 rendered invisible making our members extremely
12 vulnerable to exploitation and structural violence.

13 Our community has been directly and deeply
14 impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the cases
15 began to surge in New York City last March, thousands
16 of community members reached out and we quickly
17 rallied to directly relieve services and workforce
18 support along with advocacy to address the devastating
19 levels of unemployment and job scarcity. We worked
20 to develop members digital literacy skills to
21 participate in workforce development trainings.

22 Additionally, we've been active on the temporary
23 protected status campaign since Adhikaar fought and
24 won TPS for Nepali in 2015, depending on the outcome
25 of the ongoing litigation and potential

1
2 redesignation. We anticipate a substantial demand in
3 services and plan to host large scale legal clinics
4 to serve Nepali TPS holders.

5 For more than 15 years, we have provided critical
6 direct support and creative pathways for our
7 community members to be seen and heard in New York
8 City and yet minimal funding has been provided by
9 city to support our work. To meet the demands of our
10 growing community and provide services to help them
11 become tomorrow citizens, we are requesting \$200,000
12 in FY22 city discretionary funding to support our
13 direct services work including our workforce
14 development training, legal services, adult literacy
15 classes and our COVID-19 response work.

16 Together, we invite you all to support the
17 development of a new community of leaders who push -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 AAKRITI KANAL: Boundaries within their places of
20 work and within and outside the halls of government
21 for the betterment of immigrant workers and
22 communities.

23 We have submitted a longer written testimony that
24 we invite you to read to learn more in depth about

1
2 this important issue and I thank you for your time
3 and your consideration today. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. It's
5 always been a pleasure to work with Adhikaar and
6 thank you for the work that you do for the community.
7 Thank you.

8 AAKRITI KHANAL: Thank you so much.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Diya
10 Basu-Sen followed by Erick Agarijo.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 DIYA BASU-SEN: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and
13 Committee Members for the opportunity to testimony.
14 My name is Diya Basu-Sen, Executive Director of Sapna
15 NYC. The only CBO in the Bronx that provide services
16 to the Pan South Asian community in Bangla, Hindi,
17 and Urdu.

18 Throughout the pandemic, APA CBOs have been
19 filling the gap between community needs and city
20 services and outreach. We have been doing essential
21 frontline work, distributing groceries and PPE,
22 making vaccine appointments, counseling victims of
23 hate crimes, distributing emergency funds and much
24 more. Our CBOs are always the first place our
25 communities go to for help because they simply cannot

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2 get the same culturally competent, linguistically
3 accessible services anywhere else but at the same
4 time they remain historically under-funded. APAs
5 represent over 15 percent of the population, yet our
6 CBOs receive less than 5 percent of discretionary
7 dollars and less than 1.5 percent of social service
8 contract dollars. We saw how disinvestment in
9 communities of color led to disproportionate impacts
10 in the COVID-19 pandemic and we are calling on the
11 Council to ensure that those same mistakes are not
12 repeated.

13 We are asking New York City Council to create
14 vital initiatives to support culturally competent and
15 language accessible direct service programs to
16 address the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on
17 our APA communities and to invest in community-based
18 solutions to addressing the exponential rise in anti-
19 Asian hate crimes. We need more affordable and
20 accessible mental health services provided by trusted
21 CBOs. We need more case managers to increase access
22 to much needed benefits. We need more support for
23 survivors. We need a better reporting system for
24 hate crimes. We need in-language health outreach to

1
2 ensure our communities have accurate COVID-19
3 information. We need budget equity.

4 A budget is a moral document that shows who and
5 what we value and too often APAs, immigrants and
6 communities of color are shown that we matter when it
7 comes to our votes, to holidays and public events but
8 not when it comes to investing real dollars in our
9 communities. Now more than ever, investing in APA
10 CBOs like Sapna is essential for our neighborhoods –

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 DIYA BASU-SEN: Communities and businesses to
13 heal and recover to stop Asian hate and to ensure
14 that we have an equitable recovery from the pandemic.
15 Thank you Council Member Dromm for your continued
16 support of our APA communities and to all of you for
17 your time today.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Diya and
19 it's really been a pleasure to work with you and the
20 AAPI communities and I look forward to continuing
21 that and hopefully with a good outcome for the
22 budget.

23 DIYA BASU-SEN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Erick
3 Agarijo followed by Lakshmi Sammuganathan.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 ERICK AGARIJO: Hello, good afternoon. My name
6 is Erick Agarijo and I am the Communication
7 Coordinator for the Korean American Family Service
8 Center.

9 Thank you to Chairman Dromm and the esteemed
10 members of the Committee on Finance for holding this
11 important hearing and providing us the opportunity to
12 submit testimony. KAFSC is a nonprofit organization
13 that provides social services to Korean Asian
14 immigrant survivors and their children who are
15 effected by domestic violence, sexual assault and
16 child abuse for the past 32 years. All of our
17 programs and services are offered in a culturally and
18 linguistically appropriate setting. 98 percent of
19 our clients are immigrants and 100 percent of our
20 staff members are immigrants themselves or children
21 of immigrant parents. Over 95 percent of our clients
22 first language is not English and come from low-
23 income backgrounds. During New York State on pause
24 and throughout the COVID-19 public health and
25 economic crisis, KAFSC responded to a 300 percent

1
2 increase in calls to our 24 hour bilingual hotline.
3 88 percent were related to domestic violence, sexual
4 assault and child abuse.

5 In 2020, we responded to over 4,000 hotline calls
6 and KAFSC served 1,201 survivors of domestic violence
7 and sexual assault and provided over 20,900 aid
8 services related to domestic violence and sexual
9 assault. Many of our survivors are undocumented and
10 are excluded from accessing unemployment insurance
11 and all other income supports. They lost financial
12 means, some temporarily, others permanently,
13 resulting in loss of livelihood and unable to support
14 themselves and their children.

15 These consequences are then exacerbated as they
16 are ineligible for unemployment benefits and other
17 labor protection by law from which they are excluded.
18 Many in their community and their loved ones have
19 contracted the virus and died. Without financial
20 means, our immigrant survivors cannot afford food,
21 rent, basic necessities, personal protective
22 equipment and supplies, medical care, or even basic
23 living expenses such as -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 ERICK AGARIJO: Utility bills etc. If you just
3 give me 30 more seconds, I will wrap it up.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

5 ERICK AGARIJO: KAFSC – thank you in Fiscal Year
6 2021, Asian led and serving organizations received
7 only 4.65 percent of City Council discretionary
8 dollars and less than 1.5 percent of social services
9 contract dollars.

10 Our community based organizations never received
11 funding that adequately supported their vital
12 services in neighborhoods and during a time when APA
13 immigrants are especially vulnerable, they have had
14 to fill the tremendous gaps in services.

15 KAFSC is at the frontline serving a community and
16 the constituents to fill the gap during this
17 unprecedented trauma. We are seeking support from
18 the budget of Finance to create the funding for the
19 recovery and healing for Asian American New Yorkers,
20 which would directly support the critical life
21 affirming community based work to supporting our
22 immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual
23 assault and child abuse. And other support for the
24 sustainability of the organization as we provide the
25 culturally and linguistically services and programs.

1
2 Once again, thank you very much for allowing me
3 to testify and we look forward to working with all of
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and thank you for
6 the work that the community services communities that
7 it does. Council Member Rosenthal has her hand
8 raised.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much and
11 thank you Chair Dromm. You are always amazing on
12 these hearings. I really appreciate your time and
13 effort.

14 I wanted to ask Erick if you could just for
15 minute – first of all, I want you to know I agree
16 with everything you just said and I really appreciate
17 the work that you have done always but particularly
18 during the pandemic. And I think the – I would be
19 curious to know your thought about the city's
20 response. The support that you've gotten. Your
21 organization has gotten during the pandemic for what
22 you have seen happen with your clients.

23 In other words, have you had the resources you've
24 needed to be able to do outreach? To serve your
25

1 clients? Stuff like that. Oh, I think we're going
2 to have to unmute Erick. Thank you.

3 ERICK AGARIJO: Oh, well, thank you very much for
4 that question and for full disclosure, I did come
5 into the organization on December, I guess during the
6 height of the pandemic. I moved to Hawaii to KAFSC
7 and I was working remotely from Hawaii. So, while I
8 am learning through the organization and working
9 alongside Jeehae Fischer Executive Director, I know
10 we have been really strapped and we've been - I just
11 came on board and we're just hearing contribute. I
12 know the systems and the people and the staff and the
13 services, the programs that are implemented are in
14 place. It's just the funding, like, we're basically
15 fine in preparing - where we are building the plane
16 as it lifts off.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

18 ERICK AGARIJO: So, I just have to wear multiple
19 hats. If it means doing outreach and doing outreach
20 and doing a test and trace where we're navigating our
21 clients through the career language, like we
22 mentioned.

23 So, all of our staff are multitasking -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 ERICK AGARIJO: And we're really spreading
3 ourself thin and that's where we're asking for this
4 deep cry for the funding that's necessary to ensure
5 that our immigrant survivors and their children and
6 our constituents are then being served rightfully and
7 righteously so.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Thank you
9 so much. Appreciate all the work you do. Thank you.
10 Back to Committee Counsel.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Now, we will hear from
12 Lakshmi Sammuganathan followed by Ravi Reddi.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Times starts.

14 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: Good afternoon. My name
15 is Lakshmi Sammuganathan. I am a Policy Fellow from
16 the Coalition of Asian American Children and Families
17 CACF. We greatly appreciate Chairman Dromm and the
18 esteemed members of the Committee on Finance for
19 providing us this opportunity to submit testimony.

20 For more than a decade, CACF has been the 15
21 Percent and Growing Campaign, which unites over 50
22 Asian-led and serving community-based organizations
23 across New York City to fight for a fair and
24 equitable budget to protect the needs of our most
25 vulnerable APA community members.

1
2 Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has
3 been a time of immense fear and uncertainty and pain
4 for our APA New Yorkers. Asian Americans have been 2
5 times more likely to test positive for the virus than
6 their White counterparts, yet less likely to get
7 testing at all. Asian Americans have also experienced
8 the largest increase in joblessness of all major
9 racial groups in New York City, with unemployment
10 claims rising 6,900 percent in the first few months
11 of the pandemic and a slow and grueling recovery
12 process ever since. There have also been over 3,800
13 incidents of anti-Asian violence and 1,900 percent
14 increase in Anti-Asian related hate crimes that have
15 been reported in New York City over the past year and
16 these are only the incidents that have been reported.

17 Recent data also reviews that our APA communities
18 have been hit disproportionately harder by the
19 pandemic as a result of systemic inequities relating
20 to our healthcare and economic systems that long
21 predate the pandemic. And these issues vary across
22 our communities and have relied heavily upon our
23 Asian led and serving CBOs to fill in the gaps
24 through culturally inclusive and language accessible
25

1
2 programming that has the most impact on addressing
3 the needs within our communities.

4 Yet, our CBOs remain historically underfunded as
5 Erick has just said. Last year, our APA
6 organizations received only five percent of City
7 Council discretionary, despite the fact that APA's
8 comprise more than 15 percent of New York City's
9 population.

10 And as we have witnessed the severe rise in anti-
11 Asian violence that results from racist and dangerous
12 rhetoric surrounding the virus, now more than ever,
13 our families, our youths, our communities need a
14 focused effort from New York City to help us recover
15 and heal and from the many traumas that we are
16 facing.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: Can I have an additional
19 30 seconds please? Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, of course.

21 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: With that in mind, we are
22 calling on New York City Council to create the
23 Recovery and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers
24 Initiative. This is a \$4 million citywide Initiative
25 that would provide roughly \$80,000 in direct

1
2 allocation funding to 50 community-based
3 organizations who are serving the diverse diasporic
4 communities of New York City. That's the East,
5 Southeast, South, and West and Central Asian American
6 populations in New York.

7 We are providing critical lifelines to our
8 community at this time, yet we don't have enough
9 funding to sustain our programming and services,
10 which is why we are calling on Council for their
11 solidarity, leadership and support in creating this
12 new initiative for us. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Lakshmi, how would this
14 funding go through CACF? How do you see that
15 happening?

16 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: It would be directly
17 allocated to the 50 organizations. However, we are
18 also asking in the amount of \$80,000 – however, there
19 are roughly seven of those 50 organizations who
20 weren't able to apply for discretionary funding this
21 year. And so, we would be asking for a community
22 fund to pass through that funding to them.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Through CACF?

24 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

1
2 LAKSHMI SAMMUGANATHAN: Hmm, hmm.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Ravi
4 Reddi followed by Roshni Ahmed.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin now.

6 RAVI REDDI: Well, thank you so much for giving
7 the Asian American Federation the opportunity to
8 testify this afternoon. I am Ravi Reddi, the
9 Associate Director for Advocacy and Policy here at
10 AAF.

11 So, now there have been 6,600 reports of anti-
12 Asian incidents from March 2020 to March 2021,
13 nationally. And the tragedy within this tragedy is
14 that 1,500 of them, more than a fifth, have occurred
15 in our city, to say nothing of the continuing daily
16 incidents.

17 So, this budget season, as you have heard before
18 we and our member and partner organization are
19 advocating in the context of an emergency. We are
20 joined here today with other Asian nonprofits who are
21 fighting this crisis through in language and
22 culturally competent direct services support. The
23 work they have done in their capacity of mental
24 health providers, senior service providers,
25 immigration advocates and other direct service

1 support should be argument enough to continue funding
2 them. But the moment calls for far more than
3 continuity. It calls for a coordinated campaign that
4 sees immediate crisis as an impetuous for a long-term
5 community driven solution that stem the tide of
6 rising anti-Asian hate and creates lasting community
7 resiliencies across our city.
8

9 That's why we are asking the City Council to
10 provide \$10 million in new initiative funding for our
11 Hope Against Hate Campaign. Through which, funding
12 will go towards empowering our community-based
13 nonprofits to act as reporting centers for bias
14 incidents through an in-language reporting tool in
15 order to connect victims to the services they need.

16 In-depth anti-violence, upstander trainings that
17 go well beyond what is already being provided by the
18 city and its partners. Implementing a safety
19 ambassador program that will consist of volunteers to
20 escort vulnerable community members who are also
21 trained in self-defense and mental health first aid.

22 And finally, to create safe zones in communities
23 across New York City to serve as safe havens for
24 targeted Asian Americans by partnering with small
25

1
2 businesses, houses of worship and other community
3 focal points.

4 And while Anti-Asian hate requires a massive,
5 coordinated response, it's just one fight our
6 nonprofits are undertaking right now. We're asking
7 City Council to also allocate an initial investment
8 for \$1 million so we can continue our Asian small
9 business support across the city. Up till now, we've
10 helped over 100 small businesses in Flushing. We
11 need to continue that work.

12 And then we are also asking for \$2 million in -
13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 RAVI REDDI: Legal funding for CBO's with a track
15 record of providing not only immigration legal
16 services but also case management services. Finally,
17 we're also asking for a \$2 million investment to
18 provide culturally competent mental health
19 programming.

20 So, finally, you know ultimately we need our
21 community-based organizations and we need funding for
22 them and for the Help Against Hate Campaign. The
23 work they have done is more than a demonstration City
24 Council needs to continue funding them but the crisis
25 at hand is again, why continuity is not enough. As

1
2 we come out of this pandemic, how we choose to spend
3 our city resources during this critical time will
4 speak volumes about our values and we ask the City
5 Council to prioritize community.

6 We look forward to working with all of you to
7 make sure we come out of the pandemic stronger,
8 together. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ravi, you are asking for \$10
10 million.

11 RAVI REDDI: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what groups would be
13 involved? Do you have a list of groups that you
14 would – how would that work?

15 RAVI REDDI: So, the \$10 million would be
16 dispersed through an RFP process by Asian American
17 Federation. This RFP process will be based on three
18 buckets. Non profits that are doing some of this
19 work already. Organizations that see a need amongst
20 their clients for this sort of work and then
21 organizations that had a demonstrated capacity to
22 either continue this work, do this work or start new
23 work. Like the safety ambassador programs.

24 So, this would be a simplified RFP process that
25 would go towards federation members but also

1
2 organizations across communities of color that
3 continue to do this work.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And your program is different
5 than CACF? Are the organizations different or are
6 they the same?

7 RAVI REDDI: The organizations may not different.
8 The key distinction here we believe is that our new
9 initiative funding is focused on the immediate crisis
10 at a long-term work routed in the anti-Asian hate.

11 {DOG BARKING 3:16:58}

12 So, ours is more of a response to the moment. We
13 see the CACF funding ask as you know also in need of
14 full funding. We do not think these programs are
15 mutually exclusive but we do think the goals are
16 different and the focus. There is more direct
17 service oriented that we are more focused on the
18 moment and resiliencies. Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sorry about my dogs barking.

20 RAVI REDDI: Don't worry about it.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you forward me the
22 Synopsis? Have you already done that? Send it to
23 me.

24

25

1
2 RAVI REDDI: I believe we sent a letter outlining
3 the [INAUDIBLE 3:17:34] but we can also send a brief
4 as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay that would be great if I
6 could get that. So, send it to dromm@council.nyc.gov
7 or to Robin Forst to rforst F-o-r-s-t.

8 RAVI REDDI: Gotcha.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

10 RAVI REDDI: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNCIL: Next we will hear from Roshni
13 Ahmed followed by Sanjana Khan.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

15 ROSHNI AHMED: Hi everyone. My name is Roshni
16 Ahmed I'm the Advocate and Outreach Coordinator at
17 Women for Afghan Women. Thank you Chair Dromm and
18 members of the Committee on Finance.

19 Women for Afghan Women is the only social service
20 organization specifically supporting the Afghan
21 community in all of New York City alongside our
22 diverse Muslim Asian immigrant community.

23 As part of the 15 percent and Growing Campaign,
24 I'm here to share how the needs of our community have
25 grown exponentially during this pandemic and why it

1
2 is imperative to support our recovering and healing
3 for Asian American New Yorkers Initiative through
4 CACF. Our community-based organizations never
5 received funding that adequately supported our vital
6 services and neighborhoods and during a time when APA
7 immigrants are especially vulnerable, we had to fill
8 tremendous gaps in services.

9 Even before this pandemic, WAW served as a
10 lifeline for the community we work with. The past
11 year, we saw over a 20 percent increase in case work,
12 which meant taking on critical and lifesaving cases
13 with sustained limited resources and investment. Two
14 case workers took on over 4,000 cases. We stand
15 alongside 45 plus APA organizations calling for
16 equitable and just funding that will ensure the
17 safety and healing for our community.

18 We call for a restoration and enhancement of
19 critical funding such as DOVE, immigrant survivors
20 and domestic violence, college and career readiness
21 that support our Seniors and Immigrant opportunities
22 Initiative. CBO's like WAW have been on the
23 frontlines of this pandemic. We too have been
24 responding to egregious acts of gender based
25 violence. With financial and social support to

1
2 community members. This includes providing
3 individuals enter in cash assistance through grants
4 and partner organizations, care packages with
5 essential items and PPE to almost 600 individuals.

6 Even assist in community members with vaccine and
7 through an appointment through the engagement
8 initiative advocating for youth, seniors and victims
9 and survivors in gender-based violence, in language
10 competencies and [INAUDIBLE 3:20:06] in Bengali and
11 more.

12 And with your support, we can continue to do even
13 more. Thank you for your time.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

15 ROSHNI AHMED: And consideration today.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Sanjana
18 Khan followed by Tazmin Uddin.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

20 SANJANA KHAN: Hi everyone. My name is Sanjana
21 Khan, my pronouns are she, they. I am the Co-Founder
22 and Executive Director of Laal. We are the only
23 organization working with the Bangladeshi community
24 in District 11 of the Bronx. Bangladeshi's are one
25 of the fastest growing immigrant communities. I am

1
2 here to speak on behalf of CACF's \$4 million budget
3 request for the AAPI Recovery and Healing Campaign.

4 I was born and raised in Norwood. I'm from
5 District 11. I am a Bronx side through and through
6 and what I really want to talk about is how
7 drastically effected the Bangladeshi community has
8 been because of COVID-19. We don't statistically
9 exist hence why when I do go in places, they are like
10 no, Bangladeshi's don't exit here. So, Laal has
11 actually with a shoestring budget have led the
12 collection of data regarding health economics, etc.
13 for the Bangladeshi community and from our data
14 findings from COVID, over 80 percent of our community
15 have lost all sources of income. On top of that, we
16 supported six women to leave this domestic violence
17 relationships they have been in.

18 I wonder if we didn't exist who would be helping
19 them. So, in order to disaggregate Asian American
20 Pacific Islander Data is very important. We are not
21 a monolithic community. Each of us are diverse and
22 we need different - we all need different services.
23 We only started our program six months before COVID
24 started and we grew our membership base to 250 women
25 who are participating in all sorts of programming.

1
2 We are pushing for this budget to help us register
3 women to vote. This is a community that has not been
4 part of the voting bloc, has not had a voice in
5 politics, New York City politics.

6 I also personally want to testify that someone
7 who was in 5th grade during 911, this rise in Asian
8 American hate crimes is extremely triggering and
9 traumatic to the salvation community. So, to
10 recognize how important it is to have this mental
11 health services, how traumatic, how triggering
12 everything has been.

13 In that regard, also as a woman founder working
14 with women in our community, men have not been
15 supported in our efforts. So, it is extremely
16 important that we have support from the City Council
17 for us to push forward these policy initiatives that
18 we really want to bring through and give a seat to
19 the table of women in our community that have been
20 institutionally, culturally and systematically taken
21 power from.

22 That's it for me. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and as
24 you know I have a large Bangladeshi community in
25 Jackson Heights as well. So, that is particularly

1
2 close to my heart and I appreciate you coming in
3 giving testimony about your community there in the
4 Bronx. Thank you.

5 SANJANA KHAN: I appreciate you, thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we will hear from Tazmin
7 Uddin followed by Katie Vo.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

9 TAZMIN UDDIN: Good afternoon. My name is Tazmin
10 Uddin, I'm the Youth Program Director at Turning
11 Point for Women and Families. A member of the 15
12 percent and Growing Campaign. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify today.

14 Turning Point was founded in 2004, as the first
15 nonprofit to address domestic violence in New York
16 City's Muslim community. We also conduct ARISE New
17 York Workshops for youth to help them address
18 bullying and hate crimes and provide them with the
19 tools to become upstanders who can safely intervene
20 and report incidents of hate and discrimination.

21 Since the start of the pandemic, there have been
22 over 3,800 incidents of anti-Asian violence and a
23 1,900 percent increase in Anti-Asian related hate
24 crimes in New York City. Now more than ever, our
25

1
2 communities are vulnerable and need additional
3 support.

4 Many organizations have had to pivot resources to
5 meet the needs of the community. Turning Point
6 started a COVID-Relief fund, which allowed us to
7 provide financial assistance to 22 DV survivors and
8 28 children to support their utilities, rent and
9 groceries for an entire year, we had to discontinue
10 this financial support due to limited funds. Food
11 and housing insecurity escalated during this time and
12 vulnerable members of our community are homeless and
13 starving. They fear seeking support due to the
14 stigma, shame and uncertainty of benefits. And this
15 is unacceptable.

16 At no time have DV survivors needed us more and
17 we need to make sure that the options available to
18 them are both culturally and religiously competent.
19 At Turning Point we do everything we can to ensure
20 that our clients are not isolated and continue to
21 receive counseling that our seniors are able to
22 overcome the digital divide. And that our youth
23 continue to have a safe space to gather, share
24 concerns and express themselves.

1
2 We urge each of you in the Finance Committee to
3 support the 15 percent and Growing Campaign Recovery
4 and Healing for Asian American New Yorkers
5 Initiative. During this time of uncertainty, trauma
6 and discrimination, APA communities in New York City
7 are counting on you to provide sustained support for
8 our community-based organizations who offer critical
9 and life-affirming services. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Tazmin and also, I
11 am going to say it's been a pleasure working with you
12 over the last 12 years. I really appreciated it and
13 really admire your advocacy.

14 Thank you and thanks to everyone at Turning Point
15 as well. Thank you.

16 TAZMIN UDDIN: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Katie
18 Vo followed by Danielle Mowery.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

20 KATIE VO: Good afternoon, my name is Katie Vo
21 and I am a youth 17-year-old Outreach and Education
22 Specialist for the COVID-19 test and trace community-
23 based organizations, education and outreach program
24 for the Chinese American Planning Council, also known
25 as CPC.

1
2 Our work is funded and managed by the city's
3 Health + Hospitals Corporation and the city's
4 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. I have been
5 indisposed since January of this year and as part of
6 my work, I regularly conduct in-person outreach to
7 community members in the Flushing Queens area. Many
8 of whom are Asian immigrants whose first language is
9 Chinese. As a part of our outreach efforts, we
10 distribute sanitizers, face coverings and transfer
11 outreach materials to community members.

12 To date, we have reached over 1,300 community
13 members. Through this work, my colleagues and I see
14 first hand the importance of providing education and
15 about COVID-19 that are culturally and linguistically
16 accessible.

17 As you make your considerations regarding the
18 city's budget for the next Fiscal Year, I urge you to
19 preserve existing funding to continue supporting
20 efforts both within the city agencies and with
21 community based partners like us to provide
22 linguistically and culturally appropriate services
23 and education on COVID-19 to underrepresented and
24 underserved communities.

1
2 Additionally, I urge you to commit to investing
3 in the human services workforce by allocating funds
4 by the cost of living adjustments as well as funding
5 to correct the retroactive cuts to the sector. In
6 order for us to continue serving as lifelines for
7 low-income immigrant communities and to guarantee a
8 full recovery from this public health and economic
9 crisis.

10 Thank you to the Committee on Finance for hearing
11 me and us all out.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you for coming in and
13 for giving testimony. It's really important that we
14 hear from young people. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
16 Danielle Mowery followed by Janet Perez.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

18 DANIELLE MOWERY: Hi, I'm Danielle Mowery, from
19 The Partnership for the Homeless. I want to thank
20 everybody. I hope everyone is doing well in this
21 Zoom filled Tuesday.

22 Thank you again for considering our funding
23 request for \$160,000 to keep New Yorkers safely
24 housed. Let me just dove in a little bit, we have
25 submitted a detailed brief but also, I want to give

1
2 you a little bit of the background of the
3 partnership. How do we do this? How do we keep New
4 Yorkers safely housed? We are focused on Prevention.
5 Prevention entails a range of areas and services to
6 support people and ensure long-term stability. We
7 address our programs and impact in more detail in our
8 brief again and we thank you for those of us in the
9 Council that we've got a chance to speak with about
10 this.

11 And for this short conversation, I'm going to
12 keep this focused on one component, which is rental
13 assistance. We work with our clients to pay their
14 rental arrears. We work with landlords, especially
15 small landlords, to negotiate amounts to pay and to
16 arrange and help keep our - to arrange logistics. We
17 stabilize both the tenant and the landlords this way
18 and help keep our city's housing ecosystem whole.

19 Small landlords are a strong source of affordable
20 housing and our city needs them to come out of this
21 crisis intact. We also need the many, many New
22 Yorkers, some of whom I've heard addressed by some of
23 the community organizations, who are facing eviction
24 to stay safely housed. Who are our clients? lower
25 income New Yorkers, rent-burdened, women of color,

1
2 women with young children, undocumented and people
3 who don't qualify for federal aids, and primarily
4 families.

5 With the pandemic, we are seeing more clients,
6 more people in economic distress, especially women
7 and women with young children and much higher amounts
8 of rent due. Still, the amount that it takes to
9 prevent eviction, approximately \$4,000 right now, is
10 so much less of cost than the nearly \$70,000 it takes
11 to keep a family in shelter. Money, of course, is not
12 the only cost here. Eviction, homelessness, housing
13 instability, this is trauma. And trauma that people
14 often never fully recover from. And this trauma,
15 ultimately, hurts all of us as we see families
16 suffer, communities fray and children lose
17 connections to their friends and their education.
18 Which is why we believe the best way to solve
19 homelessness -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

21 DANIELLE MOWERY: Is to prevent it. And I have
22 just a little bit to wrap up if that's okay. which
23 is why we believe the best way to solve homelessness
24 is to prevent it and we really appreciate your
25 support.

1
2 And just in closing, I'd like to also say that we
3 join with in a separate issue, Advocates for Children
4 and many other organizations in their urgent request
5 for the DOE to hire 150 shelter-based community
6 coordinators to help students in shelter. This is a
7 key issue for The Partnership as well because
8 children in shelter missing school and this feeds
9 intergenerational homelessness and this is also part
10 of our prevention is helping children now is a key
11 part of long-term prevention and secures a better
12 future for them. And I'd just like to say it sounds
13 like everybody here will ultimately hear our goal in
14 all the work we all do to secure a better future for
15 all New Yorkers. So, I thank you again for your
16 time.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much Danielle,
18 that you came in, appreciate it.

19 DANIELLE MOWERY: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Janet
21 Perez followed by Cheryl Warfield.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

23 JANET PEREZ: Great, thank you everyone. Good
24 afternoon all. Thank you for this opportunity to
25 testify. My name is Janet Perez, Director of

1
2 Programs Mixteca Organization. A CBO based in Sunset
3 Park Brooklyn. Over the past two decades Mixteca has
4 remained a small organization focused on providing
5 programming and services in health, education,
6 immigration and mental health to the Latinx immigrant
7 community in the broader metropolitan area but still
8 mostly focus in Brooklyn.

9 So, on behalf of Mixteca, I would like to
10 emphasis the importance and impact of funding support
11 at the budget hearing committee has small CBO's like
12 ours.

13 Last year, we experienced a budget cut on DYCD
14 and despite experiencing these cuts in the middle of
15 a pandemic, Mixteca continued our education
16 programming. Which includes providing beginning
17 nurse and intermediate ESOL classes, basic computer
18 literacy classes, financial management, skills
19 building workshops and college access series, to not
20 only support immigrant English Language Learners but
21 also provide opportunities for youth and adults and
22 older adults alike to advance their educational
23 goals.

24 So, as a trusted CBO that majority services
25 undocumented and mixed status families, we serve as a

1
2 bridge for community members to access culturally and
3 linguistically service, services Mixteca. We call on
4 the Committee to uplift and continue to sustaining
5 CBO's like ours that provide services to the
6 community.

7 We just wanted to share a bit of our work and
8 [INAUDIBLE 3:33:01] on small CBOs like ours.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Love Mixteca.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
11 Cheryl Warfield – Janet Perez followed by Cheryl
12 Warfield.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

14 JANET PEREZ: I'm sorry, am I going again?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Perez. We will
16 be moving forward to Cheryl Warfield followed by
17 Amira Mustapha.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

19 CHERYL WARFIELD: Good afternoon. Thank you,
20 Chair Dromm, my own Council Member Rosenthal, Council
21 Member Van Bramer and other council members for the
22 opportunity to testify before this body on behalf of
23 arts and culture. I speak to you today to urge the
24 inclusion of \$70 million in funding for the Cultural
25 Plan for Recovery, also known as CPR and \$10 million

1
2 to support New York City's independent artists and
3 cultural workers.

4 I am Cheryl Warfield, a professional opera singer
5 and teaching artist on Manhattan's upper west side.
6 For two decades I have presented innovative arts and
7 educational outreach programs in all five boroughs
8 for minority youth and elderly persons in underserved
9 communities through DOE, DYCD and SUCASA contracts.
10 I remind you that culture generates \$110 billion in
11 economic activity for the city and employs nearly
12 400,000 people and that neighborhood with cultural
13 assets show better outcomes for education, aging,
14 crime, health and community wellbeing.

15 Arts and culture are essential to New York's
16 economic recovery and for quality education. The
17 city must be forward thinking and lay a strong
18 foundation to stimulate the economy with initiatives
19 that rebuild and restore arts and culture. Fund arts
20 education and provide greater access to city
21 contracts for artists and nonprofits of color working
22 in underserved communities hit hardest by the
23 pandemic that are not eligible for DCLA funding. I
24 wholeheartedly support \$70 million in CPR funding
25 which includes restoring funding for critical

1
2 cultural initiatives. Baseline funding for the
3 Coalition of Theaters of Color. An additional \$40
4 million for culture to heal our communities and lead
5 the city's economic recovery, including social and
6 emotional learning and anti-violence programs. An
7 additional \$30 million to DCLA and the continuation
8 of the arts -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

10 CHERYL WARFIELD: Workforce program. Thank you
11 for all your efforts towards a greater, more
12 equitable and just New York. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much for your
14 testimony.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Amira
16 Mustapha followed by Benjamin Spierman.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

18 AMIRA MUSTAPHA: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Amira Mustapha and I am the Founder and Executive
20 Director of Art Defined Productions. We are a Bronx-
21 based nonprofit arts organization with the mission to
22 support and create platforms for literary and
23 performing artists living in underserved communities.
24 In the over 10 years we've existed, we have kept our
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2 workshops and events free to make our programming
3 accessible to the community.

4 While we enjoy offering these services, it has
5 been a struggle to continue these programs, five to
6 seven of them each month and grow to the extent where
7 we can help fill in the gaps formed by the racial and
8 financial inequalities of the Bronx. We've applied
9 for discretionary funds from a handful of council
10 members that lead the communities of the majority we
11 serve, and some initiatives, namely the Adult
12 Literacy Initiative, CASA, Digital Inclusion and
13 Literacy Initiative and a few others.

14 That's why it is so important that the Council
15 restore initiative funding, restore and support the
16 DCLA with an addition of \$30 million. I join my
17 colleagues in supporting the whole \$70 Million
18 Cultural Plan for Recovery, which includes those asks
19 from the Council, as well as baselining the funding
20 for the Coalition of Theaters of Color and an
21 additional \$40 million from the administration, to
22 provide equitable support for the hardest hit parts
23 of our sector so we can heal our communities and lead
24 the city's economic recovery.

1
2 We are confident that with your help, Art Defined
3 and similar arts organizations can continue to
4 fulfill our mission. Thank you for your time today.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
7 Benjamin Spierman followed Melody Capote.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

9 BENJAMIN SPIERMAN: Thank you to the Finance
10 Committee and to Chair Dromm. Your personal
11 investment in the work of all of our organizations to
12 you is obvious and your work is daunting.

13 I'm Benjamin Spierman, General Director of the
14 Bronx Opera. We've presented opera and worked in our
15 community since 1967. Over the years, Bronx Opera
16 has participated in three City Council initiatives:
17 CASA, SUCASA and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative.
18 We have received Cultural Development Funds for our
19 performances and our arts education work as well and
20 this year we've applied to the Jewish Caucus. With
21 this support, we've been able to create live and
22 virtual performances and to partner with schools,
23 parent groups, community centers, houses of worship
24 and senior centers to work to help enhance the lives

1
2 of people in our community by connecting people as
3 only the arts can.

4 Even during COVID, we've been able to continue
5 enriching the lives of people in our community
6 through our virtual productions our distance learning
7 choral programs for seniors, acting classes, music
8 classes and dance classes for special needs children.
9 We've also just begun BxO Breaths for which we bring
10 opera singers to groups of recovering COVID patients
11 to help them regain their breath. In addition, we're
12 conditioning a musical work to memorialize the life
13 and tragic death of Elijah McClain.

14 Like each organization you'll hear from, we feel
15 that our work is vital. It's wonderful to hear what
16 everyone is doing and it's a little daunting too.
17 But the answer, not living in isolation. We are part
18 of our communities and we are part of the solution.
19 Increasingly, we work in all the sectors you've heard
20 from today. The support you all give to us as arts
21 organizations is critical to our work, and to our
22 ability to be part of the city's recovery from the
23 pandemic.

24 I urge you to fully fund the initiatives to
25 maintain an increase, culture development fund and

1
2 cultural institutions group funding. Maintain
3 members items and increase administrative funding for
4 the Department of Cultural Affairs, so that that
5 agency can manage New York City Arts funding more
6 smoothly. I thank you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and I am
8 a big believer in the smaller arts organization, so I
9 appreciate your testimony. Thank you.

10 BENJAMIN SPIERMAN: Thank you very much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
12 Melody Capote followed by Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

14 MELODY CAPOTE: Mr. Chairman, members of the City
15 Council and colleagues. My name is Melody Capote,
16 Executive Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center
17 African Diaspora Institute. I come before you today
18 to urge the City Council to take a long and overdue
19 step to correct the inequitable and unfair funding
20 for funding arts and culture organizations of color.

21 We so often speak about New York's rich cultural
22 diversity and its uncanny ability to blend threads of
23 culture into a beautiful tapestry. What we are
24 talking about ladies and gentlemen is communities of
25 color. Let's face it, without the cultural and

1
2 artistic contributions of communities of color, New
3 York would not be the cultural capital it proports to
4 be and that's a fact.

5 We have had our music, our culture, culture
6 stolen and replicated, resold and appropriated by
7 people outside of our communities. Our institutions
8 are so fragile and underfunded that the common cold
9 translates to pneumonia. The pandemic made this so
10 very clear. All too many institutions of color
11 closed their doors in 2020 never to have them open
12 again. And yet we talk about culture coming back.
13 It's not coming back; it's coming backwards.

14 I come to you today with one request, namely,
15 that you make the creation of the Cultural Equity
16 Fund a mandatory minimum requirement for arts and
17 culture funding in this and subsequent fiscal years.
18 People ask, what we can do to make up for the decades
19 of cultural appropriation and cultural neglect
20 inflicted on communities of color.

21 Well, here's the answer. Establish a Cultural
22 Equity Fund within the Executive Budget and funded at
23 a level that does three things: First, recognize
24 that, for over a century, cultural organizations of
25 color received almost no meaningful support within

1
2 the city budget; Second, also recognize the fact that
3 a critical mass of dollars is necessary in order to
4 allow arts and culture organizations of color to
5 catch up to those economically privileged
6 organizations; and third -

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

8 MELODY CAPOTE: Recognize the need to develop the
9 capacity and create a pipeline of talent necessary to
10 populate organizations of color. I am asking that
11 the Cultural Equity Fund receive appropriation of \$75
12 million in this Fiscal Year. Our lives matter too.
13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
15 from Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez followed by Mohammad
16 Attia.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

18 CARINA KAUFMAN-GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon Chair
19 Dromm and everyone present today. My name is Carina
20 Kaufman-Gutierrez and I am the Deputy Director of the
21 Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center.
22 Thank you for the opportunity to share today.

23 With a staff of eight, SVP is the only
24 organization that focuses on street vendors in New
25 York City. Providing legal representation, small

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2 business development and training, organizing support
3 and strategic legislative advocacy.

4 In just this past year alone, we've connected
5 nearly 3,000 street vendors to resources and
6 information about housing, food access and loan and
7 grant opportunities. We are respectfully requesting
8 for New York City Council to support our ask to
9 demand essential multilingual and cultural outreach
10 and community education services that we offer to
11 street vendors across the five boroughs.

12 Our member base includes over 2,300 of New York
13 City's vendors within part of our organization in its
14 20 year history. This population is primarily new
15 immigrants who rely on vending to provide for
16 themselves and for their families and have continued
17 to provide for our communities throughout the
18 pandemic.

19 About 90 percent of street vendors are
20 immigrants. And at SVP we ensure that there is
21 excellent language access for members who come and
22 join our monthly meetings and outreach sessions in
23 Spanish, Mandarin, Bengala, Tobetin and Rolof.

24 There is an extremely high demand for our
25 services especially during this past year and it has

1
2 presented an unsustainable demand on a small staff
3 body and hence our urgent request for support to
4 increase our ability to respond, so that we can
5 continue to support our community to both rebuild and
6 to thrive.

7 The vendors that we work with trust and rely on
8 SVP's grassroots organizing efforts. And we truly
9 appreciate your support for this proposal. Thank
10 you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we will hear
12 from Mohamed Attia followed by Rui Li.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Attia, we can't hear you.
15 Mr. Attia, we are unable to hear you.

16 MOHAMED ATTIA: Can you hear me now?

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, yes we can sir.

18 MOHAMED ATTIA: Sorry about that. Good afternoon
19 Chair Dromm. My name is Mohamed Attia, I am the
20 Director of the Street Vendor Project. We are a
21 membership based organization working to improve the
22 working commissions of the Brooks Medley 2000 street
23 vendors across the city and provide essential
24 services for them. As the only organization that
25 focuses on street vendors in New York City, we serve

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2 street vendors through directly legal representation,
3 small business development, organizing support and
4 leadership development.

5 As VP requests supports from the News York City
6 Council to further develop and expand the essential
7 multilingual services we offer to street vendors.
8 Street vendors have special needs related to the
9 mobility of the businesses. Also, it can be really
10 difficult to establish relationships with the vendors
11 community due to several barriers.

12 In January 2021, New York City Council passed a
13 landmark legislation Intro. 1116. Thanks everyone
14 for the overwhelming support to this legislation
15 reforming the entire street vending system. As it
16 resolved over the passage of this bill 4,000 new
17 supervisory licenses from other food vendors would be
18 introduced over the next decade. Since then, SV
19 staff members have been fielding the hundreds of
20 calls per week to advise vendors.

21 The high volume of intakes has presented an
22 unsustainable demand on the small staff that the
23 organization has. Hence our urgent request for
24 support to increase our ability to respond.

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2 As my colleague Carina mentioned, we have only
3 eight staff members and we are serving thousands of
4 vendors across the city, not only the 2,600 members
5 we have right now. With the increased need to inform
6 vendors of the updated rules and regulations and the
7 new system is the request support to expand capacity
8 for our culturally and linguistically specific
9 outreach services across the five boroughs.
10 Additionally, the outreach specialist we are hoping
11 to hire will work with SVPs graphic designers to
12 great linguistically specific materials, as well as
13 materials for the illiterate population.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

15 MOHAMED ATTIA: With the help – we are hoping to
16 ensure that street vendors not only survive in our
17 city but also thrive and prosper as essential part of
18 the city's fabric. Thanks Chair Dromm and thanks all
19 Council Members.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Mohamed. Good to see
21 you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Rui Li
23 followed by Justin Pollack.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

25 RUI LI: Hi, can you hear me?

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

3 RUI LI: Great. Good afternoon Chair Dromm and
4 fellow Council Members. Thank you so much for the
5 opportunity to testify today. My name is Rui Li and
6 I am the woman in BIPOC Small Business Empowerment
7 Organizer at Street Vendor Project. With New York
8 City Council support, we hope to launch phases of a
9 vital new program. The Small Business Consultation
10 Program.

11 So, with this Small Business Consultation
12 Program, SBP aims to provide our members with the
13 tools, the resources and skills to grow their
14 businesses. So, they feel empowered to make business
15 decisions on their own. That will help them succeed
16 down the road. With this program, we are
17 intentionally making investment in the development of
18 financial empowerment literacy by creating a year
19 long empowerment program. Designed to provide a
20 holistic approach to establishing financial
21 independence, self-sufficiency and small business
22 growth for vendors.

23 And this program were on three phases beginning
24 with phase one which launched earlier this year that
25 will focus on business and compliance, social media.

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2 Phase two will expand into our services for finance
3 for small businesses and personal finance and there
4 is a wide range of financial literacy within our
5 membership. Many operate relatively informally and
6 do not have the access to technology like Excel Quick
7 Books, so we went to offer tangible tools to those
8 who need it and make sure that folks have the proper
9 documents needed to be loan ready.

10 And phase three will cover marketing for those
11 who want to take that next step to actively market
12 their businesses. We can offer advice and
13 strategies, create business cards or even logos to
14 help them make their businesses uniquely there's.

15 And through the Small Business Consultation
16 program, SVP will conduct outreach to vendors in the
17 street throughout the five boroughs and provide them
18 with information on available services that we have
19 and our partners provide in relation to small
20 business development, legal services, financial
21 literacies and loans. And providing Small business
22 assistance to street vendors benefit the community by
23 providing primarily low-income migrants, immigrants
24 who work as street vendors with the skills to support
25 necessities to thrive and grow.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

RUI LI: Could I just have 30 more seconds please?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

RUI LI: Thank you. And by educating vendors to improve their financial literacy, we can help them integrate into formal economy by allowing them to open bank accounts, access credit, regular pay and file taxes, even eventually in some cases buy homes on their own.

So, when a vendor grow their business, that creates jobs and expands the economy. Furthermore by providing tax filing systems to vendors, we are hoping to increase tax compliance, therefore growing the revenue to the city and state.

And as the city reopens, we really want to make sure that our street vendors who were disproportionately devastated by the pandemic are a part of the just economic recovery of the city. So, thank you so much in consideration of this proposal and advancing the business development and financial empowerment of New York's smallest business owners. Thank you so much.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What organization do you
3 work? I am sorry, I missed that.

4 RUI LI: I'm also with the Street Vendor Project.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay, okay, alright then.
6 Okay thank you.

7 RUI LI: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Justin
9 Pollack followed by Zara Nasir.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

11 JUSTIN POLLACK: Good afternoon. Thank you. My
12 name is Justin Pollack and I've spent my career Wall
13 Street but I really wanted to follow the last few
14 testimonies and just share my enthusiasm for the City
15 Council has done this year in addressing the archaic
16 law that used to govern vending of food on public
17 streets. Because the new law that you just passed,
18 provides a critical update to this important industry
19 but I want to focus on the individual vendors.
20 Because it's going to require a constant focus on
21 complying with this new law.

22 And as investment professional, I have committed
23 hundreds of millions of dollars to private businesses
24 including quite a few enterprises here in New York
25 City. And most of these companies have full-time

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2 staff that can interpret regulations and negotiate
3 the formalities of the city's governing institutions
4 while also operating a profitable business.

5 Again, I've found that well intentioned rules
6 that all businesses must observe are difficult to
7 follow despite the fact that I am a Native New Yorker
8 and English is my first language. And that gives me
9 deep insight to the challenge for vendors who must
10 operate within the same guidelines but with far less
11 support.

12 And I have spent the past few years working with
13 the nonprofit Street Vendor Project as a member of
14 the Advisory Board. The Street Vendors represent the
15 best of New York. They are all small business
16 people. They are largely drawn from our immigrant
17 population, minority neighborhoods and military
18 veterans across the five boroughs. And I applaud the
19 City Council for leveling the playing field with the
20 passage of the new law but the next step is ensuring
21 that the vendors comply with the policies of the new
22 Office of Street Vendor Enforcement. And that's going
23 to require an effort that's beyond the capabilities
24 of the immiscible administration. The city is not
25 equipped to quickly educate 20,000 vendors who

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2 operate outside, on the street, without the benefit
3 of desktop technology and who speak many different
4 languages.

5 Instead, I suggest utilizing the foundation laid
6 by the street vendor project over the past couple
7 decades. With a limited amount of fiscal support, by
8 just \$500,000 from the Council, the Street Vendor
9 Project can continue its work -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 JUSTIN POLLACK: Instructing its members to
12 ensure compliance with the new law. And Street
13 Vendor Project can do this in English, Spanish,
14 Mandarin, Arabic, Bangla and many other languages.

15 So, I encourage the Council to take the route of
16 leveraging the infrastructure that's readily
17 available from the Street Vendor Project to ensure
18 implementation of the Street Vending Law is
19 fulfilled. And thank you very much for the
20 opportunity to testify.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and we
22 appreciate you coming in to support the Street
23 Vendors. Thank you.

24 JUSTIN POLLACK: Thank you.
25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
3 from Zara Nasir followed by Mallory Tompkins.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 ZARA NASIR: Hello, Chair Dromm and Finance
6 Committee Members, my name is Zara Nasir and I work
7 at the New York City Anti-Violence Project AVP. And
8 I wanted to talk to you all today about AVP's
9 important work supporting survivors, LGBTQ survivors
10 of violence, which is even more important during this
11 time of crisis and economic instability.

12 We appreciate the Council's past support of our
13 work and just wanted to reiterate how important it is
14 for us to continue support to do this vital work. We
15 are the only LGBTQ specific victim services agency in
16 the City. We operate a bilingual 24/7 hotline and
17 provide legal services, counseling and advocacy. All
18 of our services are free and confidential and have
19 been fully remote since March.

20 During this time of crisis, violence is
21 increasing especially against LGBTQ New Yorkers.
22 2020 was one of the deadliest years for hate
23 violence, especially against Black transwomen.

24 Every week, we get reports from the Office of the
25 Prevention of Hate Crimes about anti-LGBTQ violence

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2 in this city and we get daily calls through our
3 hotline from LGBTQ and HIV affected survivors of
4 intimate partner, sexual hate and/or police violence
5 requesting support and resources.

6 As these crisis grow, so does that work that we
7 do to support survivors. We're often having to reach
8 out more frequently and do more support work with
9 Council Members affected by – community members
10 affected by increase in more complex webs of
11 violence. We're also training more and more
12 community members than ever in bystander intervention
13 to keep their communities safe.

14 We're seeking a [INAUDIBLE 3:56:42] level
15 restorations in general operations funding, DOVE the
16 outreach work to connect persons involved in the sex
17 trades with Supported Service initiative. The
18 initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic
19 Violence and the legal services for the Working Poor
20 initiative. We are also requesting a restoration of
21 the Hate Crimes for Prevention initiative, which was
22 cut completely last year despite rising violence
23 against marginalized communities.

24 As a member of the CPR Coalition, we're also
25 urging the Council to pull back and divest from NYPD.

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2 Many of the root causes of violence that we're seeing
3 in the city right now can only be addressed through
4 preventative -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 ZARA NASIR: After care and support. And
7 researchers for communities and survivors not through
8 more policing. We appreciate the past support of the
9 Council and can continue - look forward to continuing
10 to work together. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Mallory
12 Tompkins followed by Randi Levine.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

14 MALLORY TOMPKINS: Good afternoon and thank you
15 for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name
16 is Mallory Tompkins and I represent 82nd Street
17 Academics.

18 Last year around this time, I spoke with several
19 members of City Council about Jadon. His family had
20 recently arrived from the Dominican Republic and I
21 was sharing with you the joys of supporting his
22 progress with English.

23 Ten days after I spoke with you, I saw Jadon in
24 person. Neither of us knowing that it would be the
25 last time that we shared a table together for more

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2 than a year. Jadon's family is part of the roughly
3 70 percent of students in our community that are home
4 for learning this school year. As part of the
5 corona, Jackson Heights and East Elmhurst
6 neighborhoods, Jadon's family is part of an area that
7 has been disproportionately hit by the dangers of the
8 coronavirus.

9 We know that social/emotional learning,
10 conversational skills and fluency are best achieved
11 when students are in supportive environments that are
12 in-person surrounding themselves with peers that are
13 also working towards these same goals. Our mission
14 is to complement the public school system, so that
15 students can have equal access to college education.
16 We celebrate their home language by making sure they
17 are served by staff members that live and work in
18 their community.

19 Since the pandemic, we have introduced tutoring
20 programs and extended our options for two year old
21 children to support families who are attempting to
22 get back to work.

23 Jadon's grit and resiliency knows no bounds. He
24 has joined our tutoring program to continue his
25 language skills and he has continued to thrive in

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2 small groups that have been supported by allocations
3 thanks to the friends of our agency on this call,
4 Council Members Moya and Dromm.

5 With food pantry lines and homelessness on the
6 rise, you might wonder why something like this is
7 important. Jadon's mom is a single parent who needs
8 to work a full time job to keep the lights on at
9 home.

10 How many families can go back to work without a
11 place for their child to go or a guide for their
12 child's education outside of school hours?

13 We respectfully request \$80,000 to fund essential
14 services for our families, such as full-time
15 preschool and tutoring. Thank you for your continued
16 support of our learning community.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Mallory for coming
18 in. I am very much aware of the work that you do in
19 the Jackson Heights and Elmhurst communities and
20 other communities as well, now that you have expanded
21 out and I appreciate everything you do. So, thank
22 you and we'll be in touch as we move through the
23 process of the budget. Thank you.

24 MALLORY TOMPKINS: And thank you. You've just -
25 the City Council has been very adaptive in the

1
2 funding model this year considering the needs and the
3 complexities. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Randi
6 Levine followed by Maggie Moroff.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

8 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity. My
9 name is Randi Levine, I am the Policy Director of
10 Advocates for Children of New York.

11 The city has a historic opportunity to create
12 much needed, lasting change for students following
13 the pandemic. The Executive Budget has some
14 important education investments but it's short on
15 some details in some areas and has inadequate funding
16 in others.

17 The FY22 Executive Budget includes \$500 million
18 for academic recovery with no specifics. We
19 recommend allocating \$50 million for evidence-based
20 culturally response reading curricula as recommended
21 in the City Council's response to the Preliminary
22 Budget and \$150 million for small group reading
23 intervention. Every student should learn to read in
24 our public schools. And \$100 million to provide
25 targeted support to English Language Learners and

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2 ensure they receive the legally required language
3 instruction denied during the pandemic.

4 The Executive Budget includes \$236 million for
5 compensatory special education services. Again, with
6 no specifics. Before adoption, please ensure the
7 city details how it will provide the make up
8 instruction and services to its students with
9 disabilities are entitled as a result of the pandemic
10 and ensure there is adequate funding.

11 We appreciate the new investment in preschool
12 special education, but there is no funding slated
13 until FY23 to address the preschool special education
14 class shortage that has left children sitting at home
15 in violation of their rights and no commitment even
16 in FY23 to provide salary parity to their teachers.

17 Please include \$85 million in FY22 for preschool
18 special classes and salary parity as recommended by
19 the City Council.

20 In addition to adding more mental health staff
21 for students, the FY22 budget should include \$15
22 million for a mental health continuum as recommended
23 by the City Council to provide an integrated system
24 of intensive mental health supports for students in
25 high need schools and \$118 million to expand

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2 schoolwide restorative practices. The education
3 budget should also include \$55 million to hire 500
4 community coordinators, including 150 shelter –

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 RANDI LEVINE: To engage in intensive outreach
7 and reengage students in school. \$46 million for a
8 DOE multilingual communications plan. \$1.5 million
9 for a small DOE office focused on students in foster
10 care as the DOE currently has no staff dedicated to
11 supporting students in foster care who have the
12 lowest graduation rate of any student group in New
13 York City.

14 Our written testimony has additional
15 recommendations and details. We deeply appreciate
16 your leadership Chair Dromm and are grateful for the
17 work of the City Council. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Randi and I want to
19 just say, what a pleasure it's been to work with you
20 and Advocates for Children with Kim Sweet and with
21 Maggie as well over the last 12 years. You are like
22 the four most advocates for special education
23 students and all of the cases that my office has sent
24 you and you have taken care of them and gotten them

1
2 justice actually. Gotten them justice has really
3 been beneficial to my district.

4 So, thank you and we look forward to working with
5 you as we move toward adoption. And as this is my
6 final budget, I just wanted to say thank you again
7 for all that you do. Thank you Randi.

8 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you. Its been so wonderful
9 to have such a teacher and a leader and fighter in
10 the City Council. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Randi.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Maggie
13 Moroff followed by Jeff Lau.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

15 MAGGIE MOROFF: Good afternoon Chair Dromm.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I didn't know you were next
17 Maggie. I swear, I did not know you were next.

18 MAGGIE MOROFF: Thank you so much for your kind
19 words just now and I will jump to the end of my
20 testimony quickly. Just to say thank you for all of
21 your partnership all over the years on behalf of
22 students with disabilities and their families.

23 So, I speak today on behalf of the ARISE
24 Coalition. About the need for funds for evidence-
25 based literacy supports for all students. About

1
2 compensatory services for students with disabilities
3 and about specialized placements for preschool
4 students with disabilities.

5 My written testimony, as always, is more detailed
6 but I am going to shorten it here. So, echoing some
7 of what you've heard already. When school staff have
8 access to evidence-based culturally relevant reading
9 curricula and when they are trained and supported to
10 use those, their students will learn how to read.
11 There will still be some students who need small
12 group or one on one intervention but the science is
13 clear that they can all become readers.

14 Yet too many students don't currently get that.
15 For our 3rd through 8th graders, less than one-half of
16 them overall only 36 percent of Black and Hispanic
17 students and less than 16 percent of students with
18 disabilities were reading proficiently in 2019.
19 We're asking the city to include at least \$50 million
20 in the budget for evidence-based culturally
21 responsive literacy curricula, so the teachers have
22 what they need to teach their students effectively
23 and at least 150 million for targeted intervention
24 for the students who need more help.

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2 Also, while we recognize that all done this year
3 by DOE staff to support students with disabilities,
4 too many students with IEP's who are
5 disproportionately Black and Latinx and from lower
6 income families, one without key instruction and all
7 the special ed supports that they required. The city
8 must make their plan for determining who requires
9 comp services, what will be offered to them and how
10 the city will actually implement that public. That's
11 going to require funding but no family, no family
12 should have to litigate that in order to make it
13 happen.

14 And then lastly -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

16 MAGGIE MOROFF: As you've heard, just a few more
17 seconds, sorry. Currently a huge shortage of
18 preschool special ed seats. The budget, we're
19 echoing the call for at least \$85 million to
20 guarantee a preschool special ed seat for every
21 student who needs one and salary parity for their
22 teachers regardless of where they work.

23 Thank you again for all you have done over the
24 years and for your partnership and I am looking

25

1
2 forward to working together in some other context
3 going forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, me too. Thank you
5 Maggie. It's always been great to hear from you and
6 I deeply appreciate your advocacy. Thank you.

7 MAGGIE MOROFF: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jeff
9 Lau followed by Kate McDonough.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

11 JEFF LAU: Good afternoon to the Chair of the
12 Finance Committee. Council Member Dromm in addition
13 to the City Council. My name is Jeffrey Lau and I am
14 the Adult Literacy Director at the Chinese American
15 Planning Council. I am here today to ask the city to
16 baseline the \$12 million Adult Literacy Initiative.
17 Launch the Adult Literacy Pilot Project and invest in
18 human services, like CPC.

19 Especially now as our communities struggle to
20 rebuild in a post-COVID world. Community
21 organizations like CPC are providing the culturally
22 competent and language accessible services our
23 neighborhoods need, despite significant cuts to our
24 funding. But this is making it more difficult to
25

1
2 staff the services to meet the needs of our growing
3 communities concerns.

4 We know that unemployment within the AAPI
5 community in New York has increase almost 7,000
6 percent since the start of COVID-19. As the Adult
7 Literacy Program Director, the community members that
8 I see come to learn English to better support their
9 children with remote learning. They come because
10 they need the skills to navigate the healthcare
11 system.

12 Students learn English to enter the workforce or
13 improve their job performance. They come because
14 they are applying for US Citizenship. Through our
15 programs, students are learning about their American
16 rights. How to start a small business and how to
17 report a crime. It's been disruptive and
18 disadvantageous for students to take summer breaks
19 because we're waiting for classes to be renewed
20 through single year investments. Single year
21 investments and low reimbursement rates mean we can't
22 provide staffing for the wrap around services and
23 counseling that the students need outside of the
24 classrooms and that CPC provides.

1
2 Right now, 59 percent of Asian Americans are
3 worried about their next months rent payment. Right
4 now, community members are receiving information for
5 financial assistance, legal aid, domestic violence,
6 healthcare access and translation services through
7 our community centers. Now, I'm asking to invest in
8 human services. Baseline the adult literacy
9 initiative and give our communities the equity they
10 need to succeed post COVID. Invest in the Adult
11 Literacy Pilot program so our program can provide the
12 needed services to our students.

13 Invest in human services as we work towards
14 rebuilding our community stronger and more resilient
15 and finally, I want to say, stop Asian hate now.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hmm, thank you for your
18 ending comment. Yes, stop Asian hate now and I just
19 don't get you know why we have to every year go back
20 and forth with the administration about the Adult
21 Literacy, it's gotten to the point and ridiculous at
22 this point but we'll advocate again. And hopefully
23 we'll make sure that you get that funding. Thank you
24 Jeff.

25 JEFF LAU: Thank you very much Chair Dromm.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Kate
3 McDonough followed by Emily Hellstrom.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 KATE MCDONOUGH: Hi, I am Kate McDonough with the
6 Dignity in Schools Campaign New York. A coalition of
7 over 20 New York City based organizations consisting
8 of students, parents, educators and advocates who
9 work towards education justice and the end to the
10 school-to-prison pipeline. I'd like to just quickly
11 thank you Chair Dromm for all your support of our
12 work and the Coalition over the years that you have
13 been in Council.

14 So, you have heard from many of our youth leaders
15 earlier today and their call for a police free
16 schools. I will uplift that I was in 8th grade at a
17 school in the Bronx with no windows and few resources
18 when the NYPD took over school policing. And I don't
19 have words for what it feels like to work with young
20 people who weren't even born when that happened.

21 I think the city does have a real opportunity now
22 to start repairing the harm by divesting from school
23 policing and investing in the resources that our
24 young people want, need and deserve.

1
2 So, our budget demands are to fully fund
3 meaningful restorative justice. The Mayor has never
4 fully funded restorative justice. We're asking for
5 \$118 million to adequately fund restorative justice
6 in 500 high schools this year. We are also asking
7 for the expansion of social emotional supports at
8 \$117 million to help hire more guidance counselors
9 and social workers and also invest in the mental
10 health continuum.

11 Lastly, we're calling for the ending of school
12 policing. The Council does have an opportunity now
13 to divest from school policing by not hiring the 554
14 school police positions that have been lost to
15 attrition. And reinvesting that \$50 million towards
16 restorative justice support staff and mental health
17 support for youth.

18 Thank you again for all of your support and I
19 hope to work with you as we close things out.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Kate and you are
21 right; we need to get rid of policing in schools. We
22 need to support culturally responsive sustaining
23 education. We need to ensure that there is implicit
24 bias training going on in schools as well. So, I am
25 aligned with you on this and let's continue to fight.

1
2 KATE MCDONOUGH: Wonderful, thank you so much
3 Chair Dromm.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Emily
5 Hellstrom followed by Kim Watkins.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 EMILY HELLSTROM: Hi, 95 percent of children can
8 learn to read on grade level if they are given the
9 proper instruction. I just think it's important to
10 let that statistic stand because science has weighed
11 in and it flies in the face of the reality on the
12 ground. So, I repeat, 95 percent of children can
13 become skilled readers.

14 My name is Emily Hellstrom, I am the Vice
15 President of the CEC for District 2 and I am the
16 Founder and Chair of the Students with Disabilities
17 Committee, a member of the ARISE Literacy Coalition
18 and I am part of the team trying to start the first
19 DOE public school for children with dyslexia and
20 language-based learning disabilities, which I do hope
21 will be funded soon too.

22 Over the past four years, I have met with
23 hundreds of individual families who are desperate to
24 receive the literacy instruction for their children
25 that actually works. Structured literacy is sound

1 science, it is essential for students with dyslexia
2 and other LDLD's but over 60 percent of our students
3 must be taught this way in order to learn to read.

4 And an added benefit is that it works for all
5 learners. We must dedicate money to ensure that all
6 principals, teachers, para's, speech therapists and
7 more receive the evidence-based literacy training
8 that we know works.

9
10 We must also dedicate funds to the small but
11 highly successful universal literacy program started
12 by Andrew Fletcher at the DOE. As Loretta Hammond,
13 the author of Culturally Responsive Teaching and the
14 Brain recently said, ineffective reading instruction
15 is the main way we will ensure inequity will
16 continue. It's cognitive red lining in the
17 classroom.

18 We passed a robust resolution and the CEC
19 District 2 regarding the importance of evidence based
20 structured literacy in our classrooms and a similar
21 resolution was passed at CECD 4 and CECD 5. It also
22 specifically called out the importance to not spend
23 money on curriculum that has been proven not to work
24 and to actively harm students ability to read. With
25 this budget, we have opportunity to put our money

1
2 towards teacher training, curriculum and literacy
3 instruction that will help us achieve the goal -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

5 EMILY HELLSTROM: That science puts in front of
6 us. 95 percent. Thank you so much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will hear from Kim Watkins
8 followed by Jeanine Kiely.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 KIM WATKINS: Thank you so much. Thank you Chair
11 Dromm for having this hearing. I am Kim Watkins; I
12 am President of CEC 3. I want to just take a second
13 to lift up all of my CEC colleagues that have been
14 speaking about really important educational issues.
15 So many important tugs at the budget dollar but I am
16 here today to talk about another one. And that is
17 putting a permanent full-time nurse in every school.
18 I am going to read some excerpts from a letter that
19 nurses, retired nurses and nurses that put together
20 this being published tomorrow Gotham Gazette. I
21 encourage you to take a look at the full detail
22 because what has just been presented from the
23 Chancellor in terms of our reopening for this fall
24 that a nurse will be in every school, is not
25 accurate. We are about to have 400 vacancies in our

1
2 schools because we have chosen to outsource this job
3 instead of paying the women mostly who work in this
4 position for equal work.

5 We have 1,400 buildings with 1,800 schools
6 roughly and fewer than 600 salaried full-time nurses
7 that work for the DOE. The rest is being paid hourly
8 by DOH or they are being outsourced as we have
9 multiple tiers, multiple unions, really complex but
10 this is the year. If there was ever a time to invest
11 in the women that take care of our kids in our public
12 school system, this is the year to invest in that.

13 So, the nurses are asking that we pay for a
14 permanent, a nurse, in every school. My CEC has been
15 working on this issue for three years. We have
16 written multiple letters and resolutions and some of
17 these nurses have been working on this issue for more
18 than a decade. It is long overdue that we take this
19 seriously and it is unjust that we pay some women
20 almost double what we pay others to do the same work
21 in our school system. Our kids are worth it. Our
22 health is important, so thank you so much for
23 listening and I hope we can get this out of here.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Kim and thanks for
25 always being such a strong advocate for our schools

1
2 and our children. I appreciate it very much. Thank
3 you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jeanine
5 Kiely followed by Amy Tsai.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 JEANINE KIELY: Good afternoon. My name is
8 Jeanine Kiely, I'm the parent of children with
9 disabilities and a member of the ARISE Literacy
10 Coalition. I'm also part of the team at Seeking
11 Green Light to start the first DOE public school for
12 students with dyslexia and language based learning
13 disabilities.

14 My son was labeled a behavior program in PreK.
15 School suggested a feelings doctor. He failed
16 spelling tests, couldn't sound out simple words, got
17 up and down during library, selecting books he
18 couldn't read to impress his friends. Our son felt
19 dumb and fell further and further behind.

20 These are common signs of dyslexia but we were
21 told that he would eventually catch up. He continued
22 to act out. One experience educator suggested he
23 attend a therapeutic residential treatment program
24 with animal therapy. In this city, if our son were a
25 Black or Brown boy, he would have had a higher chance

1
2 of being labeled emotionally disturbed and
3 recommended to a more restrictive educational
4 setting.

5 But we are a family with resources. In third
6 grade, we paid for a private neuropsych exam that
7 diagnosed him dyslexia and ADHD. We funded private
8 tutoring and he is now thriving in a public middle
9 school. Unfortunately, most families cannot afford
10 private interventions and the thousand dollars
11 promised by one mayoral candidate won't cut it.

12 Bottom line, our city is failing to teach
13 children to read. May reading scores showed that
14 only 26 percent of New York City students are
15 proficient in reading by 8th grade. Black and
16 Hispanic students and students living in poverty have
17 the lowest scores. To address these significant gaps
18 in New York City schools, I ask the city to invest
19 \$50 million in evidence-based reading curricula and
20 another \$150 million for small group reading support
21 taught by teachers who are trained in structured
22 literacy. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: When you say evidence based
24 literacy, is there a specific program you are
25

1
2 referring to? I have heard that a few times today
3 now.

4 JEANINE KIELY: There are programs and
5 approaches. So, there are approaches like Orton
6 Gillingham or Ladders, which is an approach.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

8 JEANINE KIELY: And the specific curricula that
9 the city can purchase to go with these. So, the
10 answer is both.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. I am
12 familiar.

13 JEANINE KIELY: Okay, thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, thank you. I am so
15 much familiar with it, so thank you.

16 JEANINE KIELY: Okay.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Amy
18 Tsai followed by Erik Joeras.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 AMY TSAI: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and the
21 members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Amy
22 Tsai, I am a Member of the Citywide Council for
23 District 75. I am also a parent advocate and
24 activist here in the Bronx. I am also a mom of five
25 children. Three of them with students with

1 disabilities in New York City public school system.

2 I speak today for all of our students here in New
3 York City citywide but especially for our students in
4 District 75 inclusion programs, NES programs, Horizon
5 programs, ACE's programs which are specialized
6 programs with special needs students. And I just
7 wanted to focus on the disturbing news that we
8 received yesterday from our mayor's announcement that
9 coming September, our students will be fully in-
10 person and not remote.
11

12 And that is very upsetting to me and many of our
13 community parents. We know that a lot of times we
14 are opted to contain and no voices. Contain to no
15 choices and no opportunities and I want to just kind
16 of offer the three top of mine that I really want to
17 make sure that we have investment in our children,
18 which is the class size. I live in the Bronx which
19 is very overcrowded even though cap sizes in our
20 classrooms were ICT's are not beneficial. And
21 certainly during this remote time of learning, we've
22 seen that class groups are really essential for our
23 students to learn and thrive.

24 So, I really want us to continue a long term
25 investment for a class size. Secondly, trauma and

1
2 healing intervention. Yes, the DOE has invested some
3 type of plan but not really an official plan to
4 really focus on not just a COVID that we're dealing
5 right now but also what we've dealt with, Black Lives
6 Matter, Anti-Asian hate, hate and crime in general
7 nationwide and also in our Capital Hill. My children
8 have been devastated through this whole time because
9 I am Asian American and my children are multiracial.

10 Thirdly, language justice is really important
11 because in order to be equitable and inclusive, we
12 want to make sure that every single parent and family
13 community is involved in our childrens education and
14 their success. So, thank you so much for this
15 opportunity to speak today and take care.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. I
17 appreciate your testimony.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Erik
19 Joeras followed by Rachael Gazdick.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 ERIK JOERAS: Hello Mr. Chairman. Hello members
22 of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 testify. Also, hello Sergeant Perez, it's nice to
24 see you. I miss seeing you in person.

1
2 I would like to speak very briefly about, I am
3 sorry, I am the Director of Government Affairs for
4 the New York City Charter School Center. Charter
5 schools in New York City serve about 138,000
6 students, about 90 percent of which who are Black or
7 Latinx. 80 percent qualifies economically
8 disadvantaged.

9 There were a lot of cuts that came up as COVID
10 hit and we understood some of those cuts had to be
11 shared equally and kind of willing to do our part.
12 Now that the money has been restored, we're still
13 left with a few; we're still left with some holes.

14 Number one, the district charter partnership,
15 which my organization started Carmen Forena[SP?]
16 picked up for the DOE and transferred it to a more
17 institutional setting where 350 charter and district
18 schools work together, sharing best practices,
19 figuring out what we could do better for kids. That
20 was cut and has not been restored in this new budget.

21 Second, the learning bridges program that was put
22 in place as childcare for parents in hybrid learning,
23 those seats were not extended to families of charter
24 students. Even when it became apparent, they were
25 under enrolled. There was no response from City Hall

1
2 on allowing charter families to be part of that
3 program.

4 The third one, and maybe the most obnoxious in
5 some ways is charter schools were completely shut out
6 of the COVID-19 testing that DOE does for other
7 public schools. So, charter schools and families
8 have been on their own to provide testing to make
9 sure those school buildings are safe.

10 It is a blatant violation of state law. We have
11 won a lawsuit against the city. The city is
12 appealing and kind of -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 ERIK JOERAS: Sorry sir. Uhm, and sorry but just
15 to finish up then very quickly, we would ask that the
16 funding be restored for the district charter
17 partnerships and that pressure is put on City Hall to
18 make sure that all kids are tested. Part of the
19 absurdity is that testing that our kids don't get is
20 in the same building with DOE students and DOE
21 teachers.

22 So, you have different testing regimens, some
23 strict, some with no rules around them for families
24 and staff in the same building. It's an absurdity

1
2 and we hope that the Council can weigh in and force
3 City Hall's hand.

4 Lastly, Mr. Chair, we've been doing this a long
5 time. It's wonderful to see you and thank you for
6 your public service all these years. It's really
7 been a pleasure working with you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Erik and it's
9 always good to see you as well. Although sometimes
10 we have disagreed, I have appreciated our
11 relationship, our professional relationship and our
12 back and forth and I value that highly. And I knew
13 you even before getting elected. You know what I
14 mean. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for
15 your service.

16 ERIK JOERAS: Be well, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Appreciate it Erik. Thank
18 you Erik.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And next, we will hear from
20 Rachael Gazdick followed by Jahlika Hamilton.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 RACHAEL GAZDICK: Thank you Chairman Dromm and
23 Members of the Committee. My name is Terri West and
24 I am the Director of Government Contracts and School
25 Partnerships at New York Edge. I am providing

1
2 testimony this afternoon on behalf of our CEO Rachael
3 Gazdick.

4 Twenty-nine years ago, New York Edge was created
5 at the suggestion of the New York City Council to
6 provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters
7 attending summer school. From these beginnings, we
8 have grown into the largest provider of after-school
9 and summer programming in New York City,
10 traditionally serving over 40,000 students a year at
11 134 locations throughout the five boroughs. And as my
12 staff and I prepare for the New York Edge's 29th
13 summer of providing Free camp activities for youth
14 across the city, I am here today to ask that you
15 advocate for and prioritizing our FY22 citywide
16 funding request of \$1 million under the Council's
17 After-School Enrichment Initiative.

18 Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap
19 among students in underinvested communities by
20 providing programs designed to improve academic
21 performance, health and wellness, self-confidence and
22 leadership skills for success in life. It is the
23 belief of our Board and Staff that every child is
24 gifted and talented if only given the necessary
25 tools, resources and supports. And as our name

1
2 implies, we strive to provide every student in our
3 programs with the edge that they need to succeed in
4 the classroom and in life.

5 And with the Council as our partner, we are
6 succeeding in our mission. 80 percent of principals
7 attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting
8 academic improvement in their schools. New York
9 Edge, its students and families are extraordinarily
10 grateful for the support provided by the New York
11 City Council these past 29 years. We are now looking
12 to you to meet the needs of the next generation of
13 young people by supporting our FY22 citywide funding
14 request of \$1 million -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 RACHAEL GAZDICK: To bring us back to our FY20
17 level of funding. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Rachael. I hear
19 that you are doing great things with New York Edge
20 and I appreciate that innovation and new things that
21 you are doing with the organization. And yes, we
22 really rely on you heavily to provide programs for
23 our students both during the year and certainly
24 during the summer as well. So, thank you and we look
25 forward to working with you as we move to adoption.

1
2 RACHAEL GAZDICK: Thank you Chair Dromm.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jahlika
4 Hamilton followed by Komal Goomany.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 JAHLIKA HAMILTON: Good afternoon everyone.

7 Thank you for sharing your time with me. My name is
8 Jahlika Hamilton, I currently reside in the Borough
9 of Queens. I aged out of foster care about four
10 years ago, but I can still remember almost being
11 unfairly evicted from housing after spending 12 years
12 navigating the fields of the foster care system.

13 I was about to face the real world with no
14 support to even make a mistake because there would be
15 no one there to catch me. Thankfully, I was
16 introduced to a wonderful woman named Liz
17 Norkett(SP?). She stepped up to be my coach for me,
18 my life coach. She not only invested her time to
19 teach me realistically budgeting and find sources as
20 an adult to finish my education, but she also
21 invested part of herself, by being someone to talk to
22 or even to cry on or someone that I knew that when
23 the holidays came around, I will always have a seat
24 in her home.

1
2 I am now a graduate of two degrees, including a
3 bachelor's. I am also a full-time health worker and
4 a productive citizen of New York City. Fair Futures
5 made that possible for me to reach these goals.
6 Without the support of Fair Futures that they offer
7 youth, become statistics. The unfair statistics as a
8 kid do not stop when we age out because one out of
9 three youth that ages out, either becomes homeless,
10 incarcerated or suicidal within the first three years
11 of their independent living.

12 During the beginning of the COVID epidemic, it
13 was Fair Futures that stepped up immediately and
14 found emergency funds for me to book accommodations
15 as well as find laptops to finish my education and
16 even plan therapy Zoom calls.

17 Baselining Fair Futures is an investment into our
18 future generations of doctors, lawyers and leaders.
19 Fair Futures is the first of its kind because they
20 are ran by a team who have worked in or around foster
21 care system -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 JAHLIKA HAMILTON: And the unfair disparities and
24 blind spots within it. These people want to do more

1
2 but their regular nine to five jobs was not cutting
3 it.

4 The people recognize that the youth need more. A
5 generation of youth that already had to face
6 obstacles of trauma before and after foster care and
7 rise above it. Who chose not to let their abuse be
8 an excuse but fuel to become a living testimony on
9 their pursuit of happiness?

10 Thank you for investing in us and baselining our
11 supports for us. Thank you for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Jahlika, you are an
13 inspiration and you give hope to many, many people
14 who have found themselves in the foster care system
15 and your testimony here today is wonderful. We need
16 to hear your voice and others as well to advocate for
17 those who have gone through the system and you are a
18 wonderful example of how foster youth can become
19 successful in life and I just am very grateful and
20 happy for you. Keep it up and keep staying strong.
21 Thank you.

22 JAHLIKA HAMILTON: Thank you so much.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Komal
24 Goomany followed by Amelia Ramirez.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 KOMAL GOOMANY: Good afternoon. Thank you to the
3 Council for holding this important hearing and for
4 allowing me to speak.

5 My name is Komal Goomany and I am Fair Futures
6 Coach for children. I will testify on behalf of my
7 youth who cannot be here today.

8 My name is Paul Antoni Urbanek(SP?), I am 21-
9 years-old and I've gone into foster care in April
10 2018, when my mother passed away from a heart attack
11 right before I turned 18. I got diagnosed with
12 autism when I was a baby. I am currently living in a
13 group home. I am here today to share my story and
14 ask for your support in saving Fair Futures. Fair
15 Futures staff supported me when I was in care and
16 continued to support me after I aged out. Jerald
17 (SP?) was a great education specialist to me. We
18 talked regularly on the phone about my plans and
19 goals for the future. He helped me with summer
20 youth, vocational training and told me about higher
21 education options. My social worker with guidance
22 from David, our housing specialist helped me find
23 housing. The group home staff treats me very well
24 and helps me become more independent by teaching me
25 how to prepare simple meals and making purchases.

1
2 When I left care, I met Komal, the Fair Futures
3 Coach and Caledonia(SP?) the Coach Supervisor through
4 the teen group. The teen group always has
5 informative topics for youth to talk about including
6 climate change, police brutality and mental health
7 among many others. Komal and Caledonia always give
8 everyone the chance to speak their mind. We also do
9 fun projects that allow us to be creative. Through
10 the teen group, I found a committee of other youth
11 during the pandemic and made new friends who are
12 friendly and smart.

13 I am grateful for the support of Fair Futures
14 staff and my time and care as well as transitioning
15 out of care.

16 Every foster youth deserves educational,
17 vocational, housing and emotional support. Which is
18 why Fair Futures needs \$20 million baselined. Thank
19 you again for the opportunity to speak today.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Komal and thank you
21 for being a strong advocate as well and you know I
22 was one of the original supporters of Fair Futures
23 and I am continuing to be and as we move to adoption,
24 I hope that we get that money baselined. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Amelia
3 Ramirez followed by Shyionna Medley.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 AMELIA RAMIREZ: Good afternoon everyone and good
6 afternoon Council Members. First, I want to thank
7 you all for just consistently supporting Fair
8 Futures. Now more than ever, we need you to continue
9 fighting for us and for our youth in foster care.

10 My name is Amelia Ramirez and I work as a Youth
11 Coach at Sheltering Arms. Working here has made me
12 realize how truly important Fair Futures is. Fair
13 Futures is an entire support system created for young
14 people to thrive and be successful. This support
15 system is need because unfortunately it isn't that
16 easy for kids in foster care. Most kids in foster
17 care don't have that many things in life that are
18 constant. They are always changing their home or
19 their family. It's always something that's changing
20 for them but with Fair Futures, youth get to have
21 something that is constant in their lives and that is
22 their coach. She will always be there to support
23 them no matter what.

24 Even long after they are out of foster care,
25 we're still there for them, helping throughout

1
2 anything they need. Out of the ten youth that I've
3 worked with, I've helped two reenroll back to school,
4 one find a stable job, three get their driver's
5 license, two get in therapy and three into tutoring.
6 And although it may not seem like much to some, this
7 is a huge step for kids in foster care. This is
8 something that will also lead them closer to
9 achieving their goals.

10 It is important for NYC to fully fund Fair
11 Futures because youth in foster care need a strong
12 support system now more than ever. Youth need to
13 support motivation compassion, love and patience to
14 move forward and continue to persist through their
15 struggles. They need someone on their side that is
16 going to fight and advocate for them. Because that
17 is what coaches in Sheltering Arms and Fair Futures
18 do.

19 Please, continue to fight to baseline \$20 million
20 for Fair Futures in the City's FY22 budget. Thank
21 you so much.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let me just say thank you and
23 you know I think you are so right about stability.
24 My family when I was younger, we were poor. We
25 received public assistance. We used Food Stamps and

1
2 we had to move quite often because we couldn't pay
3 the rent is really what it came down to. And so, I
4 think in my first 20 years, I moved 12 times to
5 different places, fortunately I had my own biological
6 family to stay with but uhm, it was still very
7 difficult.

8 So, I really appreciate you raising the issue of
9 stability within the foster care system and having
10 youth being able to you know have that advantage of
11 some type of stability in their lives. Because there
12 is often times just no stability in their lives at
13 all. Thank you.

14 AMELIA RAMIREZ: Thank you Council Member Dromm.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
16 Shyionna Medley followed by Sade Lythcott.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 SHYIONNA MEDLEY: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Shyionna Medley. I am 15-years-old, I live in Staten
20 Island New York. My agency is Senior Society. Time
21 before joining Fair Futures I felt as though my point
22 of view was very un-honorable. During this time I
23 felt as though being a role model and a leader to
24 youth voices should be witness with open minds and
25 career path. I struggled with financial management

1
2 and school work but my Fair Futures Mentor Lucas
3 Simmons, having him around for three months is so
4 fundamental to me through all the good and bad
5 struggles.

6 Although him being my mentor was an eye opener to
7 see how much of a voice and right I had, it opened me
8 up to be more optimistic and outspoken to what I
9 need. During COVID-19 Lucas Simmons was very
10 engaging and accessible to me for a lot of things.
11 However, I feel as though that's - I'm sorry. I feel
12 as though New York City's baselined-funding for Fair
13 Futures is very important for all youth to have
14 voices and to grow into young people towards someone
15 with bright futures and clear paths with colleges and
16 high school scholarships etc..

17 We are calling on city baselines for \$20 million
18 to save Fair Futures and to continue to provide
19 foster youth with support that they need to be
20 successful adults. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and again and you
22 heard what I've had to say. You know, we must
23 support our youth. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Sade
25 Lythcott followed by Alejandra Duque Cifuentes.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Lythcott, are you there?
4 Okay, we'll circle back. So, we'll now hear from
5 Alejandra Duque Cifuentes followed by Jirina Ribbens.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 SADE LYTHCOTT: Hello, can you hear me? Hello,
8 can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Let's hear from Ms. Lythcott.

11 SADE LYTHCOTT: Yes, hi, how are you? Sorry,
12 sorry, apologies. I am having a little bit of
13 internet connection challenges. Can you hear me now
14 clearly?

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

16 SADE LYTHCOTT: Wonderful. Okay, good afternoon.
17 Thank you Chair Dromm and esteemed members of the
18 City Council. My name is Sade Lythcott. I am The
19 CEO of the National Black Theatre and the Chair of
20 Coalitions Of Theaters of Color. The largest
21 coalition of culturally specific theaters existing in
22 all five boroughs.

23 I am going to apologize in advance because of
24 course ad you have called my name, my computer has
25 frozen. So, I don't know if you can still hear me as

1
2 I know that my computer has frozen. Is it possible I
3 can go right after the next person. I really do
4 apologize; I don't even know if you can hear me as I
5 am frozen.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can hear you.

7 SADE LYTHCOTT: Okay. My uh, my oh, here we are,
8 sorry. I'm going to begin again.

9 Good afternoon, my name is Sade Lythcott. I am
10 the CEO of the National Black Theatre and the Chair
11 of Coalitions Of Theaters of Color. A coalition that
12 represents the largest body of culturally specific
13 theaters in all five boroughs.

14 It has come from unexpected people in unexpected
15 places. While standing on line to get vaccinated, in
16 the grocery store, on Facebook and in my inbox;
17 People, strangers over the last year have stopped me
18 to say that NBT literally have saved, their or their
19 friends and loved one's lives. You see CTC is a
20 coalition that represents 52 cultural arts
21 organization most, in communities hardest hit by
22 COVID-19; however, CTC is more than just theaters.
23 CTC organizations represent 52 cultural arts
24 organizations – CTC organizations especially in this
25 past year have functioned as safe havens for artists

1
2 and communities that identify as Black, indigenous,
3 and people of color.

4 Even through the extreme challenges and traumas
5 of this past year our CTC organizations have
6 continued to serve hundreds –

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time

8 SADE LYTHCOTT: Of thousands of New Yorkers with
9 vitally needed cultural, educational and social
10 resources in local neighborhoods and the broader
11 residents living in the outer boroughs. From
12 Vaccination Hesitancy webinars conducted by Hi-Arts
13 in East Harlem to digital education and activism by
14 the Chinese Theater Works in Queens. Art therapy
15 that Mind-Builders in Bronx provide their kids, some
16 who have lost both parents to COVID-19.

17 Today in my abbreviated testimony, I would like
18 to convey that there is no reopening or recovery for
19 our Great City without comprehensive and an equitable
20 plan for arts and culture and that's why on behalf of
21 members of the CTC we join our colleagues in this
22 sector and ask you to support the Cultural Plan for
23 Recovery to add \$70 million to the cultural budget in
24 FY22 and \$15 million of which would go to the
25 historic and first time creation of a cultural equity

1
2 fund but most importantly, we ask that you, after
3 last year's tremendous victory of bringing no harm to
4 the CTC take our hands and step us one step further
5 and baseline our funding. The insecurity of CDF
6 funding and discretionary funding is completely
7 destabilizing to our organization and we're asking
8 respectfully that you secure an annual investment in
9 our organization by baselining the CTC.

10 We are beyond grateful to the Council for voting
11 no harm last year and respectfully implore you to
12 continue to move in the direction of budget justice
13 with more secure and equitable distribution of
14 funding as we heal our way forward. Thank you Chair
15 Dromm and apologies for the technical difficulties.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No worries and thank you for
17 your testimony and I for one am very supportive of
18 community theatres of color as well and also of our
19 smaller cultural organizations. So, we look forward
20 to continuing to support you in the budget. I know
21 that the Chair of the Cultural Committee, the Library
22 and Cultural Committee Council Member Van Bramer
23 would like to say a word.

24 SADE LYTHCOTT: Hi, Councilman Van Bramer.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: There we go. Can you
3 hear me?

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: First of all I just
7 want to say thank you Chair Dromm for leading the
8 hearing and I wanted to come back to the hearing of
9 course to hear so many of our cultural partners and
10 leaders and Sade is one of the heroes of our movement
11 and every time she speaks we learn something. And I
12 just want to assure you Sade that we are actively
13 talking about these issues, including the baselining
14 discussion which of course is going to be a big one
15 and obviously you know how much, how strongly I feel
16 about CTC and majority leader Cumbo and I have been
17 on the phone this week and last. You know talking
18 out as we often do. Our strategies around the budget
19 and how the two of us form together as a team with
20 obviously, many of our other colleagues who share our
21 love of culture and the arts.

22 But I just want to say thank you and you know it
23 is something that you know is top of mind for myself
24 and Laurie obviously and I just wanted to let you
25

1
2 know that I am here. I see you. I hear you, even
3 when you have technical difficulties, you are heard.

4 SADE LYTHCOTT: Thank you Council Member Van
5 Bramer and just I didn't realize you were on today.
6 None of what has happened to the Coalition of
7 Theatres of Color would not be possible if it weren't
8 for your leadership and Laurie's leadership and you
9 really showing how we lead from a space of equity,
10 placing our values within our pin as we make these
11 decisions in company with your esteemed colleagues.

12 So, I can't tell you how much of a champion you
13 have been to the CTC and we are truly grateful and we
14 are looking for secure [NOISE 4:46:00] moving forward
15 with baselining, so thank you so much. And to Chair
16 Dromm for the extra minute of time.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you Sade and I
18 have been bouncing back and forth but as you know
19 Jack Bernatovicz, our cultural rock star is
20 monitoring the hearings and is like here come the
21 cultural's. We got to uh, I got to get back on.

22 So, we're here. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
24 from Alejandra Duque Cifuentes. Thank you for your
25 patience and then followed by Jirina Ribbens.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 ALEJANDRA DUQUE CIFUENTES: Hello. Hello and
4 thank you for having me. My name is Alejandra Duque
5 Cifuentes and I am the Executive Director of Dance
6 NYC. As a service organization for the dance
7 industry in New York City we work to ensure
8 independent dance workers and organizations can
9 thrive.

10 It's well known that COVID-19 has had a
11 catastrophic impact on our sector, exacerbating
12 deeply inequitable practices that existed before this
13 moment. A 2021 report from the New York Comptroller
14 found that two-thirds of all arts jobs in the city
15 disappeared because of the pandemic. That's nearly
16 200,000 people and their families impacted.

17 Even as the arts workforce continues to provide
18 arts education performances and mutual aid in their
19 communities. Many arts workers and organizations and
20 the organizations that they are a part of are still
21 unable to access resources to support their basic
22 human needs including medical and mental healthcare,
23 food and housing and importantly, the dignified wages
24 that allow them to thrive and to run their
25 organizations healthily.

1
2 Of those impacted Black indigenous people of
3 color, disabled immigrant undocumented and trans
4 artists have been the hardest hit. Our data shows
5 that these arts workers and organizations often with
6 the smallest budgets are not only the lion share of
7 our sector but also the most adaptive and employ a
8 workforce that is representative of the demography of
9 our city.

10 And yet, they have the least access to funding
11 and support. In a climate that has threatened our
12 humanity and artists really are the ones that are
13 playing a key role in organizing us, sharing our
14 stories and continuing to highlight the creative and
15 cultural capacity of our city. A healthy city needs
16 health local communities and local communities cannot
17 recover or thrive without a strong arts and cultural
18 presence. Artists are necessary workers. It's for
19 this reason that today I join my colleagues in
20 requesting that the city implement the cultural plan
21 for recovery which distributes \$70 million in support
22 to the arts and cultural sector, including a
23 restoration of the \$20.2 million from Fiscal Year '21
24 for arts and culture with an additional investment -

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 ALEJANDRA DUQUE CIFUENTES: Of \$9.8 million to
3 bring this funding back to prior levels. A
4 restoration of Council funding initiatives including
5 the baselining of the coalitions for Theatres of
6 Color support. And the creation of the cultural
7 equity fund which so many of my colleagues have
8 already shared. Additionally, the city recently
9 announced the New York City Artist Corp. and it's
10 important for us to continue to think about how this
11 is not just the helicopter support that drops in some
12 help and needs but how it can remain an active
13 program that turns into a proper workforce program to
14 secure the arts workforce.

15 We need to support organizations. We need to
16 support individuals and we need to make sure that the
17 artists that live in our city can stay in our city
18 and don't have to leave to other places because they
19 can't afford to live here because they don't make
20 enough to be here.

21 And so, I encourage us to really think about how
22 our cultural communities as my colleague Melody
23 Capote mentioned earlier in her testimony, New York
24 City culture is what it is because of the Black and
25 Brown and indigenous and immigrant and disabled

1
2 communities that make it what it is and so, we have
3 to put our money where our mouth is and ensure that
4 they can thrive here. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Council Member
6 Van Bramer.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you Alejandra -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: And I just wanted to
10 say in particular, your comments about the recently
11 announced fund for artists are on point. I share -
12 well, I shouldn't say, I have some concerns about
13 that program and how it will be implemented and uhm,
14 and some concerns around the Mayor having discovered
15 a love for culture and the arts in the last few
16 weeks. But uhm, you know and that's great cause when
17 whenever you find a love for it, that's good even if
18 you come to it late in life but the point is to make
19 sure that's real and that's it's based in equity and
20 that it's not a flash in the pan one time all of a
21 sudden we love culture and the arts and have a press
22 conference about it. But that it's actually going to
23 continue long past this year.

24 So, you know, we're going to have a new, a new
25 everything basically in January. And that concerns

1
2 me, so that why we have to make sure it's baked in
3 right? The support for artists is real and
4 transcends a particular fiscal year, a particular
5 administration and we can continue to rely on it,
6 right and not just a one shot you know look us, we
7 now love culture kind of stuff. Which that might
8 have been a little political but it was true so.
9 Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Jirina
11 Ribbens followed by Olympia Kazi.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 JIRINA RIBBENS: Okay, there we go. Hi, good
14 afternoon Chairman Dromm, members of the Finance
15 Committee, Council Member Van Bramer. It is my
16 privilege to address this buddy today. My name is
17 Jirina Ribbens and I am the Executive Director of Ice
18 Theatre of New York, which is a nonprofit dance
19 company out on Ice.

20 We're proud to have been part of the fabric of
21 New York's cultural community for over 35 years. In
22 this meeting I will focus on one aspect of our
23 services. Annually, we introduce up to 2,000 school
24 children to the fine art of dancing on ice and the
25 physical activity of skating, which they can do in

1
2 their own neighborhoods. Our classes moved online
3 during the shutdown providing enriching experience to
4 the children stuck at home citywide.

5 To quote Governor Cuomo, "Ice Theatre of New York
6 enables New York City public school children to get
7 out on ice and it is widely recognized for its
8 innovative educational program that uses skating as
9 an effective empowering motivator and teaching tool.

10 In a normal year, we employ up to 50 artists and
11 our public performances attract up to 30,000 people.
12 We weathered the storm by pivoting to virtual
13 programming with the help of some federal funds and
14 our private patrons but we will need continued
15 support to get back to full live programming.

16 The better part of which, we offer for free to
17 city residents, tourists and public school children.
18 Just like all city performing arts organizations, we
19 need funding restored so we can reemploy the
20 teachers, the artists and get back to public
21 performances and start serving the community again.

22 I urge you to continue funding the arts. Ice Theatre
23 of New York joins our colleagues in supporting the
24 \$70 million cultural plan for recovery, with which
25 you are familiar. And we also applaud the

1
2 administrations support of independent artists with
3 the Artists Corp and ask for \$10 million to fund that
4 effort.

5 Ice Theatre of New York is looking forward to
6 continuing as part of the essential cultural
7 framework of the city, which generates \$110 billion
8 in economic activity annually. We are worthy of
9 support. Thank you very much.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's sounds like - I was
12 going to say, it sounds like such a wonderful
13 program. I didn't know of it before. Thank you for
14 coming in today and giving testimony.

15 JIRINA RIBBENS: Great, well, you will have to
16 come and watch us in action someday.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I will, get me an invitation
18 for like September or something okay. Reach out to
19 me.

20 JIRINA RIBBENS: Very good. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Olympia
23 Kazi followed by Matthew Sturiale.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

1
2 OLYMPIA KAZI: Thank you so much. My name is
3 Olympia Kazi and I am a Founding Member of the Music
4 Workers Alliance. A group of mostly independent
5 [INAUDIBLE 4:54:41] who got organized to fight
6 against unfair treatment.

7 So, last years budget cuts and services, the
8 exclusion of vulnerable people from relief and the
9 lack of real action on the issue of residential and
10 commercial rent, have left thousands of New Yorkers,
11 including many artists as Alejandra said before,
12 facing homelessness and crossing debt.

13 New York's economy was roaring before the
14 pandemic but just for very few and this was directly
15 connected to the hardships and exploitation faced by
16 the majority of working New Yorkers. So, my first
17 comment to you today is, let's make sure that this
18 budget puts people first on every issue. Arts and
19 culture are very important for New Yorkers joy and
20 wellbeing and it is important for New York City's
21 economy. But we cannot talk about arts and culture
22 recovery without talking about artists proper pay,
23 fair treatment and access to benefits.

24 In this year's budget, we need to restore funding
25 to all cultural organizations to the Department of

1
2 Cultural Affairs but we also need to focus on equity
3 by creating a dedicated funding stream that
4 meaningfully supports and protects artists,
5 especially those from historically marginalized
6 communities.

7 So, the performing arts sector was completely set
8 for more than a year. A great number of arts workers
9 won't regain full employment for many more months and
10 hundreds of them join rallies led by the Music
11 Workers Alliance is here to demand a real WPA style
12 works program.

13 The 25 million recently dedicated to the New York
14 City Artist Corp by the Mayor, let's say it's a
15 positive sign but Council Member Van Bramer already
16 said what it is. But it needs to be extended and
17 expanded in this years budget. It also needs to be
18 revised so that it becomes a real workforce program
19 informed by the impacted workers needs.

20 Now, I also need to say that I am a mother of an
21 income PreK and a rising first grader and I have been
22 following the work of Alliance for Quality Education
23 and I support their agenda and their ask for this
24 years budget. We do need to fully fund social and
25 emotional learning.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 OLYMPIA KAZI: Make the classes smaller and most
4 importantly, I want to ask you to stop funding
5 programs and policies that we know have exacerbated
6 segregation and inequities in education.

7 So, thank you and let's work together to make all
8 this better.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
10 from Matthew Sturiale followed by Jennifer Stewart.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 LISA GILDAY: Hi, everyone, my name is Lisa
13 Gilday; I am not Matthew but uhm, I am the Chief
14 Operating Officer of Birch Family Services and I am
15 filling in for Matt who could not be here. And I am
16 - thank you very much Chairperson Dromm and Council
17 Members for providing us with the opportunity to
18 provide testimony. Specifically as it pertains to
19 preschool special education.

20 Birch is the leading provider of special
21 education preschool services in New York City,
22 operating eight New York State approved 4410
23 preschool programs in the boroughs of Manhattan,
24 Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx.

1
2 The students that we provide services to are New
3 York City public school students who were referred to
4 us by the New York City Department of Education
5 because they are unable to meet the students needs.
6 Birch works in partnership with the New York City DOE
7 in providing UPK, early childhood and special classes
8 in our preschool programs, so children may thrive in
9 the least restrictive environment.

10 My testimony will focus on issues pertaining to
11 equity, access and quality that currently exists in
12 4410 programs and recommendations to address these
13 matters.

14 Preschool Special Education programs are for
15 small class sizes and provide students with targeted
16 individualized academic and social/emotional
17 interventions. The majority of special education
18 preschool students in New York City, 86 percent
19 receive their services through community-based,
20 nonpublic programs operating 4410. Special classes
21 ranging from six to 18 students per class.

22 Children with disabilities who have the
23 opportunity for the specialized intervention during
24 the preschool years, are more likely to succeed in
25 elementary school and beyond. We applaud the Mayor

1
2 for recognizing the value of 4410 programs through
3 expansion of universal PreK to include 3K and
4 increase special education integrated classes.

5 However, the Proposed Executive Budget only includes
6 a new investment of \$22 million in FY22 to the New
7 York City DOE and an increase to \$88 million in FY23
8 for preschool special education without an immediate
9 or clear plan to support nonpublic 4410 education
10 providers who serve an overwhelming majority of this
11 population.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 LISA GILDAY: If free appropriate public
14 education be afforded to special education students,
15 this must be called into question. I'll just be
16 another few, 30 seconds.

17 Prior to the pandemic, there was a shortage of
18 more than 1,000 preschool special class seats. While
19 referrals have declined during the pandemic, there
20 continues to be a shortage of class seats, particular
21 for those who need six and eight student classes.

22 This lack of access is the right kind of
23 educational opportunity cannot continue in the
24 upcoming school year.

1
2 On the expansion of 3K for All of New York
3 children is laudable but to be accessible and
4 equitable for all we must ensure that there is
5 adequate capacity for special classes for those
6 mandated for such placement.

7 We commend the City Council's response to the
8 budget and support the proposal of \$85 million to
9 address shortages of special education classes. The
10 Council's budget goes one step further if Council's
11 commitment to ensure salary parity for those
12 certified special education teachers, working with
13 our most complex and vulnerable students.

14 Preschoolers with significant disabilities cannot
15 wait another year for the city to make needed
16 investments to meet their needs. We urge the Council
17 to do the right thing and include their proposed \$85
18 million in the final budget for FY22 to address the
19 issues of equity, access and quality presented.
20 Ensure that every preschool child who requires a
21 special education seat has one and that preschool
22 special education teachers are treated the same as
23 all New York City Early Childhood Education Teachers.

24

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will
3 now hear from Jennifer Stewart followed by Jennifer
4 Choi.

5 JENNIFER STEWART: Hi, my name is Jennifer
6 Stewart and I am one of the Founding Members of
7 Caring Parents, a group that advocates for equity and
8 education for disabled children who cannot be
9 accommodated by the DOE and they end up either
10 attending 4410 schools or for school age 853
11 community-based organizations.

12 As a former teacher, I was thrilled to see Early
13 Childhood Education get the recognition it deserves
14 but calling it 3K and PreK for All is absolutely
15 dishonest when you are consistently excluding
16 marginalized communities. It feels like our elected
17 officials are acting like one of the most vulnerable
18 communities and New York City just doesn't exist and
19 at this point the neglect of 4410's on both the state
20 and city levels feels like a deliberate vanishing of
21 our kids.

22 The children who need the most are getting the
23 least and we thank you for adding more self-contained
24 inclusion classes to level the playing field for some
25 special needs students but what about the children

1
2 whose needs cannot be met by inclusion classes.

3 Where will they end up going when their 4410 CBO's
4 eventually close down?

5 The Early Childhood Education pay parity
6 agreement goes into effect in October. Where does
7 the Council think all of those extra teachers are
8 going to come from? I'll tell you. Many will leave
9 their jobs at 4410's where the children with the most
10 severe needs are served because they simply cannot
11 compete with the salary and benefit incentives for 3
12 and PreK for All.

13 There is zero incentive to work in a 4410 for
14 unfair wages and poor benefits. I don't blame the
15 teachers for leaving. But there is still a dire need
16 for these schools for the children who need the most
17 support and it won't be long before they buckle under
18 pressure and all these children will be left without
19 a seat at all.

20 Pay parity would be a great start. It would
21 allow 4410's to retain their teachers and encourage
22 more to work there. By doing this, less schools will
23 close, new ones will open -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 JENNIFER STEWART: And the seat shortage will
3 grow smaller. I have ten more seconds. Our kids
4 start off in a world that does not accommodate them.
5 You are contributing to that on an institutional
6 level. You've built a wonderful full day program for
7 their peers but it's a program that our kids are not
8 welcome in. And one that will ultimately kill the
9 only programs that they are welcome in.

10 So, please either start by offering pay parity to
11 4410 teachers or stop using the word all, because
12 it's a blatant lie. Earlier we heard from ten-year-
13 old Lucas Healy who is already aware that he doesn't
14 fit into the DOE's little boxes. And we shouldn't be
15 hearing that in 2021. No child should ever feel like
16 they are not included by the institutions that are
17 meant to support them. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
19 Jennifer Choi followed by Josephine Okungu.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 JENNIFER CHOI: Thank you Chair Dromm. My name
22 is Jennifer Choi. I am a Woodside Queens parent of
23 an 11th grader with multiple disabilities and an IEP.

24 I am also a Special Education Advocate and a
25 member of the ARISE Coalition. I am here to discuss

1
2 the need to include funding for compensatory services
3 and to request for the DOE to tell us what their plan
4 is for compensatory service provision.

5 My child is one of many students with
6 disabilities who was not able to fully participate in
7 their education because of remote instruction. Most
8 high schools including my child's high school offer
9 Zoom in a room, which for us is even worse than Zoom
10 at home.

11 I am not faulting high schools for doing this but
12 that doesn't erase the fact that my child wasn't able
13 to make progress on his goals. In fact, he severely
14 regressed and to the point where we are very worried
15 about if he is able to move on beyond high school.
16 Students with disabilities have a right to reach
17 challenging objectives of further employment, further
18 education and independent living.

19 For many of our kids, it's not just a lost year.
20 It's a year of losses. It's a year of going
21 backwards. High school students like mine, not only
22 need compensatory services, they need more time to
23 work on their goals before they enter the world of -
24 as independent adults.

1
2 Uhm, currently, there are no concrete answers for
3 diploma tracked children who are not ready to move on
4 and want to extend their graduation date. The
5 Mayor's budget proposal of \$236 million for
6 compensatory as special education services, there is
7 one of that but the DOE has not provided any
8 information on how they will spend this money, how
9 students with disabilities get their makeup
10 instruction and services. These questions must
11 please, please, they must be answered.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 JENNIFER CHOI: Before you adopt a budget. Thank
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
16 from Josephine Okungu followed by Nancy Crooms.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 JOSEPHINE OKUNGU: Hello?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can hear you.

20 JOSEPHINE OKUNGU: Okay, my name is Josephine
21 Okungu and sorry, get in, get in. I am so sorry. My
22 child has special needs and I have to ensure his
23 safety first and I am sorry. I hope everyone can
24 hear me. I am going to read my testament. My name
25 is Josephine Okungu. I am here as a New York State

1
2 Certified Teacher. A former 4410 Preschool Special
3 Ed Teacher and a parent to a child with autism and an
4 advocate for equity for students with disabilities.
5 I quit my teaching job in a 4410 Preschool Special
6 Program because my salary wasn't enough to provide
7 for my family. It was a very tough decision but my
8 husband had lost his job, so I made drastic
9 decisions. Just like every teacher in New York City,
10 I earned my master's degree, passed the exams. I
11 worked every hard to become certified and believe me,
12 it's a daunting process. But after all my hard work,
13 I realized that equity and teacher in numeration
14 excludes teachers like me who work in a 4410
15 Preschool Special Ed program.

16 Why was I paid less than general education PreK
17 teachers when I am as qualified as they are? Is it
18 because I teach students with disabilities? 4410
19 Preschool Special Ed programs serve three to five-
20 year-old children with significant disabilities.
21 Parents like me whose children attended or attend
22 4410 programs may not choose to send our kids there.
23 Our kids who are placed there by the DOE because they
24 need extra support and the DOE determined they cannot
25 get that support in 3K or PreK or PreK for All

1
2 classes. These kids do not have the luxury of
3 attending -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 JOSEPHINE OKUNGU: Their preschool. Please
6 explain to me why city reached a salary parity as we
7 meant to pay PreK teachers and CBO's the same
8 salaries as public school teachers but excluded 4410
9 Special Ed Teachers. Why should the preschoolers who
10 need the most have teachers who are paid the least
11 and why doesn't this years budget fix this
12 discriminatory process that leaves more teachers like me
13 leaving. Please let me finish.

14 Thank you City Council for recommending salary
15 parity for 4410 teachers in your budget. The Mayor's
16 budget increases funding for preschool special
17 education but still does not guarantee salary parity.
18 I am here to beg, demand, implore, that you show that
19 you believe in preschoolers with special needs by
20 investing in them in the final budget. You must make
21 sure there is a preschool special ed class seat for
22 every child who needs one. Please change this course
23 and give salary parity and please make sure the city
24 stops discriminating against this population that we
25

1 serve just because they cannot speak for themselves.

2 And thank you so much for giving me time. Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
4 from Nancy Crooms followed by Linda Rosenthal.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready, starting time.

6 NANCY CROOMS: Hello, can you hear me?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

9 NANCY CROOMS: Good afternoon everyone. My name
10 is Nancy and I am here this afternoon as a parent, a
11 Member of Caring Parents.
12

13 I am a parent of twin boys who are both autistic.
14 John and Adam both received early intervention and
15 special education services since PreK. From grades
16 K-5 Adam attended a 1211 class in a community school
17 and was provided with special education services
18 including an individual paraprofessional.

19 For 2018-2019 year, Adam was placed in a District
20 75 school. While attending District 75 school for
21 almost two years, Adam was mentally, physically and
22 emotionally abused because the school system didn't
23 know how to deal with Adam. Adam has a prior IEP
24 which stated he needed OTPT counseling and one on one
25 para. I later found out he never had services

1
2 because they didn't have enough therapists and
3 teachers to administer the services. While in
4 District 75 school, Adam had daily meltdowns at
5 schools and at home. What does this mean? It's when
6 he cries, hits himself and overpowers his dad and
7 myself with his strength when we try to calm him
8 down.

9 This was happening for most of the time at
10 District 75 because he was very unhappy at the school
11 and couldn't explain what he was feeling. I knew
12 District 75 was not a good fit for Adam. My family
13 was so overwhelmed in what Adam was going through
14 that we had no choice but to hire a lawyer. The DOE
15 failed to give Adam a free appropriate public
16 education. He was placed in St. Dominic's School
17 which is an A53 school.

18 Since June 2019, Adam has been attending St.
19 Dominic's in Rockland New York. It has been a dream
20 come true. The faculty at St. Dominic's are amazing.
21 Adam has an annual IEP and he gets all his services
22 at St. Dominic's including a para, which he so
23 desperately needs. Adam rarely has meltdowns because
24 St. Dominic's has taught him how to express himself
25 verbally not physically.

1
2 I see Adams future as a promising one because of
3 St. Dominic's. He will be an individual getting the
4 job and giving back to his community but only because
5 of St. Dominic's and their wonderful teachers.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 NANCY CROOMS: I just recently found out that the
8 New York State Budget doesn't include our school in
9 them. Why? Our A53 students are part of the DOE.
10 They are an A53 because the DOE failed them. Whose
11 fault is that? New York State should be proud of A53
12 schools because they provide all the services that
13 our special needs children need.

14 They are helping our special needs children and
15 become an independent individuals who give back to
16 the communities.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 NANCY CROOMS: Please include our A53 children in
19 your budget. Thank you so much for giving me this
20 opportunity to testify.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Linda
22 Rosenthal followed by Alice Bufkin.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

24 LINDA ROSENTHAL: Thank you for the opportunity
25 to speak with you about the proposed Executive

1
2 Budget. My name is Linda Rosenthal and I am Director
3 of Early Childhood Educational Services for
4 Volunteers of America-Greater New York.

5 I oversee the Bronx Early Learning Center, a 4410
6 preschool special education program for children with
7 significant developmental disabilities, which is
8 approved by the New York State Education Department
9 and under contract with the New York City Department
10 of Education to provide multidisciplinary
11 evaluations, special education services and
12 therapeutic services to preschool students with
13 disabilities. We serve New York City's students and
14 we are not private schools.

15 I am here today to ask that the Executive Budget
16 include salary increases for the teachers in the
17 preschool special education programs. Under the
18 city's salary parity agreement, this is only fair.
19 Currently, there is a gap in pay between what public
20 school teachers receive in salary and the special
21 education teachers in community-based organizations
22 such as ours.

23 The very real concern is that our teachers, who
24 until now have remained with our programs out of
25 dedication to our children and families, will be

1
2 forced to leave for the far higher-paying public
3 schools Head Start and childcare positions in
4 response to the realities of their own life's needs.
5 This will be tragic.

6 All children deserve New York State Certified
7 teachers. Our teachers are dully certified in early
8 childhood education and special education. Our
9 teachers are not being treated equitably and they are
10 being forced to leave our programs for higher paying
11 positions. While the city has made strides for
12 salary parity for CBO early childhood educators,
13 working in childcare centers and Head Start programs,
14 teachers in our programs in 4410 preschool special
15 education programs, were not included.

16 As a result, effective October, CBO preschool
17 special education teachers will now be the lowest
18 paid early childhood teachers in New York City,
19 including \$20,000 less than salary per year.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 LINDA ROSENTHAL: Uh, one final comment. The
22 city must extend salary parity for teachers with CBO
23 preschool special education programs so that we can
24 continue to support preschool students with
25 disabilities.

1
2 On behalf of Volunteers of America and the Bronx
3 early money center, I want to thank Council Member
4 Treyger, Chairman Dromm and the members of the City
5 Council Finance Committee. We greatly appreciate
6 your support. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I would like to
8 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member
9 Chin and we will now hear from Alice Bufkin followed
10 by Adam Ganser.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

12 ALICE BUFKIN: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair
13 Dromm and members of the Committee and thank you for
14 this opportunity to provide testimony today.

15 My name is Alice Bufkin and I am the Director of
16 Policy for Child and Adolescent Health at Citizens'
17 Committee for Children. The time I have today, I
18 want to touch briefly on several issues in the budget
19 that are important to children and families. You'll
20 find more detail on additional items in my written
21 testimony.

22 Starting with the youngest New Yorkers, we are
23 city leaders to significantly increased full day year
24 around programs that serve infants and toddlers.

1
2 These roles provide a full day of care and summer
3 services for three and four year old's.

4 For young people in Summer Rising, we urge you to
5 increase rates for the program and expedite staff
6 clearances to ensure CBO's have everything they need
7 to make the program a success. In response to the
8 profound social and emotional toll the pandemic has
9 had on children, we urge you to restore and enhance
10 funding for the City Council's mental health
11 initiatives. For years, these flexible programs have
12 used nontraditional community-based settings to help
13 identify children and families in need, not for
14 developmentally appropriate services and supports.

15 In terms of school-based behavioral supports, we
16 believe social workers are a critically important
17 part of this landscape and are grateful for
18 significant investments in this workforce.

19 We urge the city to take a thoughtful approach to
20 implementing these providers in schools by ensuring
21 they receive the structural support they need. By
22 ensuring communities are actively engaged in the
23 implementation plans. And by ensuring that the city
24 is also addressing challenges and enhancing supports
25 for community-based behavioral health providers who

1
2 face severe funding struggles. In addition, we join
3 others in urging greater investment in restorative
4 practices and funding for mental health continue in
5 school.

6 Regarding the depth of hunger crisis in New York
7 City, we strongly support City Council proposals to
8 increase funding for emergency food programs and
9 attrition benefit program enrollment and outreach
10 through HRA. There is significant additional
11 investments in school food in communities providers
12 and the restoration of cuts to City Council hunger
13 related discretionary initiatives.

14 Finally, children and families have experienced
15 unprecedented housing insecurity due to COVID. The
16 city's rent subsidy is too low to meet the actual
17 cost of New York City rents. We strongly support
18 passage of Intro. 146 to raise the rent limits of the
19 city's rent subsidies, so the families have greater
20 access to permanent housing.

21 Thank you to the City Council for all your work
22 on behalf of children and families.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Adam
24 Ganser followed by Gregory Brender.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

1
2 ADAM GANSER: Can you hear me?

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

4 ADAM GANSER: Okay, I'm sorry, I was caught off
5 guard here. My name is Adam Ganser, I am the
6 Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks. We are
7 the founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which
8 includes over 300 organizations from across the five
9 boroughs. Many of whom have already testified today
10 and more who will testify after me.

11 I thank the Council for the opportunity to speak
12 today. During the last year and a half, New York
13 City's parks and parks workers have been essential as
14 parks were the only places where New Yorkers could
15 gather with family, friends and community. Despite
16 this the city dealt with Parks Department a crushing
17 and I would say unnecessary blow. Cutting the
18 agencies funding by 14 percent. Some \$84 million
19 goes to city's parks desperately needed. That number
20 is a drop in the bucket for the city but paralyzing
21 for the department.

22 The cops left our parks in the worst conditions
23 on record, particularly in those very neighborhoods
24 that were hardest hit by the pandemic. We call on
25 the Mayor and the City Council to Play Fair now for

1
2 parks and restore \$79 million in critical funding
3 needed to make sure our parks are safe, clean and
4 accessible.

5 Specially, we would like the city to baseline 100
6 city park workers and 50 gardeners, restore the New
7 York City's park's seasonal staff budget, restore the
8 parks opportunity program, restore 50 urban park
9 rangers, [INAUDIBLE 5:19:39] that cut last year.
10 Restore 80 parks and forest patrol staff lines that
11 were cut last year. Restore contracts for tree
12 pruning, stump removals and evasive species control.
13 Restore full funding for the Parks Equity Initiative,
14 which is an amazing program that was unnecessarily
15 cut. Restore funding for Green Thumb and restore
16 funding for our city's natural forest, wetlands and
17 trails.

18 The city budget is a statement of the city's
19 priorities and for decades the budget for New York
20 City parks has been chronically insufficient.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 ADAM GANSER: COVID didn't create this problem
23 but it has brought the disinvestment to a head. We
24 urge the city's leadership to make sure the budget
25 this year reflects the urgency of our citizens and

1
2 their need for our parks for this year and far
3 beyond. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Gregory
5 Brender followed by Julie Tighe.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

7 GREGORY BRENDER: Good afternoon. Thank you so
8 much Chair Dromm and members of the City Council for
9 the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory
10 Brender and I am here on behalf of the Daycare
11 Council. A nearly 93 members provide childcare in
12 over 200 locations throughout the city.

13 We have come to you many times and your
14 leadership has been so integral to supporting the
15 early childhood system including most significantly
16 in the fight for salary parity. Once again we're
17 looking for the Council's leadership to support and
18 sustain the early childhood system.

19 We strongly support the proposal in the City
20 Council's Preliminary Budget response to invest \$45
21 million to ensure that full-time year around
22 childcare is available to the families that need it
23 the most. The Mayor's budget significantly increases
24 funding for 3K programs that operate during the
25 school day and school year but there is no

1
2 significant expansion for the extended day, extended
3 year programs that work on a working families
4 schedule that parents desperately need.

5 We believe that this funding that the Council has
6 proposed is both prudent and achievable given the
7 funding the city expects to receive from President
8 Biden's American Rescue Plan.

9 In particular, we propose that the city invest
10 \$10 million to bring in approximately 1,000 new full
11 day family childcare slots for infants and toddlers,
12 where there is the greatest need for service. \$17.5
13 million to convert over 2,000 slots that are
14 currently school day, school year only for three and
15 four year old's into extended day slots that can be
16 done with programs that have contracts currently and
17 are slated to loose their extended day contracts.
18 And \$17.5 million to expand center based infant
19 toddler capacity by approximately 700 slots.

20 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify
21 and we look forward to working with you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we have Julie Tighe
23 followed by Stacy Papas.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

1
2 CARLOS CASTELL CROKE: Hello, obviously I am not
3 Julie Tighe. I am testifying in her place. My name
4 is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for
5 New York City Programs at the New York League of
6 Conservation Voters.

7 NYLCV is pleased to see the city reinvesting in
8 the environment through the revival of the curbside
9 composting program and commitment to electrify our
10 city school buses. These two initiatives are
11 critical steps towards reducing our mission to
12 cleaning our streets and air and protecting our
13 vulnerable communities that have been overburdened by
14 decades of environmental racism.

15 It is imperative that the city provide adequate
16 funding for these programs and in the case of
17 curbside organic waste, that we do rollout the
18 program citywide. While federal dollars are
19 providing the financial relief needed to implement
20 these critical initiatives, there is still much more
21 we must do to make a permanent commitment to the
22 environment. Parks and our green spaces are one of
23 the city's most valuable environmental assets and are
24 a major source of the city's urban canopy, which
25 mitigates climate change, provides clean air and

1
2 habitats for native wildlife, contributes to the
3 wellbeing of our residents and economy.

4 Unfortunately, due to the \$45 million in cuts to
5 seasonal staff spending and forestry contracts, last
6 year, parks saw one of their worst years for
7 cleanliness on record. Therefore in this critical 30
8 year of our Play Fair Campaign, we are asking the
9 Council to Play Fair now and restore \$78.9 million in
10 FY22 Parks Budget to ensure our parks are safe, clean
11 and accessible.

12 In addition to parks funding, it is imperative
13 that the city baseline funding for full staffing in
14 critical environmental offices. Such as the Office
15 of Building Emissions and Energy Performance and the
16 Mayor's Office of Climate Resiliency. These offices
17 must be operating at full capacity to ensure New York
18 City is at the forefront of the fight against climate
19 change.

20 The COVID-19 crisis is still placing stress on
21 our economy and communities. This was apparent in
22 the FY21 Budget but does not need to be the case
23 again this year now that the federal government has
24 provided relief. We urge the Mayor and the City
25 Council to have foresight to prepare for the climate

1
2 crisis on making permanent commitments to
3 environmental investments. Bold action could be
4 taken by implementing the Citywide Curbside Organics
5 Collection program, baselining one percent of the
6 city's budget for parks and doubling down on the
7 Mayor's commitment to electrify all New York City
8 school buses by passing legislation that mandates it.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We now have Stacy Papas
11 followed by Tara Das.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

13 STACY PAPAS: My name is Stacy Papas and I am
14 Executive Director of Friends of the East River
15 Esplanade. Many of my colleagues testifying today
16 are telling you the exact same thing. Our parks are
17 underfunded and over-utilized and because of this
18 they're in the worst shape they have been in since
19 2004.

20 Anyone walking along the East River Esplanade can
21 tell you exactly where the sink holes are forming,
22 the garbage cans are consistently overflowing onto
23 the pedestrian path and dropping garbage into the
24 East River. Why is that? Because there is no
25 vehicle access so staff have to manually carry trash

1
2 bags out of the park to a garbage drop. It is
3 physically impossible for Parks Staff to keep up with
4 the amount of trash that is produced. Not because of
5 people littering but because of the deteriorating
6 conditions of the pathways and crumbling substructure
7 of the Esplanade.

8 Parks Staff cannot drive a vehicle in to
9 transport trash out and the city has not yet begun
10 substructural repairs planned in 2019. Budget cuts
11 have created an abundance of inefficiencies for Parks
12 staff on the Esplanade and their ability to do their
13 jobs. Trees are planted but there is no way to water
14 source. Lawns are seeded but there is no irrigation
15 system or fences to protect the new growth. New open
16 spaces are developed yet water and electricity are
17 not connected. The remedy? More money and time to
18 rip it all up and start over. Pathways are laid out
19 but not wide enough or supportive enough for vehicle
20 access. Seasonal labor is hired yet incapable of
21 doing skilled jobs. Volunteers are asked to help out
22 but Parks makes them wait 30 plus days to approve
23 their projects.

24 NYC Parks role is to maintain the hard-scapes,
25 landscapes, trees, lawns, benches, pathways,

1
2 playgrounds and comfort stations. They're not your
3 mother or your housekeeper. They're not here to tidy
4 up after us. Clean up your own mess! Curb your dog
5 and pull them out of the gardens that volunteers work
6 so hard to maintain. Use the dog runs that have been
7 built for you. Teach your children not to litter.

8 Once our citizens take responsibility for their
9 own garbage, NYC Parks can focus on maintaining the
10 actual park. Hours of their workday are spent
11 cleaning up after every one of us. It's no wonder
12 they cannot get to any other tasks in a timely
13 manner. It doesn't take more money to clean up the
14 Esplanade, it takes more money to improve the
15 processes, create supportive and resource rich
16 working conditions for the Parks Staff, forethought
17 and planning for daily and seasonal maintenance and
18 for the repairs to the Esplanade. Budget cuts
19 created gaps in the work flow and it shows. Increase
20 the budget, use the \$284 million -

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 STACY PAPAS: For Esplanade repairs and improve
23 the systems starting in FY22. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
25 from Tara Das followed by Lynn Kelly.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

3 TARA DAS: Great, to members of City Council and
4 Chairman Dromm, thank you for the leadership and
5 support you give to our city and thank you for this
6 opportunity to testify.

7 My name is Tara Das and I am the Government
8 Affairs Manager with New York Restoration Project and
9 I am testifying on behalf of Lynn Kelly our Executive
10 Director.

11 For 25 years, NYRP has helped build and maintain
12 the city's green infrastructure, improving access to
13 open space in our city's most under-resourced
14 neighborhoods promoting food security through urban
15 agriculture and supporting healthy communities. We
16 oversee 80 acres of City parkland, operate 52
17 community gardens and provide 20,000 square feet of
18 food production space. Just this past year, we
19 produced \$180,000 worth of food and we distributed
20 this to families in need at no extra cost.

21 The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the deep
22 environmental and social injustices in our city.
23 Low-income communities suffering the most from lack
24 of access to quality green space were also hit
25 largest by the pandemic, both in terms of health and

1
2 economic outcomes. NYRP acted on these issues
3 because the lack of municipal investment stunted many
4 of New York's underserved neighborhoods.

5 Unfortunately, the proposed FY22 budget continues to
6 under value the critical role of green space in New
7 Yorkers' lives.

8 I ask you, why does the Administration
9 chronically underfund an agency that is responsible
10 for an asset they credit as being vital to the health
11 and well-being of New Yorkers? 2020 parks conditions
12 were the worst on record since NYC Parks began
13 recording them in 2004. There are simply not nearly
14 enough City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park
15 Rangers or PEP officers to cover 14 percent of the
16 city's land and it is grossly unfair to assume that
17 volunteers will make up the lack of funded staff.

18 This proposed allocation risks, continuing the
19 hardships faced by many communities but that can
20 change. With greater investment in NYC Parks –

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 TARA DAS: With greater investment in NYC parks,
23 organizations such as NYRP can work together with the
24 city to secure and flourish the city's green spaces.
25 Please play fair for NYC Parks. Thank you very much.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
3 now hear from K Webster followed by Christina Taylor.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 K WEBSTER: Hi, thank you. I'm K Webster with
6 the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. We
7 formed in the late 70's to take this park back from
8 violent drug dealers. We build gardens and community
9 as neighbors with Council Member Chin, New Yorkers
10 for Parks, the Hort, Audubon, The BRC, homeless men,
11 Chinese Elders with Hua Mei Birds, song birds, ELL
12 public schools, Tenement Museum, University
13 Settlement, Afi Green Thumb, Citizens for NYC Parks
14 and anyone else.

15 We posted pandemic health guidance for those who
16 slept here to avoid congregate setting sites and
17 solidarity signs in three languages when anti-Asian
18 violence spiked. We hold events like Juneteenth
19 annually to honor our cultures. We meet with our
20 bead cubs. We work to be united.

21 We have always been 100 volunteer collation
22 because some parks are never ever going to become
23 well off conservancies. Now we are seeing signs
24 familiar to those of us who have been here for four
25

1
2 decades when no one, not parks, not police dared to
3 enter this park.

4 Volunteers and park staff make a park safer. We
5 need parks maintenance staff baselined with a path to
6 long-term decently paid jobs with benefits and skills
7 training. People need to be invested in. Picking up
8 garbage, used needles, human feces is not as
9 glamorous as you might think.

10 We need tree pruners. Falling limbs kill. Park
11 gardeners who know how to garden in tough conditions.
12 Urban park rangers to remind us that nature is all
13 around us and matters.

14 Committed composting inside our parks is part of
15 the sustainable future. Infrastructure with Bruckner
16 boxes. We can't plant if we can't water. Park
17 buildings return to community use. Bathrooms can't
18 safely be opened with no supervision. Bob Humber is
19 84, he daily anchors this park by greeting everyone,
20 gardening, advising, feeding and clothing the parks
21 homeless who call him dad.

22 I clean up human feces and trash. I plant
23 flowers -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 K WEBSTER: And I've held the hand of dying 19-
3 year-old who was stabbed in this park. We are here
4 but volunteers can't keep a park. We need baselined
5 funding for the last democratic meeting spaces in
6 this city, our public parks. Thank you, play fair
7 for parks.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
9 from Christina Taylor followed by Roxanne Delgado.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

11 CHRISTINA TAYLOR: Good afternoon. My name is
12 Christina Taylor, I am the Director of Programs and
13 Operations for the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance in the
14 Bronx. We are grateful for the addition of seasonal
15 staff at New York City Parks this year but New York
16 City Parks is still chronically underfunded and
17 understaffed. There are not nearly enough city park
18 workers, gardeners, urban park rangers or PEP
19 officers.

20 In fact, there is only about 300 park enforcement
21 patrol officers that are expected to patrol all the
22 parks in all the boroughs. In the Bronx, this
23 translates to approximately four PEP officers per
24 shift for the whole borough.

1
2 And in the summer, they get pulled to
3 waterfronts, pools and then large parks, such as ours
4 suffer from overuse and lack of oversight. The
5 budget for New York – sorry, the budget for parks in
6 other large cities is about two percent of the
7 overall budget on average but in New York City, it's
8 half a percent. Parks takes up 14 percent of New
9 York City but only get half a percent of the budget.
10 That is not enough money to run an agency of this
11 size and scope that New York City Parks has asked to
12 maintain. Van Cortlandt Park alone is 1,146 acres
13 and serves nearly three million visitors a year.

14 On a good day, we might have two PEP officers
15 covering the entire park and their shift is not 24/7.
16 Right now, with people still gathering mostly at
17 doors, there are large groups parting, breaking park
18 rules and playing extremely loud music into the
19 morning.

20 NYPD is busy with violent crimes and park
21 enforcement patrol ends their shift at 10 p.m..
22 There is no one to deal with the difficult issues
23 like this overnight. Communities that bordered the
24 perimeter of each park have experienced a deep
25 decline in quality of life as a result. They are

1
2 calling 911, 311 and partner administration for help
3 but they are not getting it.

4 Plainly stated, we need more parks enforcement
5 patrol. In addition, there still remains a hiring
6 freeze at New York City Parks that leaves 200 people,
7 positions not filled. Along with the fact that the
8 majority of parks positions are not baselined, which
9 means they must be renewed every year by elected
10 officials and we do not guarantee park workers their
11 jobs. We need to move beyond the cycle of cycle
12 funding. New York City Parks needs to be at least
13 one percent of the city budget. Thank you.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. One moment. We
16 will now hear from Athena Bernkopf followed by Albert
17 Scott.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

19 ATHENA BERNKOPF: Good afternoon Committee Chair
20 Dromm and the members of the Committee and thank you
21 so much for giving me the time or the opportunity to
22 testify today.

23 My name is Athena Bernkopf and I am the Project
24 Coordinator of the East Harlem-El Barrio Community
25 Land Trust. Which is one of the 18 partner

1
2 organizations that are part of the Citywide Community
3 Land Trust Initiative.

4 I am here to urge the City Council to fully fund
5 the Citywide CLT Initiative at \$1.51 million in
6 Fiscal Year '22, to help stabilize housing, combat
7 speculation and ensure a just recovery from the
8 COVID-19 crisis in Black, Brown and immigrant
9 neighborhoods.

10 The Harlem-El Barrio CLT works to fight the root
11 causes of displacement and homelessness, develop and
12 preserve permanently affordable housing, commercial,
13 green and culture space and promote self-
14 determination in east and central Harlem. As a
15 strategy to ensure permanent affordability, the East
16 Harlem El Barrio CLT will own land and lease it to
17 buildings on that land, as well as develop a resident
18 controlled mutual housing association.

19 In the past year, we've closed on the first four
20 properties to enter onto the CLT, including four
21 residential buildings that will be owned by newly
22 formed East Harlem El Barrio mutual housing
23 association.

24 All of the current residents of these buildings
25 are Black and Brown working class people including

1
2 elders and immigrants who have called Harlem home for
3 decades even a certification transformed the
4 neighborhood around them.

5 In closing on this transfer, we've been able to
6 begin on long needed repairs for the nonprofit, with
7 nonprofit developer partners Banana Kelly and Catch.
8 These are repairs that some residents have been
9 waiting on for over 12 years, when they were
10 displaced from their homes because the conditions in
11 buildings were unlivable.

12 This project serves to protect the long-term
13 stability of the property and rent in the buildings.
14 There were 99 year ground lease that will go into
15 effect between the land trust and the Mutual Housing
16 Association.

17 All of the residential units will be rented
18 below market rate and a range from 35 to 100 percent
19 AMI. We continue to deepen resident engagement
20 through the rehabilitation process and trainings to
21 prepare tenants of the building to step into
22 leadership of the Mutual Housing Association and the
23 CLT.

24

25

1
2 We've turned to Community Land Trust as one of
3 the most powerful tools we can use right to invest in
4 development -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 ATHENA BERNKOPF: We center the leadership of
7 Black and Brown working class communities in the
8 stewardship of land and property, knowing that we are
9 the most impacted by the city's housing and public
10 health crisis and therefore, the best qualified to
11 build out the foundations of helping neighborhoods
12 that actually meet our most critical needs.

13 This is what we mean when we talk about a just
14 recovery from the pandemic and beyond. We're talking
15 about building up neighborhoods where community
16 members know they are safe and secure in their
17 housing into the long-term future.

18 Without this effort, we're looking at more short-
19 term actions that incurred exorbitant costs to the
20 city and don't actually address the root causes of
21 the housing and health crisis in the city.

22 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today
23 and we look forward to working with you all towards a
24 just recovery for the city. Be well and take care.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Albert
3 Scott followed by Boris Santos.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 ALBERT SCOTT: Thank you. Good afternoon
6 Committee Chair Dromm and members of the Committee
7 and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My
8 name is Albert Scott and I am a Board Member of the
9 East New York Community Land Trust.

10 We are a grassroots volunteer and resident led
11 CLT, fighting for community control of land, so that
12 what this built on, the land meet the needs of the
13 working family and the working poor family of Black
14 and Brown people in their respective communities.

15 East New York CLT and 17 partner organizations
16 are part of a citywide CLT initiative, that seats
17 \$1.51 million in City Council discretionary funding
18 in Fiscal Year 2022.

19 We ask the Committee to recommend renewed funding
20 for the citywide CLT initiative in the Fiscal Year
21 2022 Budget. We rely on the CLT Initiative funding
22 to move our work forward and we have done so much
23 with the funding.

24 For time purposes, we were able to coordinate and
25 organize our community to do surveying of public

1
2 land, host various educational forums in regards to
3 CLT educations and how we could help build up the
4 community for collective ownership, community
5 ownership, increase generational wealth within
6 communities such as Brownsville and East New York.
7 The funding will mean so much to our community as we
8 fight speculation, fight housing instability,
9 economic instability in our community.

10 This is a tool that we need that need to be
11 strengthened and funded again, to beat back the
12 vultures of speculation in communities such as
13 Brownsville and East New York. Thank you for your
14 time.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have
16 Boris Santos followed by Debra Ack.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

18 BORIS SANTOS: Good afternoon. Greetings to the
19 Chair, Chairperson Dromm and all Council Members. My
20 name is Boris Santos, I am the Treasurer of the East
21 New York Community Land Trust or board member as
22 well. I come before you to give testimony and urge
23 the Council to fund the Community Land Trust
24 Initiative to the degree of \$1.51 million for FY22,
25 as my colleagues have referred to. And to demand

1
2 that the city give an update to Community Board 5 or
3 the East New York community at large, as it relates
4 to the status of the commitments made to the
5 community through the April 2016 approved rezoning.

6 I want to first thank – begin by thanking the
7 Council for being the first to recognize the need for
8 funding, specifically discretionary funding to help
9 build, grow and expand the CLT movement. From this
10 goal and proposition was the CLT Initiative funding
11 borne out of. First funded in 2020 for a total of an
12 estimated \$850,000, the funding dipped a bit to
13 \$650,000 in Fiscal Year 2021 but it is important to
14 note that funding remained through dire fiscal
15 circumstances as our city was ravaged by the COVID-19
16 pandemic.

17 Yes, funding remained as the Council, “looked
18 through each budget line” thoroughly, and asked, “Is
19 this essential to preserve, maintain our social net?
20 That, in the words of Speaker Corey Johnson. So, it
21 would follow that this initiative must be funded this
22 upcoming Fiscal Year and at a time when we are
23 working towards our recovery as the city’s coffers
24 look somewhat decent, particularly because of
25 financial support from the federal government. We

1
2 must further show how important this initiative is by
3 bolstering this funding at least to the level of
4 \$1.51 million.

5 I want to end by making one simple but necessary
6 demand. Since the rezoning of East New York in April
7 2016, our community has yet to receive an update
8 beyond the one last made in the city's rezoning
9 tracker with regards to its commitments. We're
10 talking about our community not getting a progress
11 report for about three years. And what this has
12 caused is people organizing on the ground, to make
13 demands about money that the city has already
14 committed and allocated to East New York.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 BORIS SANTOS: Wrapping up in ten seconds.
17 Recent reports show this. Our community deserves
18 full, consistent and transparent reporting with
19 regards to the finalization of the work done after
20 the funding streams were allocated. I repeat, the
21 city must be able to report to the Community Board,
22 at least to give a clear and documented progress of
23 the East New York rezoning commitments.

24 I look forward to that happening immediately
25 after this summer and before this Mayor leaves Gracie

1
2 Mansion. I am willing to work with my Council Member
3 to make that happen and I thank you again for this
4 opportunity.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
6 from Debra Ack and then we will circle back to
7 Roxanne Delgado.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

9 ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello, hi, I'm sorry - [LOST
10 AUDIO 5:43:18].

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I am sorry. First we are
12 going to hear from Ms. Ack. Is she there?

13 DEBRA ACK: Yes, I am here. Hi, good afternoon
14 Council, Chairman Dromm and City Council Members. My
15 name is Debra Ack and I am a Board Member of the East
16 New York Community Land Trust.

17 East New York CLT and 18 partner organizations
18 are part of a citywide CLT Initiative that seeks
19 \$1.51 million in City Council discretionary funding
20 in FY 2022. The funding will assist our work to move
21 forward. We have accomplished so much with the
22 funding and there is more work to be done.

23 The East New York CLT has given my life purpose,
24 especially during the pandemic. It has truly opened
25 my eyes to housing, generational wealth and

1
2 entrepreneurship that is lost in my community. We,
3 the East New York CLT, will return these desperate
4 needs to our community through community organizing.

5 Just recently, we visited an area that is on the
6 borderline of Brooklyn and Queens. The lost
7 community of the whole. It tore at my heart to hear
8 the stories of how our people are living without a
9 sewer system in the neighborhood and are living in
10 the 50's with septic tanks. No paved streets, no
11 sidewalks, along with continuous flooding.

12 Along with residents of the whole and East New
13 York CLT community organizational skills, we will
14 fight for this lost community. Giving them a sense
15 of pride for their community. Funding from the
16 Council will allow the East New York CLT to work with
17 these residents and other residents in the East New
18 York area.

19 We need the City Council to invest in our CLT and
20 in the Citywide CLT movement. Support the CLT
21 movement by investing \$1.5 million in your FY 2022
22 budget. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity
23 to testify and look forward to talking with you guys
24 again. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and we have
3 questions from Council Member Diaz.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: It's more so not a question
5 but I want to thank my East New York people for
6 standing tall and standing proud as I am transition
7 from an advocate with you to be your Council Member.
8 I get great joy to know that your at the amount of
9 290 or so people that have been on since ten o'clock
10 this morning.

11 I am committed to having the conversation with
12 the Mayor about the rezone and as that happened but
13 publicly I want to state it is on the record. It is
14 in conversation and Boris it will happen before the
15 end of June.

16 Again, let's just circle back, check and follow
17 up with Alexis. I just sent an email out to her this
18 morning, a text message for our next meeting. So,
19 again, thank you for fighting the fight. The
20 stronger you are, the easier it is to make it
21 deliverable. Thank you Chair Dromm.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Now we will hear
23 from Roxanne Delgado followed by Hannah Anousheh.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is ready to begin.
25

1
2 ROXANNE DELGADO: Yes, hello. I am so sorry
3 about the ground. I am on my way to work but my name
4 is Roxanne Delgado, I am the Founder of Friends at
5 Home Parkway, which was founded in summer of 2017, to
6 address the loss of maintenance and cleanliness in
7 our parkway. And I am here to ask the city to play
8 fair with parks.

9 But this is more than about money, it's about
10 equity and environmental justice. The Bronx has the
11 highest asthma rates and trees can prevent asthma.
12 It's proven, it's a fact. And it seems that they
13 have money to build trees, to cut trees, to turn
14 trees and no money to care for our trees and older
15 trees can absorb more carbon dioxide and tend to do
16 it faster than the younger trees. This prevents
17 asthma and in the long run, it saves us millions of
18 dollars.

19 On Parks own website, the inspection grade for
20 all trees at Pelham Parkway is a Grade C. In fact,
21 some of our trees were damaged by parks lawnmower
22 because they have to do more with less so they tend
23 to be careless, so they tend to use large equipment
24 instead of doing it manually or with weedhackers.
25 Because we have a parkway, we are given less priority

1
2 than playgrounds and even parks and playgrounds. Our
3 parkways highly used by low-income working class,
4 NYCHA residents and immigrants. And they are always
5 safest, oh, my God, regardless of which zip code or
6 what type of greenspace deserves adequate maintenance
7 and tree care which Pelham Parkway currently lacks.

8 All I ask is one percent for parks operation
9 maintenance for it to be baselined because as Council
10 Member Van Bramer stated, we don't know who – what
11 will be the next administration, so we should have a
12 legacy plan for the next generation.

13 And crime could be prevented with parks at Queens
14 because when it's clean it attracts good people.
15 When it filthy, it attracts bad characters who tend
16 to do bad things, which is why we need PEP officers.
17 You know the United Nations stated that we need to
18 think globally and act locally and it is time for us
19 to act for our parks.

20 And I am sorry, I am heading to work but this is

21 –

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

23 ROXANNE DELGADO: Of the inequities they have and
24 unlike everyone else, I don't have the comfort not to
25 work and [INAUDIBLE 5:49:12] behind this office.

1
2 Like most of the people in my neighborhood we're low-
3 income working poor, we're always struggling pay
4 check to pay check. So, I am here despite the fact
5 that all my struggles because parks are very
6 important to our community and we need the Mayor and
7 City Council for once to play fair with parks.

8 Thank you for your time. Enjoy the rest of your
9 day.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
11 now hear from Hannah Anousheh followed by Izoria
12 Fields.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

14 HANNAH ANOUSHEH: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and
15 City Council Members. My name is Hannah Anousheh and
16 I am the Coordinator of the East New York Community
17 Land Trust or East New York CLT for short and I am on
18 staff at Cypress Hills Local Development Cooperation
19 or CHLDC for short.

20 East New York CLT is a member of the New York
21 City Community Land Trust Initiative or NYCLI and
22 we're one of ATNCLT groups in the growing citywide
23 CLT movement. I am here to request the City Council
24 provide \$1.51 million in funding for the citywide CLT
25

1
2 initiative. This will allow CHLDC to support the
3 growth of the East New York Community Land Trust.

4 CHLDC received funding for the CLT Initiative in
5 Fiscal Year '21 and this allowed us to hire a CLT
6 Coordinator to support community leaders in the
7 formation of the East New York CLT. Together we have
8 grown the capacity of the East New York CLT
9 tremendously over the last year and now, we're really
10 eager to acquire land and to partner with nonprofit
11 developers to build much needed low-income housing.
12 But in order to acquire land ongoing, organizing and
13 engagement of residents is an enormous priority.

14 The East New York CLT members do an incredible
15 amount of work as volunteers but it's a lot of work
16 and the City Council funding for staff and other
17 operational costs is so crucial for our ability to
18 grow the East New York CLT. Thank you so much for
19 your time.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
21 from Izoria Fields followed by Deyanira Del Rio.

22 IZORIA FIELDS: Good afternoon -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

24 IZORIA FIELDS: Chair Dromm and City Council
25 members and thank you to so much for the opportunity

1
2 to testify on today. My name is Izoria Fields and I
3 am the Vice President of the East New York Community
4 Land Trust and I am here today to urge you all to
5 fully fund the CLT Initiative across the city at
6 \$1.51 million in the East New York Community Land
7 Trust Specifically.

8 As these funds are helping with our operations on
9 a day to day organizing towards our mission of
10 securing long-term affordability of land for our
11 community.

12 The East New York CLT is a grassroots
13 organization that was first of the pandemic. We are
14 advocates for community control of land to provide
15 truly sustainable affordability, create affordable
16 home ownership opportunities for the people of East
17 New York, commercial spaces for locally owned Black
18 and Brown owned businesses and other community needs.
19 We are currently faced with a global pandemic and a
20 homelessness crisis.

21 My organization has surveyed hundreds of lots in
22 East New York alone that are under the jurisdiction
23 of HPD and other city agencies. That have been left
24 vacant and unkept, providing opportunities for
25 dumping of trash, breeding of rats and other pests.

1
2 Instead, we would like to see these lots turned over
3 to us, so that we can provide home ownership
4 opportunities for our community. Spaces for
5 commercial businesses and rental opportunities for
6 the East New York community, that are truly
7 affordable.

8 As it stands, several developments have been
9 built in East New York and marketed under the guides
10 of affordable housing. However, the question becomes
11 affordable for whom? The AMI used to qualify
12 families for housing in these developments are
13 typically much higher than the AMI of East New York.

14 This contributes to the systematic displacement
15 of long-term East New York residents who simply
16 cannot afford to live here anymore. As a local
17 realtor, it pains me to tell potential clients and my
18 neighbors that they cannot afford to purchase a home
19 where they have lived for decades and have raised
20 their families.

21 When out surveying our neighbors, we discovered
22 that some of them are living under deplorable
23 conditions to avoid homelessness and to avoid the New
24 York City shelter system. Ms. Debra spoke to it a
25 bit earlier that there are areas where there are no

1
2 paved roads. There are no sidewalks. They don't
3 have access to city sewer.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

5 IZORIA FIELDS: There is a huge flooding problem
6 and this is not something that we can allow to
7 continue here in New York City. We ask that the City
8 Council fully fund the CLT Initiative across the
9 city, as well as provide continued funding and
10 support for our efforts to not only house our people
11 but to regain community control of land. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
13 Deyanira Del Rio followed by John Krinsky.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

15 DEYANIRA DEL RIO: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and
16 members of the Committee and thanks so much for the
17 opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

18 My name is Deyanira Del Rio, I am the Co-Director
19 at New Economy Project. A citywide organization that
20 works with community groups citywide to build a just
21 economy for all New Yorkers.

22 Among out other activities, New Economy Project
23 coordinates the Citywide Community Land Trust
24 Initiative that you've heard a little bit about
25 already. This initiative was launched in Fiscal Year

1
2 '20. So, less than two years ago and in that short
3 time, the City Council funding has supported the
4 formation and expansion of more than a dozen
5 community land trusts across the five boroughs from
6 the South and Northwest Bronx to East Harlem, the
7 lower eastside, Brownsville, East New York and
8 beyond. I am leaving out a lot of neighborhoods
9 unfortunately.

10 As community controlled nonprofits, CLT's work to
11 take land out of the private speculative market and
12 ensure that it is used for deeply and permanently
13 affordable housing, affordable commercial and
14 storefront space, community gardens and a host of
15 other needs. And the diversity of local projects
16 that are taking route on CLT's throughout the city is
17 a real testament to its flexibility to meet a whole
18 range of community needs, while preserving critical
19 public investment and affordable housing and other
20 neighborhood development.

21 Over less than two years and throughout the
22 pandemic as you've heard, the CLT Initiative has not
23 just sustained but has amplified and increased its
24 worth citywide. Incorporating new CLT's and
25 expanding existing ones, like the Cooper Square CLT

1
2 on the lower east side, which just brought two more
3 multifamily buildings onto its CLT. Groups have
4 engaged thousands of community members and education,
5 organizing and community land trust governance.

6 Groups have spearheaded mutual aid relief efforts
7 in their communities when COVID hit and ongoing and
8 so much more. Two land trusts as you've heard
9 including the East Harlem El Barrio CLT -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

11 DEYANIRA DEL RIO: Their first properties and
12 many others are well on their way to doing so. This
13 all occurred despite deep cuts to funding in Fiscal
14 Year '21, when groups were less than a year into this
15 work. So, in Fiscal Year '22, our initiative is
16 seeking expanded and full funding of \$1.51 million
17 for 18 groups. This will allow us to bring two
18 additional organizations into the initiative, two new
19 CLT's and an additional citywide technical assistance
20 provider. And crucially, it will bring this
21 community land trust initiative, which has done so
22 much more than the modest funding has actually
23 covered but it will bring this initiative more in
24 line with other initiatives that the Council
25 supports, allowing groups to dedicate meaningful

1
2 staffing and resources to continue and sustain this
3 work.

4 As you've heard today, there are a range of needs
5 and opportunities for the Council to equitably invest
6 in a just recovery for Black, Brown and immigrant New
7 Yorkers in their neighborhoods. Community Land Trust
8 are going to be a critical part of that equation and
9 we urge the City Council to please not only renew,
10 but to increase funding for this vital work to combat
11 speculation and displacement in the wake of this
12 pandemic and to ensure a fair and just recovery for
13 all New Yorkers. Thank you again for the opportunity
14 to testify today.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
16 from John Krinsky followed by Michelle Neugebauer.

17 JOHN KRINSKY: Yes, good afternoon Chair Dromm
18 and members of the City Council Finance Committee.
19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My
20 name is John Krinsky, I am a Professor at City
21 College of New York Chairman Dromm, in the Department
22 of Political Science. With my colleague Hillary
23 Coldwell, I also run the Community Team Studies
24 Program, which is an intensive minor that connects
25 City College students with a wide variety of

1
2 community organizations in the city and teachers
3 community organizing and community based research and
4 related skill.

5 Ms. Coldwell and I have entrepreneurd the City
6 Community Land Initiative from its beginning in 2012
7 and I currently serve on the board. I have been
8 proud that our efforts at City College have taken a
9 leading role in providing technical assistance to
10 existing and emerging community land trust in
11 preparing training curricula and materials.

12 Thanks to the funding already provided through
13 the City Council's Committee on Land Trust
14 Initiative, Community Land Trusts are now acquiring
15 their first properties but also training residents
16 for self-governance. Training them to understand the
17 steps of the rehabilitation process, so they can have
18 some control over it.

19 Reaching out to residents of housing. It's
20 already owned by organizations that are sponsoring
21 CLTs in order that they understand the kind of
22 collective stewardship CLTs can provide and their
23 role in it and much else.

24 We work weekly with CLT organizers to address
25 their training and education needs in detail.

1
2 Further at City College we posted leaders and
3 organizers from three CLTs including Ms. Fields whom
4 you just heard from. And an inaugural grassroots
5 leaders fellows program, where they take the course
6 in our minor and develop projects that deepen the
7 engagement of neighborhood residents and the CLTs as
8 they develop. We plan to expand this program next
9 year and over the next three years.

10 With the growing number of CLTs and growing
11 education outreach and training needs, as the CLTs
12 engage in different part of the organizing and
13 development process, the work to support this groups
14 is growing in volume and complexity. We ask not just
15 for a continuance of the CLT initiative but for an
16 enhancement of it in order to meet these critical
17 needs.

18 Thank you again for your support for the CLT
19 Initiative and I look forward to it bearing even more
20 soon. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
22 Michelle Neugebauer followed by Pilar De Jesus.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

24 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Good afternoon Chair Dromm
25 and esteemed Council Members, especially our new

1 Council Member Darma Diaz. I testify today on behalf
2 of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation.
3 A 38-year-old nonprofit CBC and settlement house in
4 East New York and I'm testifying about the basement
5 legalization pilot.
6

7 Our organization along with a Coalition of Houses
8 of Worship and community-based organizations called,
9 the Coalition for Community Advancement that our
10 Council Member used to be on. Fought really hard for
11 a fair and equitable rezoning of East New York.

12 We didn't win the battle but one of the victories
13 we did win was a \$12 million promise in writing from
14 this current Mayor and the City Council to fund a
15 basement legalization pilot in East New York. The
16 response from the community was incredibly
17 enthusiastic. There was a lot of passion around this
18 because people in the neighborhood knew like we knew
19 that it's a win-win. A win for tenants who get safe,
20 healthy, legal, affordable apartments and a win for
21 home owners who get extra income and who do not have
22 to fear anymore that DOB Inspector knocking on their
23 door.

24 So, basement legalization is a way for the city
25 to create safe, habitable units and cheaper than

1
2 building from the ground up. While you are still
3 supporting low and moderate income, Black and Latino
4 homeowners in highly impacted areas from the pandemic
5 like East New York Cypress Hills.

6 And we were hit incredibly hard by the pandemic.
7 We've had close to 800 deaths in the neighborhood.
8 Over 20,000 people have suffered from the virus and
9 one of the reasons, one of many but one of the
10 reasons that our infection rate was so high is that
11 our housing is over crowded and basement legalization
12 is a way out of that -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

14 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: \$7 million should not have
15 been cut from the basement legalization pilot. We
16 ask that the City Council restore it and live up to
17 its promises. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Michelle and you
19 probably know that I am a supporter of the basement
20 legalization. I work here locally with Chia on that
21 right from the get go.

22 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah and I just want to ask
24 you, weren't you our last person last year in the
25 budget hearing?

1
2 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Yes, at 11:30 at night.
3 Kudos, you hung in there with me.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, no, you did a lot
5 better this year. A little after four I think it is
6 4:09. So, thank you for always coming in and giving
7 testimony. We really deeply appreciate it. I do
8 look forward to continuing to work with you on this
9 for the next seven months that I have in the Council
10 and to continue to support basement legalization. I
11 see it as a real viable alternative. A real good way
12 to -

13 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Thank you

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Down to the market.

15 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely. You did a nice
17 job.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Pilar
19 De Jesus followed by Kevin Jones.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

21 PILAR DE JESUS: Hi, good afternoon. Thank you.
22 I am also glad to make it before 7 p.m., especially
23 signing so late. And thank you for Rebecca for
24 accommodating me.

1
2 But yet, good afternoon, my name is Pilar De
3 Jesus. I wear many hats in this state. I am a
4 Member of CPR, Communities Unite for Police Reform.
5 I am a member of Decriminalize Nature. I was one of
6 the advocates who worked on the Marijuana Regulation
7 Taxation Act. I am a Senior Advocacy Coordinator in
8 the Tenant Unit at Take Root Justice.

9 In a nutshell, I'm a passionate Latina born and
10 raised in East Harlem, a fighter, an aunt, a sister,
11 a daughter, a survivor of many of the outdated racist
12 policies in this state and this country unfortunately
13 as well. And I'm here just to say that we don't need
14 to fund the police anymore and you know, what we know
15 from decades of experience, there have been billions
16 of dollars that have always been going towards
17 organized violence such as the Police Departments.

18 Often in the name of improving community and
19 police relations but this doesn't mean treating
20 people differently. It usually means taxpayer money
21 being spent on police. You know police relations
22 campaigns and it means money being taken away from
23 the support systems in the communities that have been
24 and still continue to be molested by police on a day
25 to day basis.

1
2 These outdated racist policies and budgets that
3 many of you leaders unfortunately fund instills
4 violence towards New Yorkers and our mental health.
5 Mental health is especially in my opinion, in my
6 opinion, it should in your opinion as well. Mental
7 health should always be a priority and which is why I
8 ask that we do not continue to fund violence by
9 giving the police more money but that one, we support
10 legislation that Rosenthal and Senator Rivera have
11 introduced on a state level to decriminalize
12 psilocybin and decriminalize controlled substances.
13 And let's talk about alternatives -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

15 PILAR DE JESUS: And I am going to wrap up.
16 Mental health treatments like psilocybin therapy.
17 You know, we also may need police officers to think
18 about having some psilocybin therapy. You know, if
19 you look at the research on the benefits on it, this
20 could be really helpful with helping police being
21 reintegrated into society.
22 But mostly I just want to say and I will end with
23 all of this is, you know please, do not defund. You
24 know if organizations like mine are defunded, how can
25 we continue to support our partners who are working

1
2 with the communities that are fighting are fighting
3 against a greedy landlords doing criminal acts to our
4 tenants. And I know this from working with them.
5 You know, we're not holding them in criminal court
6 but you know from what I read and the way I
7 understand the law, they are being very criminal to
8 our tenants. How can we continue to support people
9 in the community who want to open a small business
10 like worker co-ops. You know, so we need the money,
11 not to go to the NYPD but to organizations like mine
12 and the others here. You know, legal service
13 providers are so much needed. The education, police
14 officers do not belong in schools. Police officers
15 are very triggering and as I keep mentioning - I
16 mentioned earlier, mental health is really important
17 and as you can see, the city - the mental health
18 these days is really unstable. It has always been
19 unstable and unfortunately, it has a lot to do with
20 the violence from police and the violent racist
21 outdated policies that you know, legislatures current
22 and past have you know supported and continue to not
23 even reform. And so, again, I just again ask that we
24 fund the, the, the support systems and not the
25 police. I think we; we can see there is evidence to

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2 show that that way is not working and let's really
3 focus on the mental health of everyone, including the
4 officers. And I think they don't need to be the
5 responders in mental health because they also don't
6 know how to respond to it and I would also like, how
7 are they getting their mental health addressed? And
8 like I said, I would be a big advocate for psilocybin
9 therapy. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we will hear
11 from Kevin Jones followed by Rachel Sherrow.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

13 KEVIN JONES: Thank you. Good afternoon Chairman
14 Dromm and member of the City Council Committee on
15 Finance. My name is Kevin Jones, I am the Associate
16 State Director for Advocacy at AARP New York.
17 Representing 750,000 New York City members of AARP.
18 I want to thank you for providing me the opportunity
19 to testify at today's hearings. Where I will be
20 reiterating some of our priorities for the FY22
21 Adopted Budget and further underscoring the needs of
22 New York's 50 plus community as the city reopens and
23 recovers from COVID-19.

24 As many of you already know, older adults are one
25 the fastest growing populations in New York City and

1
2 will continue to make up a greater share of the
3 city's residents in the coming years. Despite the
4 growing need for aging related service throughout New
5 York City, the city's services and programming for
6 older adults remain chronically underfunded as the
7 Department for the Aging's budget continues to make
8 up less than half of a percent of the city's entire
9 budget.

10 These issues prior to the pandemic have only been
11 compounded as COVID-19 has brought about new
12 challenges and issues for the 50 plus. Specifically,
13 AARP is calling on the city to meet the unique needs
14 of 50 plus New Yorkers by making the following
15 investments in the final FY22 budget: Investing
16 \$16.6 million in additional funding for home
17 delivered meals, securing \$4.4 million in one time
18 funding to address the city's digital divide by
19 supporting technology services for senior centers and
20 expanding overall access to technology among New
21 Yorkers. Ensuring the \$10 million in funding, in
22 promised funding excuse me, for the model senior
23 center budget included in the FY22 budget to support
24 senior center staff and development. Supporting the
25 city's network of nonprofit and community-based

1 organizations that provide critical services to the
2 50 plus, specially by funding, fully funding the
3 Indirect Cost Rate Initiative for FY21, FY22 and
4 future years, as outlined in the Mayor's Executive
5 Budget. Creating a cost of living adjustment for all
6 human service contracts at a rate of three percent,
7 which would amount to \$48 million total for the
8 budget. Providing funding for comprehensive
9 emergency pay for human service workers, retroactive
10 to March 23, 2020. And lastly, AARP calls on the
11 city to restore and fully fund all City Council aging
12 related discretionary funds to FY20 levels to support
13 critical programs for older New Yorkers, specially to
14 support our seniors at \$5.1 million, the Geriatric
15 Mental Health Initiative at \$2.8 million, naturally
16 occurring retiring communities at \$5.4 million, the
17 Healthy Aging Initiative at just over -

18
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

20 KEVIN JONES: At \$3.3 million and immigrant
21 senior services at \$1.5 million. Thank you for
22 providing me the opportunity to testify today. I
23 will also provide this testimony in writing and I'm
24 happy to take any questions but thank you for all
25 your work.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Rachel
3 Sherrow followed by Katelyn Andrews.

4 RACHEL SHERROW: Hi, thank you for opportunity -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

6 RACHEL SHERROW: To speak. I, echoing AARP, city
7 meals will not be redundant. I am Rachel Sherrow
8 from City Meals on Wheels. I just want to emphasize
9 how devastating the pandemic has been on this
10 population disproportionately. Both regarding health
11 and social isolation, hunger and loneliness were both
12 issues before this crisis and will continue after.
13 We appreciate that this fact has been highlighted and
14 we hope more support will given to combat food
15 insecurity among the older adult population in New
16 York City. And as Kevin said, it is the fastest
17 growing population in the city and the country.

18 We will, the older adult population, will out
19 number those under 18 in less than 20 years. City
20 meals and Meal on Wheels is a vital lifeline to those
21 who are unable to shop or cook for themselves. We
22 have always known how critical our services and staff
23 are and listening to my colleagues who have spoken
24 for hours about this, we are the essential workers
25 and we need to make sure that these folks are

1 supported and that the recipients are not without
2 food and a friendly face.

3 We are requesting \$500,000 from Council for FY22
4 in order to continue this necessary work to ensure we
5 can get this emergency supplementary food to those
6 who are still afraid to go out. We don't know when
7 senior centers will reopen and we have not completed
8 the vaccinations that are needed for this vulnerable
9 population.
10

11 Thank you for your time today. I have submitted
12 my testimony and I am here to take questions. Thank
13 you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
15 from Katelyn Andrews followed by Melissa Sklarz.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

17 KATELYN ANDREWS: Hello, my name is Katelyn
18 Andrews, I am the Director of Public Policy here on
19 behalf of LiveOn New York. Thank you for the
20 opportunity to testify today.

21 LiveOn New York's members include more than 100
22 community-based nonprofits that provide core services
23 that allow older New Yorkers to thrive in our
24 communities as we age. As New York City begins to
25 emerge from the pandemic that took the lives of

1
2 thousands of individuals, many of whom were older
3 adults and as this budget, built upon millions in new
4 stimulus funds, will plant the seeds for our
5 recovery at-large, the stakes have rarely been
6 higher. With this in mind, LiveOn New York is
7 appreciative of the investments included in the
8 Executive Budget and prompted in many ways by the
9 Council's Preliminary Budget Response and years of
10 advocacy. Specifically, we're appreciative of the
11 decision to fully restore the Indirect Cost Rate, the
12 model Senior Center Budget Initiative and new funding
13 towards the Community Care Plan. However, given that
14 the Department for the Aging Budget remains at less
15 than one half of one percent of the overall city
16 budget, the city must go farther in its adopted
17 budget to truly set the trajectory for a recovery
18 that leads no New Yorker behind.

19 Centered around the inequities made apparent
20 during the pandemic, LiveOn New York proposes three
21 major investments to better address these issues.
22 One, \$16.6 million for the Home-Delivered Meals
23 Program, which is different from GetFood and serves
24 older New Yorkers who, due to chronic illness,
25 mobility limitation or disability, will remain

1
2 homebound long after COVID-19 subsides. This program
3 has been underfunded for years and lags far behind
4 the national average in funding. We need this
5 funding desperately.

6 \$4.4 million to address the digital divide, which
7 we have seen has been so troubling throughout the
8 pandemic.

9 \$48 million for Cost of Living Adjustment for
10 essential workers. This is across service providers,
11 not just for the Department for the Aging but we
12 recognize that all human service providers stepped up
13 throughout COVID-19 to support our communities and
14 deserve this investment. We also support
15 prioritizing staff hiring within HPD to continue the
16 historic progress made within the Administrations
17 affordable housing plan and we request a restoration
18 of Council discretionary funds to FY20 levels.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

20 KATELYN ANDREWS: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
22 from Melissa Sklarz followed by Shubhra Datta.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

24 MELISSA SKLARZ: Good afternoon, my name is
25 Melissa Sklarz, I am the Government Relations

1 Strategist to SAGE. Thank you for holding the
2 hearing the hearing today on the Executive Budget.
3 Thank you Chair Dromm. Council Member Chin, Speaker
4 Johnson and the entire Council for being champion for
5 LGBT elders and this long time commitment to SAGE.
6

7 SAGE is the country's first and largest
8 organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT
9 older people. Providing vital services for LGBT
10 elders and the older people living with AIDs.
11 Because of the support networks, LGBT older people
12 need to rely more on community service providers as
13 they age.

14 Over this last 14 months, we have seen firsthand
15 how the pandemic has drastically increased LGBT
16 elders' needs for services and supports. Throughout
17 the pandemic, SAGE has shifted capacity and resources
18 to adapt to programs and services for virtual and
19 telephonic delivery. SAGE exists to provide LGBT
20 elders with services through our SAGE Center and
21 through care management and related health, housing
22 and other services to ensure thousands of LGBT elders
23 can continue to stay engaged and stay connected.

24 In addition to our programs for LGBT elders, we
25 also support older LGBT Veterans through our SAGEVet

1
2 program. Through the pandemic SAGEVets has offered
3 one on one in group support or in virtual programming
4 to continuing to connect older LGBT veterans to the
5 community. LGBT veterans need and deserve affordable
6 welcoming housing with support from New York City
7 SAGE's open New York's first LGBT welcome affordable
8 elder housing. First Stonewall House in Fort Greene
9 Brooklyn in 2020 and this year Crotona Pride House in
10 the East Tremont section of the Bronx. Both
11 buildings are for 100 percent affordable apartments
12 for low-income elders with a portion of the units
13 specifically set aside for chronically homeless
14 elders.

15 Both residences have state-of-the-art SAGE
16 centers open to residents and members of the
17 surrounding community. SAGE requests a restoration
18 of our New York City Council funding with Fiscal Year
19 2020 levels.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 MELISSA SKLARZ: Support from the Council
22 supports our housing, our safe centers and our
23 programming.

24 These programs include restoration of Council
25 Initiative LGBT Senior Services restoration of Center

1
2 Program and Enhancement Initiative to support the
3 Windsor Center. Restoration of funding from the
4 Council's LGBT caucus. Restoration of the Veteran's
5 Community Development Fund to support SAGE vets and
6 finally, \$150,000 additional support to bridge the
7 gap between SAGE's current discretionary funding from
8 the Council in the need to help set up the SAGE
9 center at Crotona Pride House.

10 SAGE deeply values our partnership with the
11 Council. Thanks for your consideration. We value
12 your partnership and look forward to working with you
13 closely in the future.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Melissa. Good to
15 see you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Dromm, Council Member
17 Chin has a question.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, yeah, thank you
21 Chair Dromm. I don't really have a question. I
22 mean, I just want to thank the Senior Service
23 providers and advocates for you know LiveOn for
24 coming to testify to reiterate the needs at the
25 Executive Budget meeting with OMB. I raised all

1 those lists to them and the director was about it.
2 Then he said, we will work with you until adoption.
3 So, we still got a lot of work to do and I really am
4 thankful that we have Chair Dromm as our Finance
5 Chair. He is going to be working with me and my
6 other colleagues at the MT and we're going to make
7 sure that the senior budget this year, Chair Dromm,
8 it's got to go over that half a percent, okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, I hear you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, we got to do more than
11 \$500 million. That's our goal this year. So, I
12 thank all the advocates and continue to speak to all
13 the Council Members and continue the advocacy until
14 we get this final budget done. So, thank you
15 everyone.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from
17 Shubhra Datta followed by Danisha Harris.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

19 SHUBHRA DATTA: Thank you Council Member Dromm
20 and Council Members for the opportunity to testify
21 today. I am Shubhra Datta, Program Manager and
22 Community Outreach Supervisor at India Home. Who
23 serve South Asian older adult community with cultural
24 competent services and serve the Queens and broader
25

1
2 New York City community. Our community has been
3 through a lot in the past year with over 85,000
4 patients in New York City on New York Health +
5 Hospital system where COVID patients and from South
6 Asian background.

7 We also had one of the second highest persons
8 testing positive for COVID and the second highest
9 rate of hospitalization. Furthermore, the
10 intersection of being South Asian and being an older
11 adult has presented challenges for our community. In
12 New York City, 23 percent of AP seniors leaving
13 poverty, more than two in three seniors have limited
14 English proficiency. This is where India Home staff
15 seen and they provide cultural competent services for
16 the seniors during these difficult times. We have
17 provided information to our seniors through these
18 difficult times providing them with information about
19 getting tested as well as about adverse to getting
20 the vaccine. Concerning their vaccination hesitancy,
21 how to deal with that. We also distribute PPE to the
22 community. In total, we have reached out to a total
23 of more than 25,000 community members during our
24 COVID outreaches and distributed more than over
25 200,000 masks to our community.

1
2 We had made sure that people who speak Bengali,
3 Indi, Punjabi, Urdu, Telugu, New Pali, Spanish and
4 Mandarin all have access to this information with our
5 services.

6 With all the events that are going on despite the
7 Asian led organizations going above and beyond in the
8 past years, the fact still remains that over 15
9 percent of the city residents are -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 SHUBHRA DATTA: Asian Pacific American. So, we
12 request your administration to actually look into the
13 fact of giving us more opportunity and looking to the
14 budget in this regard. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Say hi to Dr. K.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Danisha
17 Harris followed by Juan Tucubal.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

19 DANISHA HARRIS: Hi, good afternoon everyone. My
20 name is Danisha Harris. I am 18-years-old. I'm with
21 Social Services and I am also here to talk about why
22 coaching, like coaching is helping me. And also, I
23 have been in care for two years now. I am in care
24 with a family member and coaching has helped me like
25 a lot. My coach is Egypt, he is like the best coach

1
2 I have ever asked for since like, this is my first
3 time especially being in foster care and actually
4 having someone by my side to help me with like school
5 and stuff like that. And it made a difference in my
6 life with me not struggling no more sometimes and
7 also, having someone to like, help me with you know
8 emails sent to my professors, uhm, making sure that I
9 have all my stuff finished in my classes and see if
10 my GPA is up there and all of that.

11 During COVID, it was actually kind of hard for me
12 because in 2019 I just went straight into college.
13 Mostly some kids say college is not for them but I
14 wanted to go to college because I wanted to make you
15 know, make a name for myself, I guess you can say.
16 And also to have - be the first child of dad's six
17 kids to have a college degree.

18 So, being in college, it kind of helped me and
19 then also seeing the struggles I've been through and
20 also, learning from them to make sure I pass my
21 semester. And the fall semester and spring semester.
22 So, I am glad that I have a Fair Future coach to help
23 me with that and I would feel kind of bad, kind of
24 feel sad if I don't have Egypt anymore to help me.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

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DANISHA HARRIS: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you want to say anything more or you're finished?

DANISHA HARRIS: I'd like to say something - no, I'm not actually, I wasn't finished.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Go ahead, finish up.

DANISHA HARRIS: Like, I feel like having a Fair Future coach would help any child in foster care because some parents are not able to pay for their student, for their child to go to college, they would have to do loans. And not everybody has the proper - had the exact income to put their child through college. So, I'm glad that I have her to do it and I'm glad I also have like a good support system. If I didn't, I don't know where I would be right now if I was in college. I might as well have some loans but I'm glad I don't because I have Egypt to help me and also everyone in the agency.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you and Egypt must be a very special person and Danisha you are a true power of example and I really enjoyed hearing what you said. And I think that the fact that you're in college and that you are working toward that degree speaks volumes about your character and about

1
2 your strength. So, good luck with that and thank you
3 so much for coming and giving your testimony. I
4 really deeply appreciate it. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Juan
6 [LOST AUDIO 6:26:52]

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: I'm sorry Moderator, you broke
8 up. We didn't hear the last witness.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: My apologies. Can you hear
10 me now?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
13 from Juan Tucubal followed by Shania Jeffrey.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

15 JUAN TUCUBAL: Good afternoon. My name is Juan
16 Tucubal. I am 20-years-old. I am living in Queens
17 Ozone Park. I want to testify about my experience of
18 having a Fair Future Coach.

19 So, my life before was hard and my future wasn't
20 clear for me because there was nobody to talk about
21 my future with me. Sometimes I want to do something
22 but I don't even know how to start or where to start.
23 The name of my Fair Future Coach is Mr. Gilani(SP?).
24 This means a lot for me to have him in my life
25 because he is always there for me. Sometimes I have

1
2 trouble with school or other issues and I have the
3 confidence to go and talk to him because he is
4 somebody that I trust. He always makes me feel
5 better when I am in a bad mood or when I am going
6 through a challenge. He is always there to motivate
7 me with advice or physical help.

8 Also, I'm not the only person in the agency that
9 I have helping me. There is also - in the agency,
10 there is also Mr. Mike that helped me to get a job to
11 be part of the Summer Youth Program. And Ms.
12 Haida(SP?) a person that is helping me a lot with
13 school. It's always, they are checking on me on what
14 is going on with school. And of course, my social
15 worker which is Ms. Baum.

16 A goal that they are helping me to achieve I
17 think is to be part of the Summer Youth Program
18 because they are helping during the process. For
19 example, they are helping with the application
20 process on my resume. Also preparing me for the
21 interview and of course they are helping me with my
22 goal with school. For example, for applying for
23 financial aid for college and they took me to basic
24 college. My coach has been so important to me during
25 the pandemic because for all students it's a

1
2 challenge to take classes on line because it's
3 something that they are not used to. It was hard for
4 me.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 JUAN TUCUBAL: To take classes online during the
7 pandemic but my coach was always there even though we
8 are not able to meet in person but we got to meet in
9 Zoom. I think it's important that New York City
10 baseline funding for Fair Future in the city budget
11 and ensure all youth people in care have access to
12 Fair Future support because it's very important to
13 have somebody to talk to them about their future and
14 their dream so they can be motivated to achieve their
15 goal.

16 Many young people have a dream or goal but they
17 need somebody to remind them that they can do it.
18 They need a push from someone. Sometimes we feel
19 that we are giving up but our coaches don't let us
20 give up. They make sure that they are in the right
21 way, especially in this situation with the pandemic.
22 Many young people would love to have a coach to
23 support them. Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much Juan and
25 I appreciate you coming in and giving testimony about

1
2 how important it is to have that coach, where they
3 can make a difference in your life. Thank you very,
4 very much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Shania
6 Jeffrey followed by Caitlin Delphin.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

8 SHANIA JEFFREY: Hi, what are we talking about?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Jeffrey, are you ready?

10 SHANIA JEFFREY: Yeah, I'm asking what are we
11 talking about.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uhm, you're registered to
13 testify at today's Executive Budget Hearing.

14 SHANIA JEFFREY: Huh?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You're registered to testify
16 at today's Executive Budget Hearing.

17 SHANIA JEFFREY: What is that?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Jeffrey, today we're
19 accepting testimony regarding the Fiscal 2022
20 Executive Budget for the City of New York. So, if
21 you have any comments regarding this years proposed
22 budget, we'd be happy to hear your testimony now.

23 SHANIA JEFFREY: I don't have testimony. I don't
24 know what your saying.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, thank you, then we'll
3 move onto the next person.

4 Thank you. We'll now move forward to Caitlin
5 Delphin followed by Bryan Cockrell.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

7 CAITLIN DELPHIN: Hi, thank you for having me
8 today. My name is Caitlin Delphin and I'm a Special
9 Education Teacher at a high school in Bensonhurst,
10 Brooklyn and I'm a member of Teachers Unite. And I
11 am here today to express my opposition to the
12 continued funding of policing in our schools.

13 As a teacher, I know that we need to fund more
14 teachers, counselors, social workers and restorative
15 justice professionals and reduce the number of police
16 in schools now.

17 Our budgets speak volumes about where we place
18 priorities and right now the budget is prioritizing
19 policing and surveillance over the health and welfare
20 and actual safety of our students. This has been a
21 long hard year for all of us and our children have
22 been impacted in a huge way. Despite this year's
23 difficulties we have all had moments in the classroom
24 of connection and joy and students letting their true
25 selves shine through. We need to building on these

1
2 positive moments and moving forward to help out
3 students begin to heal and create communities that
4 encourage connection and restorative processes.

5 My student have gained so many skills in the last
6 year including self-motivation time management,
7 multitasking on top of the academic skills and
8 learning that they are doing. Despite all of the
9 schedule changes and uncertainty that we've been
10 faced with all year.

11 But I am not at all right now concerned about an
12 achievement gap arising among our students. I am so
13 proud of everything they have accomplished over the
14 past year. I am amazed at the independence and
15 persistence that my high schoolers have shown. I
16 have seen them build skills and continue to learn in
17 a very difficult environment. However, I am
18 extremely concerned about the care gap that we are
19 showing them.

20 We are here at a time when many cities and towns
21 have made the decision to reduce or end the policing
22 in school and back those decisions with their budget.
23 And right now, in New York City, we are still
24 wavering on the shift of school safety to the DOE and
25 debating whether or not we are going hire more school

1
2 safety agents next year, which will continue to
3 perpetrate the systems of policing that cause
4 violence and harm to all of our students. And in
5 particular to our Black and Brown students and our
6 students with disabilities.

7 These students are seeing a city that is
8 beginning to slowly recover from the last year;
9 however, rather than resources to their recovery at
10 school, they are seeing the prioritizing of policing
11 over their health and education.

12 It will be apparent to my students from the very
13 moment they walk in through the doors in my school
14 that the city has prioritized policing.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 CAITLIN DELPHIN: The vast majority of my
17 students have not been in school for over a year and
18 they will be welcomed back by scanning, instead of
19 more social workers, more guidance counselors, more
20 teachers or more restorative justice coordinators. I
21 am here today to demand that in the Fiscal Year 2022
22 Budget, the city reject any spending on training new
23 school police and instead invest that in restorative
24 justice, social workers and guidance counselors and
25 teachers. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Bryan
3 Cockrell followed by Tabatha Holley.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

5 BRYAN COCKRELL: My name is Bryan Cockrell, I use
6 he, him pronouns and I am an ENL Teacher in the
7 Bronx. I am a member of Teachers Unite. I am asking
8 you to defund school policing, expand student access
9 to social and emotional supports and fully fund
10 restorative justice.

11 And when I say defund, I mean take away the funds
12 from the police and use them for services that allow
13 people to thrive and to address root causes of harm.
14 Moving school police to another department simply
15 reforms the police. That's not what I'm asking for.
16 I urge you to consider this question by Meriam Cava.
17 "What do we need to do to stop police from killing
18 Black people and others with impunity?"

19 Cava responds, "we can start by reducing people's
20 contact with police all together." When I am in my
21 school building I wonder, what vision of safety are
22 cops supposedly fulfilling in some peoples eyes? Is
23 it operating metal detectors? Because the New York
24 Civil Liberties Union says that the NYPD school
25 safety decision to vision, unfairly targets schools

1
2 attended by students of color in low-income
3 communities for metal detector screening. And I have
4 never seen cops in schools deescalate any conflict.
5 Instead, they have gotten upset with me when I asked
6 them to wear a mask and they have proudly shared with
7 me that they have the power to arrest. This is
8 punitive, not restorative justice.

9 Sometimes it feels like we are programed to
10 believe that cops keep us safe but history shows that
11 they protect and serve only the interest of White
12 supremacy.

13 I want for my school community safety that looks
14 like more restorative justice practice, counselors,
15 parent coordinators and youth advocates. Looking at
16 the history of this country, I encourage you to take
17 to heart this statement by Dillan Rodriguez that
18 abolition is an ethical obligation. People often
19 say, if I were alive centuries ago, I would have -
20 you don't have to imagine this, now is the time to
21 act and to fulfill an ethical obligation to build the
22 most nurturing compassionate and liberatory
23 experiences possible for people in our schools.

24 Drop all the charges against Prakash Churaman and
25 abolish policing. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What would you say to – let
3 me play devil's advocate here a little. To those of
4 you that mostly the School Safety Agent of color.
5 Did you hear me?

6 BRYAN COCKRELL: You're asking my response to
7 that question?

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, yes. Yes, I was
9 wondering how you would respond to that, because that
10 is something that's thrown out there.

11 BRYAN COCKRELL: I would respond first that
12 policing is inherently a racist institution looking
13 at the history of the U.S. and also, can we invest in
14 jobs that for people who want to work in schools,
15 that are caring positions that promote restorative
16 justice. Let's provide funding and support and
17 training for people in restorative and transformative
18 justice, rather than position –

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But you would rather. Are
20 you saying fire the School Safety Agents?

21 BRYAN COCKRELL: I'm saying, instead of them
22 serving as School Safety Agents or police, offer them
23 jobs and training in a position that not part of the
24 NYPD or some guys in policing but that is actually a
25

1
2 job in restorative and transformative justice that
3 does care rather than harm.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, take them out of uniform
5 basically?

6 BRYAN COCKRELL: Could you repeat your question?

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, take them out of
8 uniform. Take them out of uniform.

9 BRYAN COCKRELL: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

11 BRYAN COCKRELL: You're welcome.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Tabatha
13 Holley followed by Kate Hoy.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

15 TABATHA HOLLEY: Good afternoon Finance Chair
16 Dromm and the Committee on Finance. Thank you for
17 this opportunity to testify. My name is Tabatha
18 Holley, I am the Pastor of New Day Church, that is
19 primarily based in the Northwest Bronx. I live in
20 City Council District 8. Last summer, the police
21 that you pay with the people's money terrorized
22 entire neighborhoods. To add insult to injury, many
23 of your peers had the audacity to lie about what you
24 actually cut in last year's budget and you funneled
25 money into the terror of Black and Brown students in

1
2 the Bronx and around the city, which explains today's
3 pressure around police free schools.

4 You have a duty to repent for your wicked and
5 simply ways this year and I have the sacred duty to
6 tell you the truth. This is the people's budget and
7 for those who are serving your last term, this is
8 your last opportunity to repent now for the ways that
9 you have used this money and abused it and to repair
10 harm.

11 In the COVID-19 pandemic, I have watched
12 community members on their own dime feed each other.
13 I have watched community members own their own dime,
14 navigate and negotiate violent and nonviolent
15 conflict, so that they wouldn't have to call in
16 incompetent and unequip officers of the state.

17 In this pandemic, we have watched restorative
18 justice practitioners and social workers across this
19 city navigate entirely new terrain in the context of
20 a global pandemic. We have watched communities come
21 together on their own dime and be present for those
22 experiencing mental health crisis.

23 We have watched families come together on their
24 own dime, to do the work of supporting young people
25 to thrive in this pandemic and now it is time for you

1
2 to do your part. If you allow a \$200 million
3 increase for the NYPD, there will be blood on your
4 hands. There is yet a better way. Pay the people
5 back. Invest in the community groups that have been
6 doing this work for little to nothing or else
7 continue to prove inefficiency of this system, a
8 policing route in White supremacist violence and
9 terror.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 TABATHA HOLLEY: Defund the NYPD and pay the
12 people back. Cut the NYPD budget and police force by
13 50 percent. Freeze all new hiring and overtime to
14 free up money for communities. Police must be
15 removed from our schools, our mental health and our
16 drug use response, our subways, homeless outreach,
17 public shelters. We must invest in robust public
18 health and community services. Pay the people back.
19 Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
21 from Kate Hoy followed by Christopher Trieber.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

23 KATE HOY: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members
24 of the Committee on Finance. My name is Kate Hoy, I
25 live in Greenpoint Brooklyn. I am the Director of

1
2 Advocacy Services at AHRC New York City. AHRC is a
3 family governed organization and one of the first and
4 largest social service agencies in the country
5 serving individuals with disabilities and their
6 families.

7 I am here today on behalf of the 250 plus
8 families, students and professionals I work with each
9 year in my capacity as an Education Advocate. I am
10 in solidarity with the ARISE Coalition of which I am
11 a proud member.

12 The city cannot wait until 2023 to fund preschool
13 special education program seats and it must commit
14 this year to salary parity for its 4410 preschool
15 special education teachers.

16 Preschool special education teachers require more
17 training and must obtain the same level of
18 certification as other special education providers.
19 Yet they are paid much less. Often tens of thousands
20 of dollars less while required to do much more for
21 their students. The Department of Education's own
22 policy guidance says it best. Preschool children in
23 special classes receive IEP recommendations and
24 program placement fund the local CPSE.

1
2 Children in special classes have considerable
3 educational needs, which require a comprehensive
4 special education program to meet their IEP goals.
5 These children require more adult support, more
6 attention, more direction and more supervision that
7 is typical in general education settings to benefit
8 from the instructional program.

9 Please note, parents do not choose the program
10 that their child attends. These children are New
11 York City children, are placed by CPSE staff and soon
12 by a centralized enrollment office. Into an
13 appropriate special education program that can meet
14 their child's IEP mandate.

15 While the program may be appropriate, it cannot
16 be equitable if its teachers are paid significantly
17 less to educate children with the most significant
18 disabilities.

19 I urge you to fund salary parity for preschool
20 special education teachers for Fiscal Year 2022. We
21 cannot delay. Our children cannot and will not wait.
22 We will all remember the choices made when it
23 mattered most and when our elective leaders had it
24 within their power to change our children's future
25 for the better.

1
2 Please commit to preschool special education
3 salary parity now. Thank you very much Chair Dromm
4 and to the Committee for your time today.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
6 from Christopher Trieber followed by Carolyn
7 Cleveland.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

9 CHRISTOPHER TRIEBER: Good afternoon Council
10 Member Dromm and members of the Finance Committee.
11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.
12 My name is Christopher Trieber, I am the Associate
13 Executive Director for Children's Services with
14 Interagency Council. We are a nonprofit membership
15 association with more than 130 agencies that serve
16 children and adults with developmental disabilities
17 in New York City and the metropolitan area.

18 My testimony today focus on preschool special
19 education and the children and families who depend on
20 these critical services. Special Education 4410
21 preschool provides special education services to
22 children with disabilities ages three to five. Many
23 of these young children have been diagnosed with
24 autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy and other
25 developmental disabilities.

1
2 Every child who attends a 4410 special education
3 preschool program are public school children. Our
4 4410 preschools are 86 percent of all New York City
5 children ages three to five who need preschool
6 special education. They are a vital resource to the
7 City of New York but they haven't been treated that
8 way. The salary parity agreement which was a
9 significant accomplishment in New York City for
10 teachers in early childhood programs have left out
11 our teachers and it has a devastating impact on our
12 programs. We are calling on the City Council and New
13 York City to address this exclusion and provide funds
14 in this years budget to ensure that certified special
15 education teachers in 4410 preschool special
16 education programs, receive the same pay raises as
17 all other early childhood teachers.

18 Our teachers believe they have been forgotten by
19 the city and we ask that you not forget our preschool
20 children with developmental disabilities and our
21 teachers who provide these critical services.

22 Teachers in all preschools are paid almost 40 percent
23 less than what teachers in public schools get paid.
24 Our schools are facing a staffing crisis and it's
25 getting worse. Right now, our schools have enough

1
2 teachers to staff their classrooms, only because
3 there is limited numbers of children in the rooms
4 right now. However, in September, when all the
5 children come back, we are very concerned that there
6 will not be enough teachers to open all the
7 classrooms.

8 The struggle to recruit and retain certified
9 teachers is making it increasingly difficult for our
10 schools to continue to provide a quality education
11 and we have schools right now that are considering
12 closure because they can't recruit special education
13 teachers. We are generally concerned that if nothing
14 is done to address this issue and provide sufficient
15 funding for our schools, more preschools will close
16 their doors and children will sit at home and wait.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 CHRISTOPHER TRIEBER: Just one more minute. In
19 the Mayor's Executive Budget, there's additional
20 funds to support preschool special education but not
21 one dollar allocated to address salary parity for our
22 4410 teachers. This is unacceptable. It's time to
23 address salary parity for teachers in early childhood
24 special education preschool programs. We urge the
25 City Council to include \$85 million in the final

1
2 budget for preschool special education to commit to
3 salary parity for our teachers and ensure that there
4 is a sit for every preschool child who needs one in
5 September. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Carolyn
7 Cleveland followed by Jeanne Alter.

8 CAROLYN CLEVELAND: Hi, I want to thank the
9 Council and Chair Dromm for the opportunity to be
10 here and I want to thank Chris Trieber for his
11 testimony, which is directly linked to my own.

12 My name is Carolyn Cleveland and I am the Chief
13 Operating Officer at the Kennedy Children Center. We
14 are a 4410 special education preschool program
15 serving nearly 400 children in East Harlem and the
16 Bronx and I am here to address the critical shortage
17 of teaching staff in programs like ours, and the need
18 for salary parity for 4410 teachers.

19 Teachers at our programs have the same
20 educational and certification requirements as
21 teachers in DOE programs and yet as we've heard, they
22 are paid 30 percent to 40 percent less. Our student
23 population is overwhelmingly children of color from
24 low-income households. Over 40 percent of our
25 students are bilingual, all with special needs.

1
2 Because these unequal pay rates make it almost
3 impossible to attract experienced teachers, this
4 means that many of New York City's most challenged
5 and vulnerable students are being taught by teachers
6 who are young, inexperienced and uncertified.

7 We're working to address the teacher shortage
8 with our Grow Your Own program, which trains low-
9 income adults to become certified teacher assistants
10 and teachers. Grow Your Own is a powerful tool for
11 bringing more diverse candidates into the teaching
12 field. But without salary parity, 4410 programs like
13 ours will never be able to retain the teachers that
14 our students need to succeed.

15 The current Executive Budget includes an
16 investment of \$22 million in FY22, and \$88 million in
17 FY23. But the FY22 budget does not include any money
18 to address the critical shortage of preschool special
19 education seats and it increases pay for some
20 teachers while ignoring 4410 teachers. This is not
21 fair to these dedicated teachers or to their
22 students, who will fall even further behind if this
23 inequity is not addressed. It is vital that the
24 final FY22 budget include \$85 million to fulfill the
25 demand for preschool special education services and

1
2 provide salary parity to our teachers, as recommended
3 in the City Council's response to the preliminary
4 budget.

5 Thank you so much for your time.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
7 from Jeanne Alter followed by Joyce Glassman.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

9 JEANNE ALTER: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
10 Jeanne Alter and I am the Executive Director of
11 Kennedy Children's Center, which is located in East
12 Harlem and the South Bronx.

13 I have been working in New York City 4410
14 programs for 30 years and this issue is so near and
15 dear to my heart as both the teacher and the
16 administrator. Who will teach our children? I ask
17 this question every day. Because we all agree that
18 every child has the right to qualified, certified
19 teachers. And there is not a shortage of early
20 childhood teachers who care about young children with
21 special needs but there is a lack of funding and
22 support for these teachers who want to work with
23 these young and vulnerable learners.

24 The current Executive Budget, which I was glad to
25 see does includes a new investment of \$22 million in

1
2 Fiscal Year '22 and \$88 million in Fiscal '23. And
3 while I am pleased to see New York City make this
4 much needed investment, the '22 budget does not
5 include any money to address both the shortage of
6 classes for our children or the salary parity that
7 you have now heard many of my colleagues speak about.
8 New York City Early Childhood Special Ed has been
9 dealing with this problem for 30 years. If we really
10 want to deal with educational equity for both typical
11 and children with special needs in all neighborhoods
12 in New York City, then we need to address it through
13 funding.

14 For the past five years, we've been operating our
15 own, privately funded GYO program that is helping to
16 put quality teachers in front of the children that
17 need them the most. We have a solution to recruit
18 and train new teachers but without fair compensation,
19 will not retain them in our schools. Teaching young
20 children with special needs is not for everyone. We
21 have dedicated and capable teachers who are
22 specifically trained to work with children with
23 significant language delays, autistic spectrum
24 disorders and behavioral challenges.

1
2 Why should these teachers make any less than
3 teachers who teach developing children in the New
4 York City Department of Ed? Why are New York City
5 preschool children with special needs sitting at
6 home, when we know how vulnerable they are and how
7 early education is the one of the most absolute
8 things that we agree on that's a solution to their
9 success and future?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 JEANNE ALTER: Let me just close, thank you.
12 Insufficient funding and a lack of certified teachers
13 has led us to this crisis but we have an opportunity
14 through the private funds that are available and help
15 these children. I have spent my career fighting for
16 the needs of these children and families in New York
17 City and I will continue to be a voice for the
18 urgency and importance of the 4410 community. Thank
19 you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Joyce
21 Glassman.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

23 JOYCE GLASSMAN: Good afternoon Chairman Dromm
24 and Council Members. I am Joyce Glassman and I am
25 glad that I have this opportunity to amplify the

1
2 messages from some of my colleges. I am a Special
3 Education Teacher and Administer. I have worked for
4 almost 50 years with PreK kids with disabilities who
5 attend community-based organizations.

6 I lead the New York City Coalition for children
7 with special needs, an organization of about 75 CBO's
8 working with disabled preschoolers. For three
9 decades, these CBO's contracted through the DOE to
10 provide special education services to the majority of
11 New York City's disabled preschool students.

12 I have seen how skilled teachers can make a
13 difference. Our disabled preschool students need
14 specialized help to learn the same things as every
15 children. How to communicate their needs, be
16 increasingly independent, how to share and be fair.
17 Our hard work results in positive changes, even
18 occasional miracles. Highly qualified teachers are
19 needed to provide young disabled children with the
20 quality of services they need to learn and make the
21 progress their families are so desperately seeking.
22 But the teachers working with DOE contracted CBO's
23 are not being treated fairly. The lack salary parity
24 with all other early childhood educators working
25 under DOE contracts.

1
2 We constantly lose teachers to other DOE early
3 childhood options that get paid more and more. With
4 the outqualified teachers, our programs cannot
5 function. All of this time and there already not
6 enough preschool special education classes to meet
7 the needs of young children. Salary unfairness also
8 discriminates against our disabled students by
9 robbing them of the skilled teachers they need to
10 realize their full potential. Every child needs a
11 seat and every CBO Special Education teacher needs to
12 be paid fairly.

13 Please ensure that the final budgets for both
14 FY22 and FY23 include \$85 million to ensure preschool
15 special education class seats for every child who
16 needs one and to pay preschool special education
17 teachers the same salary as other early childhood
18 teachers. Preschoolers try to be fair, it's past
19 time for us to be fair as well. Thank you for your
20 time and attention.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
22 from Jolene Gunther-Doherty followed by Ramandeep
23 Kaur.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.
25

1
2 JOLENE GUNTHER-DOHERTY: Hello, I am here to
3 speak as a community-based 4410 Preschool Special
4 Education Program Director. I ask that the final
5 Fiscal Year 2022 budget include \$85 million to
6 address the preschool special education class
7 shortage and most importantly provide salary parity
8 to teachers of preschool special education classes at
9 community-based organizations like mine, as already
10 recommended in the City Council's response to the
11 preliminary budget.

12 The Executive Budget includes a new investment of
13 \$22 million in Fiscal Year 2022, going up to \$88
14 million in Fiscal Year 2023, for preschool special
15 education. While I am pleased to see an investment
16 in preschool special education and support several of
17 the initiatives proposed, there is no funding slated
18 for Fiscal Year 2022 to provide salary parity to our
19 preschool special education teachers. And still no
20 commitment to providing salary parity even in Fiscal
21 Year 2023.

22 Under the city's salary parity agreement, other
23 early childhood teachers will receive salary
24 increases in October 2021, and this will be a
25 difference of \$20,000 on average, which would lead

1
2 many of our preschool special ed class teachers to
3 flock to general education classes and leave children
4 with disabilities without teachers.

5 I had one classroom that went through three
6 teachers in a year. I just had another teacher leave
7 this month. Not because these teachers wanted to but
8 because they needed to be able to financially support
9 their families. Preschoolers with significant
10 disabilities should not have to wait another year for
11 the city to make needed investments in 4410 Preschool
12 programs. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
14 from Ramandeep Kaur.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 RAMANDEEP KAUR: Good afternoon, my name is
17 Ramandeep Kaur, I'm a Policy Associate with the New
18 York Public Interest Research Group and a student at
19 CUNY's City College of New York. Thank you for the
20 opportunity to testify.

21 COVID-19 has had major impacts on students and
22 higher education institutions. In the immediate,
23 schools closed and classes and student activities
24 abruptly moved to virtual formats. Many students
25

1
2 have found the transition particularly taxing to
3 their mental health.

4 Despite these challenges, a college-educated
5 workforce is key for supporting a just recovery for
6 individuals and nurturing an economy strained by
7 COVID-19. CUNY is a lifeline for working class New
8 Yorkers and people of color. But unfortunately Mayor
9 de Blasio's Executive Budget includes a \$67 million
10 cut to CUNY's community colleges, eliminating funding
11 for vital mental health and academic counselors and
12 cutting programs that help students graduate and
13 thrive, such as campus childcare, and remediation
14 programs.

15 We are glad to hear that CUNY ASAP funding is
16 being restored. Through providing one-on-one
17 advisement, specialized workshops, tuition assistance
18 and covering MetroCard and textbook costs, ASAP has
19 helped students stay on track.

20 The New Deal for CUNY is about broadening that
21 paradigm for all students. All students should have
22 access to regular advisement, smaller classes and
23 getting the classes they need to graduate.

24 Additionally, all students who need it should
25 have access to responsive mental health counseling.

1
2 Even before the pandemic began, between 2009 and
3 2015, visits to campus mental health centers climbed
4 by 30 percent. We urge the City Council to enact a
5 final budget which provides a \$20.4 million in new
6 investments to help the University begin to meet the
7 minimum ratios of mental health counselors, academic
8 advisors and full-time faculty to students that are
9 required in the New Deal for CUNY.

10 Additionally, community colleges support more
11 access to postsecondary education, enroll more
12 students of color and low-income students and
13 contribute to the development of an educated
14 citizenry and skilled workforce.

15 Although the city has stepped up in previous
16 years to take steps to stabilize communities in
17 community college funding, New York still charges one
18 of the highest public community college average
19 tuition.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 RAMANDEEP KAUR: I'll just take a few more
22 seconds and wrap it up. We urge the City Council to
23 enact a final budget which commits an additional \$40
24 million to hold community college budgets harmless
25 from the tuition losses from the pandemic-related

1
2 enrollment dips, as requested by the CUNY
3 administration.

4 Furthermore, the pandemic has also driven the
5 hunger crisis in New York to new levels. The number
6 of food-insecure New York City residents has doubled
7 since the onset of the pandemic. The level of worry
8 CUNY students have about running out of food because
9 of lack of money was more than three times higher in
10 2020 than in 2018.

11 We urge the City Council to enact a final budget
12 which fully funds City Council supported initiatives
13 including campus childcare centers, the Merit
14 Scholarship Program and the Council's CUNY Food
15 Insecurity Pilot Program, which should be brought
16 back to serve more students. Thank you for
17 listening.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
19 from Nia Morgan followed by Darren Mack.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 NIA MORGAN: Hello, my name is Nia Morgan and I
22 am the Research and Operations Coordinator with the
23 Urban Collaborative. A college made up of student
24 leaders from across city for police free schools.
25

1
2 I am testifying today on behalf of the Coalition
3 to urge you to divest from school policing and invest
4 in student care. Today's the anniversary of the
5 police murder of George Floyd. Since the last time
6 leaders and I testified for police free schools two
7 months ago, we have witnessed a police murder of four
8 young people. [INAUDIBLE 7:01:06] 20, Ann Polito 13,
9 [INAUDIBLE 7:01:08] 16 and Anthony Thompson Jr. 17,
10 who was murdered by police in his school.

11 It should be no surprise that for many students,
12 especially students of color, police in schools do
13 not represent safety.

14 If the city is said to once again, spend nearly
15 \$450 million on school policing next year. Sending
16 these students back to school in September after a
17 traumatic year but with police violence in a global
18 pandemic, to be greeted by metal detectors and school
19 police. Shame on the city.

20 With the influx of money from the state and
21 federal governments for education, this is not the
22 time to continue investing in the racist, harmful,
23 ineffective and costly system of school policing. It
24 is not enough to invest some money in support staff
25 without addressing the toll it's placing on youth.

1
2 Two weeks ago at the Public Safety Committee's
3 Budget Hearing, the NYPD Deputy Chief of School
4 Safety Division say that 554 school police positions
5 have been lost since January 2020. This is equal to
6 about \$50 million that is currently in the school
7 safety division budget for FY22. The Council should
8 reinvest this \$50 million with the staff and programs
9 to support students.

10 Lead this money to meaningfully fund student
11 care. New York City has never fully funded the short
12 of justice practices. Now, the Council and its
13 preliminary budget response is calling for about \$50
14 million for restorative justice practices. While the
15 Mayor is calling for about \$12 million for it. We're
16 calling for \$118 million so that we can fully fund
17 and implement RJ and 500 high schools, the
18 coordinators, trainings, curriculum and more. We're
19 calling for \$162 million to ensure that there is one
20 social worker and guidance counselor per 150
21 students. We need \$50 million mental health
22 continuum and we need \$15 million for college access
23 programs. We urge you to work towards police free
24 school by rejecting to hire any new school police and
25 reinvest this money into real solutions that will

1
2 make New York City a more equitable place to live,
3 learn and grow. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
5 from Darren Mack followed by Sarita Daftary.

6 DARREN MACK: Thank you so much.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 DARREN MACK: Thank you so much for this
9 opportunity to testify Chairman and members of the
10 Council. I am Darren Mack, Co-Director of Freedom
11 Agenda, which is a member-led project, dedicated to
12 organizing people and communities directly impacted
13 by incarceration to achieve decarceration and system
14 transformation. I am also a survivor of Rikers
15 Island.

16 The failures of the city to address DOC staff
17 misconduct, abuse and mismanagement has led to a
18 Federal Monitor, which reported what survivors of
19 Rikers have known for far too long, that is more
20 C.O.s equals more abuse. According to the 11th Nunez
21 Federal monitor, "The size of the Department's
22 complement of staff, particularly the number assigned
23 to the jails, is highly unusual and is one of the
24 richest staffing ratios among the systems with which
25 the Monitoring Team has had experience.

1
2 This is true even with the unusually high number
3 of Staff who have not reported to work due to chronic
4 illness, COVID-19 and other reasons."

5 Also, the Monitor reported that, "The Department
6 struggles to manage its large number of Staff
7 productively, to deploy them effectively, to
8 supervise them responsibly and to elevate the base
9 level of skill of its Staff. All of this has a
10 direct impact on the Department's ability to reduce
11 the level of violence and ensure the safety and well-
12 being of staff and incarcerated individuals."

13 So, this report also points out what I
14 experienced in Rikers Island during my 19-months
15 incarcerated there as teenager, when the population
16 was over 20,000 people detained and no spotlight, no
17 monitor and no concern during that time, which is
18 that DOC does not hold their staff accountable.

19 So, I encourage you - I am encouraging that the
20 City Council to reject the proposed \$160 million
21 increase in C.O.s and redirect -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 DARREN MACK: I am almost finished. Redirect
24 those resources towards violence interrupters and
25 credible messengers, you know who can reach those

1
2 people and communities like the South Bronx,
3 Brownsville, the Stapleton that are hard to reach by
4 other city agencies. Non police responses to people
5 with serious mental health issues like the CAHOOTS
6 program in Eugene, Oregon. Parks, libraries and last
7 but not least, the Community Land Trust. Cancel the
8 proposed new class, deflate DOCs bloated budgeted and
9 invest in impacted communities that have been
10 historically under-resourced. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Darren for your
12 advocacy and you are absolutely right that the
13 Monitor's Report, Mr. Martin's Report was damning of
14 the DOC Administration and leadership there. Just
15 absolutely horrible and I look forward to continuing
16 to work with you to fight for justice on Rikers
17 Island and for all incarcerated individuals. Thank
18 you Darren.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Sarita
20 Dafftary followed by Lois Lee.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 SARITA DAFFTARY: Thank you. Good evening Chair
23 Dromm. Nice to see you and I will just be picking up
24 a bit on where my Co-Director Darren left off.

25

1
2 My name is Sarita Dafftary, I am Co-Director
3 Freedom Agenda and I will be sending detailed written
4 testimony but I just want to highlight something
5 that's been very apparent today. You know, if
6 schools and libraries and arts organizations and
7 students and young people and immigrant communities
8 and Black communities and disabled people and all of
9 those folks who spoke today do not get the funding
10 that they clearly need, it will not be because we
11 don't have enough money. It will be because the city
12 has failed to end its reliance on a policing and
13 jail-based economy.

14 And I know that Council Member Dromm and several
15 other Council Members on this call want to prevent
16 that failure and we're really going to need your
17 leadership this year. I want to focus on the
18 Department of Correction Budget. In written
19 testimony we'll share our deflate DOC report, a
20 report from the Vera Institute on DOC's budget, the
21 Monitor's report, which you have already seen Chair
22 Dromm. The other Council Members should look at as
23 well. They all tell the same story. New York City
24 runs by far the most expensive and the most richly
25

1
2 staffed jail system in the nation, with the worst
3 results.

4 Our members have been leaders in the movement to
5 close Rikers Island, which has always been about more
6 than physical buildings and the Council Members who
7 stood with us know that. What our members ultimately
8 want is to see the money that has been funneled into
9 DOC, redirected to address the root causes of
10 incarceration and it is past time to start on that.
11 And that hasn't been happening. The number of people
12 in jails dropping DOC budget hasn't budged. This
13 Council must resist any attempt to grow DOC's
14 operations budget. Including the Mayor's outrageous
15 agreement with COLA to hire 400 new officers.

16 Allowing an increase in DOC's operations budget
17 at this moment would send entirely the wrong message
18 in a couple of ways. First, it would send a message
19 that a perceived staffing shortage that is created,
20 completely created by failed and absent management
21 will be rewarded by more resources. The Council
22 cannot—

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 SARITA DAFFTARY: Uh, I'll wrap up. Second, it
25 sends a message that the city plans to double down on

1
2 the jail based economy that has harmed communities of
3 color, including of course incarcerated people, but
4 also people who work in the toxic environment of DOC
5 solely because it was the best paying job available
6 to them. If the city had proactively initiated a
7 just transition, offering training for C.O.'s to
8 prepare for other jobs, combined with a commitment to
9 better compensate the jobs that folks have been
10 talking about all day. You know, non-law enforcement
11 jobs that are clearly essential, like human services,
12 parks workers, healthcare workers. If the city had
13 initiated that transition, we could have already
14 freed up \$1 billion in annual jail costs to spend on
15 everything else that we talked about all day.

16 So, while the Mayor's budget proposal makes it
17 clear he is not taking leadership to move the city
18 towards a just transition, the Council must at least
19 prevent him from moving us in the opposite direction.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Sarita and the battle
22 continues. You know, it's insane that we're
23 spending, you know that we are the most expensive and
24 I have to get your exact wording there. And yet, we
25

1
2 have the worst results. It's - I just can't explain
3 it but look forward to continuing the fight with you.

4 SARITA DAFTARY: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lois
6 Lee followed by Christina Gavin.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 LOIS LEE: Can you hear me? Can you hear me?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can now.

10 LOIS LEE: Okay, hi Danny, it's always good to
11 see you and I am Lois Lee, representing CPC. It is a
12 - okay, so I am going to speak on three things. Fair
13 Student Funding. Can you still hear me with that
14 background - can you hear me? Okay.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Excuse me Ms. Lee, this is
16 Chief Sergeant at Arms Rafael Perez. It sounds like
17 you may have - you are playing the hearing in the
18 background and we are getting some serious feedback.

19 LOIS LEE: Okay, shut that off?

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, please. Yes, thank you.

21 LOIS LEE: Can you shut that off? Okay, can you
22 hear me now?

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: No, we're still getting the
24 feedback. Okay, now, we don't hear you at all now.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll circle back to Lois Lee when she is able to adjust her audio issues. Next panelist is Christina Gavin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Gavin?

CHRISTINA GAVIN: Yes, can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can. We're ready for your testimony.

CHRISTINA GAVIN: Okay, thanks. My name is Christina Gavin, I am one of two Campus librarians at a Campus of six high schools in the northeast Bronx. We're located in Westchester Square. When we're not in a global pandemic, my students enjoy accessing a library that's full of contemporary books in different languages and formats, lots of graphic novels, tons of manga, board games, arts and crafts materials and computers.

The library is home to multiple clubs, we posted author visits where students from the entire campus come together to meet an author, ask questions about becoming writers themselves and have books signed. We've actually had three virtual author visits featuring LGBTQ writers during the pandemic, thanks

1
2 to the DOE Office of Library Services and Lambda
3 Literary.

4 Our library was recently remodeled. It's a
5 wonderful space where my students can exist, learn,
6 explore and create without worrying about grades or
7 wrong answers. And school librarians also
8 collaborate with classroom teachers to provide
9 instruction across the city and libraries, the only
10 shared instructional resource in our campus of
11 schools.

12 Unfortunately, though this is my ninth year in
13 the DOE. I worked for five years as a Special
14 Education Teacher at three different school buildings
15 here in the Bronx and this is the first building I've
16 worked in that had a functional library. Many of my
17 students report, this is the first time they have had
18 access to a library in their school or they had one
19 in elementary but not in middle or vice versa. And
20 this is a common refrain across the city.

21 The New York State Commissioner of Education's
22 Regulations mandate that every school in New York
23 State have a school library staffed by a pedagogue
24 and that every secondary school have a certified
25 school librarian. In many regards, New York City is

1
2 the most important city in our country but we not
3 leading in school library access. There are about
4 1,800 schools but only about 200 certified school
5 librarians. The Harlem Council of Elders frequently
6 cites at about 90 percent of Harlem secondary schools
7 do not have librarians.

8 With the influx of full Fair Student funding and
9 stimulus funds, now is the perfect time to correct
10 this inequity. Increase funding for alternative and
11 subsidized training programs for school librarians
12 provide funding to create school libraries and
13 require that all New York City public schools be in
14 compliance with state laws, to provide school library
15 access equitably for all students. Every New York
16 City public school student deserves a librarian in
17 every school.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just before you go -

21 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just want to see where you
23 are. Okay, uhm, there you are, okay. Christina
24 Gavin right?

25 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Yes.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah okay, that was a great
3 testimony and you're absolutely right and we've had
4 hearings on the situation with librarians and when I
5 was a teacher, I was a teacher for 25 years before I
6 got elected to the Council. What happened in my
7 school was that they cleared out the libraries so
8 that they could create a computer room. And it
9 shouldn't be that you have one or the other, you
10 should really be able to have both. And so, that's
11 something that we are fighting and we continue to
12 fight.

13 And also, yes, the DOE brought the literary to
14 you but the City Council funded it, so.

15 CHRISTINA GAVIN: I know, I remember it.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's -

17 CHRISTINA GAVIN: And it's unfortunate when a
18 school would chose a computer lab over a library
19 because that's also in violation of NYCIG
20 Commissioner Regulations 91.1 91.2 that say every
21 school needs a library, every secondary needs a
22 school librarian.

23 And schools should not have the option to pick
24 and choose which mandates they are going to follow

25

1
2 because then it trickles down to our students, they
3 don't have equitable access - [DOGS BARKING 7:15:34]

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Those are my dogs. I just
5 wanted to offer you, if you are interested in, as you
6 can see history, get in touch with me and I am going
7 to refer you to Eric at the DOE. He's the LGBTQ
8 Liaison.

9 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Oh, I know. We're Face bookers
10 together.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright, so he definitely has
12 some stuff on LGBT history. So, glad you were able
13 to take advantage.

14 CHRISTINA GAVIN: I just left my schools GSA
15 meetings to switch over to the hearing.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, you have to invite me
17 there. You have to get me out there.

18 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Oh, great. We would love to
19 have you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I would love to come,
21 yeah. Thank you so much for your testimony.

22 CHRISTINA GAVIN: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Debbie
24 Meyer followed by Mark Gonsalves.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 DEBBIE MEYER: Thank you. I'm Debbie Meyer and
3 I'm once again a public school parent. I'm also a
4 member of ARISE. Thank you for the opportunity to
5 speak and listen to the story.

6 When he was almost three-years-old, my son looked
7 up at a sign and said, "MTA spells BUS". This was
8 pre-reading, I was told. And he could not hear
9 rhymes and hated Dr. Seuss. He hated Sesame Street.
10 He liked shows with plots. Often, people couldn't
11 understand him and he had a big vocabulary. And he
12 hid his need for speech therapy from all, including
13 his doctor.

14 His pre-K teacher was concerned that he didn't
15 know his colors, although his health form clearly
16 stated that he was colorblind. She didn't mind that
17 he was not able to segment words into sounds, the
18 first stage of reading. She did say he was bright
19 and a joy to teach. I thought I had won the lottery
20 when Isaac was accepted to a public progressive
21 school. He memorized books in the baggies. We read
22 to him aloud but he couldn't read himself.

23 His kindergarten teacher told us he was bright
24 and a joy to teach. In first grade, he was clearly
25 struggling. Our school's response? They had Isaac

1
2 attend a one-week summer program at school for
3 teacher professional development in teaching reading.
4 He was not the only struggling reader there. In
5 second grade, a school evaluation showed he was
6 indeed bright but couldn't read or express himself in
7 writing near grade level. We mentioned to the school
8 team that dyslexia runs in our family. We were
9 hushed as though dyslexia didn't exist. The team
10 told us he would do fine in a co-teaching classroom
11 but he did not. Neither did many others.

12 So, we enrolled him in a specialized school which
13 has its own teacher training institute and we sued
14 the city for a tuition. Now, my son knows how words
15 work. He can read. He learned how to write,
16 research and take notes. His frustration dissipated.
17 He was no longer suicidal. He is now a sophomore at
18 Bard Manhattan.

19 But what about all the kids he left behind? The
20 ones without parents who can advocate or have
21 resources to spend. What about the kids that are
22 both victims of poor instruction and low expectations
23 and demic with our systemic -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

25

1
2 DEBBIE MEYER: Why don't teaching colleges teach
3 teachers how to teach reading? Why with all the
4 evidence is there still controversy over how to teach
5 kids to read? Dyslexic students are the canaries in
6 the coalmine. Why are we okay with teaching just
7 one-third of students to read? This is not only seen
8 in test scores. It's seen in the high cost of
9 remediation. High cost of special ed and elementary
10 school, middle school, high school. Adult literacy
11 programs and the dyslexia and the literacy rates in
12 prison and among the homeless.

13 The school to prison pipeline starts in early
14 education. It starts with literacy instruction.
15 Let's invest in evidence-based literacy instruction
16 at CUNY teaching colleges and at the DOE. And let's
17 save in Special Education, safe in incarceration and
18 safe in homeless services. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
20 from Mark Gonsalves and circle back to Lois Lee.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 MARK GONSALVES: Thank you Chair Dromm and all
23 Council Members. My name is Mark Gonsalves and I am
24 a parent with two children. One that goes to our
25 local elementary school and one that goes to an 853

1
2 school. With this budget that Council has a chance
3 to do something they have never done before, end
4 discrimination of students with disabilities.

5 My other son Josh is 11-years-old. He is on the
6 autism spectrum. We had planned for him to go to our
7 locally zoned school. We so wanted that to happen
8 but it was not to be. Josh's form of autism is
9 severe enough that the locally zoned school was not
10 appropriate. In fact, none of the DOE schools were
11 deemed appropriate by the DOE and thus Josh is at an
12 853 school.

13 853 schools are for the most complex students,
14 which the DOE has determined that they cannot
15 educate. The DOE directly pays Josh's school to
16 educate him because the DOE can't. For the last six
17 years, the DOE has rejected my son. That's right,
18 they rejected him. The DOE for the last six years
19 has said they don't want him because they don't have
20 a place for him. Josh has been doing well at his
21 publicly funded 853 school but he has had setbacks.

22 This year, Josh lost both of his assistant
23 teachers. Why? Because Josh's school can't pay them
24 enough to compete with the DOE's salaries and
25 benefits. Two years ago, Josh lost his teacher mid-

1
2 year. Where did she go? She went to a DOE school.
3 Why? Because the DOE paid her significantly more.
4 Gave her significantly better benefits and told her
5 she didn't have to work year round.

6 As my son is in a 12 month program due to being
7 on the spectrum. Josh's school, like other 853 and
8 4410 preschools are losing teachers because the DOE
9 and the City of New York are not offering teachers
10 and staff pay parity. Josh is being discriminated
11 against by the DOE and the New York City because he
12 is not getting the funding from the DOE and the city
13 at the same rate as other publicly funded schools.
14 This is causing significant teacher turnover and
15 directly setting back my sons -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 MARK GONSALVES: Learning. As new teachers and
18 assistant teachers have to come in, learn how to work
19 with my son and it thus impacts his learning. What
20 will the legacy be at this City Council? Will the
21 City Council enable discrimination of students with
22 disabilities to continue or will your legacy be of
23 ending discrimination for students with disabilities.

24 This Council has the chance to end discrimination
25 by fully funding pay parity for all 853 and 4410

1
2 teachers and staff. So, what will it be Council
3 Members? Will you enable discrimination of students
4 with disabilities to continue or will you be the
5 Council whose legacy is of ending discrimination for
6 students with disabilities. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mr. Gonsalves?

8 MARK GONSALVES: Yes Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh, I'm not sure, I have not
10 heard the word 853 school. Can you describe that to
11 me?

12 MARK GONSALVES: Absolutely. So, 853 school is a
13 state - it's part of state law that was enacted in
14 1976. It's basically when the local school district
15 do not have the facilities to educate the most severe
16 cases. And so, New York City DOE literally pays my
17 school with checks direct or whatever you want to
18 call it but they literally pay the school monthly to
19 educate my son because the DOE, with their thousand
20 plus schools has no school available for him.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, okay, now I'm familiar
22 with the number but let me ask you this question
23 also.

24 MARK GONSALVES: Yes Chair.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you have to fight to get
3 your child into that program?

4 MARK GONSALVES: I had to fight for him to get
5 the appropriate education. They wanted to put him in
6 a more restrictive environment than was legally
7 allowed. And so, yes, I had to fight for my sons
8 rights. So, the City of New York -

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that includes the fight
10 for the being in the private school?

11 MARK GONSALVES: It's a publicly funded non-
12 profit school. It is not private.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

14 MARK GONSALVES: So, but yes, I did have to fight
15 for him for the first year and then every other year
16 they have agreed that the proper location is not at
17 the DOE. So, I have not had to fight since -

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, no, I agree with you on
19 everything that you said and familiar with the case.
20 We have had some hearings on it as a matter fact when
21 I was Education Chair and uhm, when I say fight to
22 get your child into the school, I mean, often times
23 they put obstacles in your way for parents to get
24 proper placement for their children and of course in
25 your case, don't even have the proper placement for

1
2 them. So, then parents have to go to either outside
3 or private or a nonprofit, whatever it may be.

4 MARK GONSALVES: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But yes and I also was a
6 Daycare Center teacher. So, prior to being in the
7 Department of Ed, and I left because of the salary as
8 well.

9 So, I just want to thank you for coming in and
10 just to say that we will continue to advocate on your
11 behalf and on your child's behalf as well.

12 MARK GONSALVES: Thank you Chair Dromm and thank
13 you for serving all the New Yorkers.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now circle back to
16 Lois Lee followed by Lauren Clavin.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 LOIS LEE: Okay, can you hear me now?

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

20 LOIS LEE: Hi Danny.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hello.

22 LOIS LEE: So, I'm Lois Lee, I'm representing CPC
23 early childhood centers. Now, I'm talking about Fair
24 Student funding for DOE. It should apply to apply to
25 early childhood centers in hiring of teachers, after

1
2 school programs and summer programs and the choosing
3 of curriculum. The ECC budget is 50 percent less
4 than the DOE, which you already know. A lot spoke
5 about pay parity for directors and we spoke for pay
6 parity for teachers.

7 But no one spoke about assistant teachers. My
8 assistant teachers should get pay parity with
9 paraprofessionals and they have tiers like
10 paraprofessionals. A paraprofessional with a BA
11 degree of 40 – gets \$40,000 a year, \$40K. My teacher
12 gets \$32,000, all of my TA's have BA degrees, so it's
13 not fair that we don't have these tiers. I don't
14 want to lose my teachers to the DOE the way everyone
15 else has been talking about public schools. I want
16 high quality; early childhood centers means high
17 quality staff.

18 Okay, second issue, Summer Rising, the DOE, DYCD
19 must communicate with CBO's. We do not know where we
20 will housed this summer. Online, my school PS20 is a
21 Summer Rising but our principal, a wonderful person,
22 she doesn't know. She says she is not sure. So,
23 when will they tell us where CPC Summer Rising will
24 be located? Next week will be June and we still have
25 not heard, so we need some more communication.

1
2 The last issue that Danny, you will really
3 appreciate this. It has to do with choosing
4 curriculum. Now, I am going to show you, I would
5 love to have an emergent, relevant meaningful
6 curriculum and not stick to the DOE units of study to
7 the letter because this is ridiculous. This year and
8 last year I taught, What is COVID-19?

9 When the home of corona came to town. I don't
10 want to wash my hands.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 LOIS LEE: Then, we also taught to be culturally
13 responsive. This is our Lunar New Year about Korea,
14 China, Thailand, Vietnam and India. Coming to
15 America, a history of immigration. Remember these
16 books are not on the DOE list and I have a lot of
17 books on my Latinx community, so the day free
18 homeless and for my Black community, Wilma unlimited,
19 City Shapes.

20 You know, when you see the City Shapes, it's all
21 children of color and then Danny, you will really
22 like this. Julian is a Mermaid. Ha, ha, do you see
23 that?

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I love that book.
25

1
2 LOIS LEE: Julian is a Mermaid. It is just that
3 it is so cute about the Mermaid Parade.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, I love that.

5 LOIS LEE: About women's history. She
6 persistent, 13 women who persisted. About for all of
7 our autistic kids that we have and special needs kids
8 Arnie and the new child. Someone special just like
9 you and you matter.

10 So, what I'm trying to say is we need you know in
11 Fair Student funding, they're supposed to give money
12 for choosing your curriculum. Hey, we should get the
13 same thing, don't you think? Right.

14 So, we are the seas of change. All the books I
15 have shown you, I have used in teaching. So, what
16 does it mean to be kind? Be kind to all of us and
17 the OHR sector. I know you are very familiar with us
18 and I love you Danny. You already know that CPC
19 talking points that you have heard from Collin and
20 everyone else. So, we support all of those needs for
21 human services but I just really wish that they would
22 give us flexibility in choosing the books for our
23 curriculum. That's all I am asking. So, those are
24 my three asks. Thank you Danny.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You know Lois, you always
3 make it interesting and the teacher in you always
4 comes out. You bring the books with you to show us
5 what it is that what curriculum means and so I am
6 very, very grateful for your testimony. I am glad
7 that we were able to get your audio problem settled.

8 So, thank you and we will [INAUDIBLE 7:29:11]
9 Lois, you know, we'll keep going forward.

10 LOIS LEE: Okay, pay parity. Teacher assistance,
11 thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I got it.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lauren
14 Clavin followed by Liz Accles.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 LAUREN CLAVIN: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
17 you for the opportunity to give testimony. Good
18 afternoon Chair Dromm. I am a lifelong Queens
19 resident and I was formally a constituent of yours,
20 it's nice to see you. I am a public parent to a
21 rising first grader with an IEP and a child who will
22 be entering PreK in the fall. I can't and I won't
23 speak to resource equity in our schools better than
24 the tireless advocate from Parent Leaders who spoke
25 today. Like Maria Bautista and Natasha Capers,

1
2 Paulette Healy and her wonderful son and Senator
3 Robert Jackson, just to name a few.

4 So, I'll just say, listen to them. Please
5 allocate the money organizations like AQE have fought
6 for – for over three decades in the ways that they
7 have laid out brilliantly today. They're are
8 demanding \$1 billion for culturally responsive
9 schools. \$350 million to support English Language
10 Learners and our immigrant families. \$225 million
11 for real restorative justice. \$177 million for
12 social/emotional supports, which includes as many
13 people have said today, hiring more social workers
14 and more counselors.

15 I also want to uplift the many brilliant youth
16 leaders from organizations like the Urban Youth
17 Collaborative who spoke today about their lived
18 experiences of being policed inside their school
19 buildings.

20 There was a child today, for those of you who may
21 not have been here who shared an experience of being
22 harassed and he was 11-years-old and walking into a
23 school building and he compared walking into his
24 school as a child to visiting a family member in
25 Rikers.

1
2 So, I really urge you to remember that and to
3 listen to our kids because these policies, this
4 budget that you are about to finalize impacts them
5 the most. And so, we should hear them when they
6 speak and what they are demanding is police free
7 schools.

8 You know, we have a really amazing –

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 LAUREN CLAVIN: I just, two more seconds. We
11 have a really amazing opportunity to put this money
12 to work for people, for our kids and I hope I don't
13 have to explain to my kids ten years from now that we
14 squandered this moment. Many of the Council Members
15 that are here today will be moving on in a few
16 months. So, let's this budget be your opportunity to
17 submit your legacies as real champions for equity.
18 Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks and you know; I've
20 heard so many stories about inappropriate behavior in
21 the part of School Safety Agents. I had one student
22 that came in one time, he told me he was told to take
23 off a rainbow – one of those rainbow wristbands you
24 know, rubber wristbands that they have. And he
25 refused to do it because he identified as LGBTQ and

1
2 then was you know, there was an altercation with the
3 School Safety Agent over a rainbow wristband. You
4 know, it's just so crazy but I hear what you are
5 saying and I want to just continue fighting for what
6 we think is right.

7 LAUREN CLAVIN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Liz
9 Accles followed by Pam Koch.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 LIZ ACCLES: Hi.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hi Liz.

13 LIZ ACCLES: Hi, Chair Dromm, members of the
14 Committee. Thanks so much for the opportunity to
15 testify today. I am here, I'm Liz Accles and I am
16 here on behalf of community food advocates and the
17 Lunch for Learning Campaign to talk about uhm, the
18 capital budget ask for cafeteria redesign in the
19 amount of \$150 million, that we'd like to be invested
20 over the next five years to modernize, scale up and
21 modernize school cafeterias.

22 You know, first of all, I want to say Councilman
23 Dromm and to the Council, thank you for your
24 incredible partnership with us over the years to our
25 joint success, yet universal free school lunch, which

1
2 shouldn't have been a hard fight but was. And you
3 know our continuing work together to make the school
4 meals program the best that it could be for all
5 students and you know certainly knowing that
6 Councilwoman Rosenthal, certainly knowing that in the
7 uhm, you know in the pandemic, what we have always
8 known the pandemic has made even more clear about how
9 important school food programs are to students and
10 their families.

11 So, uhm, you know, just to kind of reiterate what
12 you all know is uhm, the Department of Education
13 Office of Food and Nutrition Services has an
14 innovative model. You'll see in my background that's
15 what - I'm not actually sitting there, of cafeteria
16 redesign. That addresses two of the biggest barriers
17 to student participation and that is cafeteria
18 environment and food appeal. It's highly cost
19 effective and very quickly done. It's a \$500,000
20 capital item per school and although there is
21 preplanning, the work is done over weekend.

22 So, when we saw this model, we were so excited
23 about this and we -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 LIZ ACCLES: Were building on the foundation of
3 universal. This is the thing to do. It's highly
4 successful high school students participate 35
5 percent more. We anticipate 30,000 additional high
6 school student would participate if we expanded this
7 out and I'm going to leave it at that because I'm
8 over time.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I know that Council Member
10 Rosenthal has questions but before, I just have a
11 comment and I want to thank you. Yeah, it looks like
12 you're sitting in a diner and waiting for a salad.
13 Which is the purpose of the work that you're doing
14 and I have seen it in my schools here in my schools
15 here in Jackson Heights where it has really worked
16 and it's very inviting to the schools where they can
17 come and select their own good healthy food and they
18 go for the healthy options. Just by the environment,
19 so I will have a surprise for you a little bit later
20 down the road about what's in my allocations.

21 LIZ ACCLES: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I look forward to
23 speaking with you in the budget process this time.
24 Thank you very much.

25 LIZ ACCLES: Okay, thank you Councilman.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Well, as usual Chair
3 Dromm, I'm going to say the exact same thing that you
4 said. Uhm, every single aspect of it. I wish, I
5 will say that your group Liz is extraordinary.
6 Everyone who is a member is extraordinary true,
7 justice advocates for life. And I regret not moving
8 faster but – and I'm excited that I will be adding
9 funding for a kitchen in my district and I know there
10 are a couple schools, because I already have one but
11 it's just extraordinary what you've done and what you
12 toting your time to doing. I know how hard it is to
13 work with DOE/SCA but you've mastered it and you've
14 also converted them. They are very excited to do
15 this work as well.

16 So, I'm glad to now be a part of it and I thank
17 you for your service.

18 LIZ ACCLES: Yeah, no, thank you very much and we
19 appreciate you being a champion on this and helping
20 us move this forward both in your district and on a
21 big scale, so thank you. It means a whole lot.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Back to you Chair
23 Dromm or back to Committee Counsel.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Back to Counsel, yeah.

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
3 testimony from Pam Koch followed by Jacqueline Baum.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 PAM KOCH: Hi, everyone. Hi, can you hear me?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

7 PAM KOCH: Okay, great. Thanks everyone and I
8 work very closely with Liz. So, I am very happy to
9 also be here to talk about cafeteria redesigns.

10 My name is Pam Koch and I am from Teachers
11 College, Columbia University and we did some research
12 on why this is so important. As you all know, school
13 meals are critical to the wellbeing of our children.
14 Studies have shown that many children rely on school
15 meals for a large portion of their daily food intake
16 often eating breakfast, lunch and snacks at school.
17 So, these cafeterias will make a big difference to
18 not just lunch but many meals.

19 Children from food insecure households compared
20 with those from more food secure ones also rely more
21 heavily on school meals. We also know that foods
22 that students get from school are not only healthier
23 than what they get from other places but also improve
24 academic achievement and reduce food insecurity. Yet
25 we know that most American's including children are

1 not eating as healthy as they should or could. Our
2 research in three of the cafeterias that got
3 redesigned have showed that more attractive
4 cafeterias for those three schools actually increase
5 participation one year later by 50 percent, which is
6 a little bit higher than Liz said was overall. And
7 it also increase the students attitudes towards
8 eating school meals. They said they liked school
9 meals better. They wanted to be in the cafeteria.
10 Crucially, we found that the results were more
11 positive when healthier items were more regularly
12 featured such as salad bars and that they were in
13 really accessible locations, as well as the grab and
14 go salads, when those were made central. Which is
15 what happened – what can happen in these cafeteria
16 redesigns.

17
18 Our findings also suggest that it would be great
19 to compliment this with ensuring training of the
20 staff in the cafeterias to present these meals
21 providing food and nutrition education that helps to
22 support school meals and to keep maintaining fidelity
23 of the program years after the cafeterias get
24 redesigned.

1
2 Being able to provide funding for continued
3 cafeteria improvements drives health directly.
4 Currently and I believe that these numbers are right.
5 Out of the thousand school cafeterias in New York
6 City, about 25 has received these improvements so
7 far. And so we believe -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 PAM KOCH: That all students deserve this, so
10 please consider to continue funding this as Liz
11 talked about too. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
13 from Jacqueline Baum followed by Ligia Guallpa.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 JACQUELINE BAUM: Hi everyone. Thank you to
16 Chair Dromm and the members of the Committee on
17 Finance. My name is Jacqueline Baum, I am a Student
18 at the City College of New York and I am here to
19 represent UHAB, the Urban Homesteading Assistance
20 Board.

21 UHAB was founded with the mission to empower low-
22 income communities that have historically faced
23 abandonment and disinvestment with the tools to
24 rehabilitate and maintain their own affordable
25 housing co-ops. These same communities have been hit

1
2 the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. HFC residents
3 and other low-income New Yorkers, need the city to
4 invest in ambitious green infrastructure projects to
5 recover in the wake of COVID-19 and address the
6 disproportionate environment hazards in their
7 neighborhoods including those in their public
8 schools. We are pleased to see funding for organics,
9 commercial waste zones and electric school buses in
10 the Executive Budget and we hope to see these items
11 funded in the adopted budget. However, I am here now
12 to urge the Council also commit to funding retrofits
13 and installing solar, specially in our public
14 school;. We are asking for \$80 million annually
15 until 2035 in retrofitting public schools and \$100
16 million annually until 2025 in solar.

17 This is a total of \$1.5 billion that can be
18 allocated from the \$3.8 billion DCAS public building
19 energy efficiency funds. The city needs to make this
20 commitment and as a result, improve the environmental
21 health of our schools, make our children safer,
22 create thousands of good union jobs, move us towards
23 climate goals and invest in New York City's low-
24 income and Black and Brown communities.

1
2 It is an honor to testify among so many other
3 students committed to building more equitable and
4 just city. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
6 from Ligia Guallpa followed by Diana Moreno.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Guallpa, you may proceed
9 when ready.

10 LIGIA GUALLPA: Oh, sorry. I wasn't sure if I
11 heard my name or it was somebody else. [PHONE RINGS]
12 Oops sorry.

13 So, uhm, my name is Ligia Guallpa, I'm trying to
14 show my face. Uh, there you go. So, my name is
15 Ligia Guallpa, I am the Executive Director of the
16 Workers Justice Project. A worker led organization
17 that it's led by mostly day laborers, domestic
18 workers and now cons- I mean, food delivery workers.
19 It's a workers led organization that it's fighting
20 for better working conditions throughout New York
21 City and it is an honor to be here testifying today.
22 Not alone, I am here with one of the member leaders
23 whose name is Anita who came not only to share her
24 story but to make a specific call on why it is so
25 essential for New York City to continue to invest in

1
2 day labor centers throughout New York City who have
3 been playing one of the most essential and vital
4 roles in New York City's recovery.

5 And we hope and first of all, we're so thankful
6 to the Chairman Daniel Dromm for making an historical
7 investment for the first time in New York City. In
8 maintaining and sustaining institutions like day
9 labor centers. It's like an historic step to making
10 sure we build an economy that works for all.

11 So, I am going to pass it on, the rest of my time
12 to Anita, who it's one of our member leaders of
13 Workers Justice Project.

14 ANITA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:44:34- 7:44:59] -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

16 ANITA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:45:00-7:47:38]-

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Ms. Guallpa, continue on.

19 ANITA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:47:44-7:50:00].

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:50:03-
21 7:51:06].

22 ANITA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:51:07-7:51:57].

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:51:57-
24 7:52:01]. What she was saying is that the Day
25 Laborers and Deliverers, the delivery people that we

1
2 relied on so heavily in the pandemic, were vital
3 service workers to all of us and they don't have
4 their rights. We participated in the March about two
5 or three weeks ago here in Elmhurst in my district
6 supporting the rights of delivery workers and one of
7 them had just been killed in an accident hit by a car
8 and we were there. They had a coffin to shine a
9 light on the plight of the day laborers. She is a
10 member of the Day Laborer Center with Ligia Guallpa
11 in Brooklyn and Ligia has done tremendous work with
12 the Day Laborers there and the day laborers serve
13 dignity and respect and they want the support of the
14 City Council moving forward as well for the work that
15 they are doing with the Day Laborers and with the
16 Delivery people and all of the essential workers that
17 we learned that we learned were essential during the
18 pandemic.

19 So, thank you for your testimony. [SPEAKING IN
20 SPANISH 7:53:06-7:53:08].

21 ANITA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:53:09-7:53:10].

22 LIGIA GUALLPA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 7:53:12-
24 7:53:14].

1
2 LIGIA GUALLPA: I just want to say thank you to
3 all of the City Council members. To you Danny and I
4 feel like you guys are leading, not only a legacy but
5 powerful spaces that are going to transform the
6 entire City of New York and that's what day laborer
7 centers are doing in every corner of our city and
8 we're so proud to be building institutions that are
9 led by workers, for workers, so we can keep on
10 creating an economy that works for all.

11 Thank you so much and we continue to count on
12 your support for Fiscal, for the next Fiscal Year.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Ligia, you are absolutely
14 right. I mean, you know I said also from day one,
15 when I was first elected in my first year in the City
16 Council, I went to visit your center out in Coney
17 Island there and saw how the day laborers buy into
18 the program and invest in bettering themselves and
19 building their own organization and it's run by them.
20 It's you know, it's led by them and that's a really
21 wonderful model that you've established out there.
22 So and as you know, I had day laborers here, in
23 Jackson Heights as well. Who I try to support as
24 much as I possibly can and you are doing tremendous
25 work.

1
2 So, Ligia for everything that you've done and you
3 do it for pennies. For hardly anything. You deserve
4 more money.

5 LIGIA GUALLPA: Thank you Danny and you know,
6 we're so proud you know to be a model for all the
7 worker centers. And our model, we're so proud that
8 you know, that JP's model has expanded to Queens,
9 Staten Island, Brooklyn and you can see now all over
10 the place led by also amazing work in the stations
11 that will be testifying today. Thank you Danny. We
12 love you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. [SPEAKING IN
14 SPANISH 7:55:04-7:55:07].

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear -

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Counsel, you want to -

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, Chair. We will now hear
18 from Diana Moreno followed by Yesenia Mata.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 DIANA MORENO: Hi everyone, good evening
21 Councilman Dromm. Good evening everybody. Thank you
22 so much for having us. My name is Diana Moreno. I
23 am the Chief of Staff of New Immigrant Community
24 Empowerment. Right there in Danny Dromm's district
25 in the heart of Jackson Heights.

1
2 We are here to testify about the work that NICE
3 has done over the past year and to really ask for
4 your continued support to invest in our immigrant
5 workers who are the heart of the city. And I think
6 this past year, I don't have to tell you, being a few
7 blocks from Elmhurst Hospital, the impact of the
8 pandemic has had on our community.

9 It has been a tremendous challenge for day
10 laborer and worker centers throughout the city to not
11 only be the center for safe and dignified jobs for
12 our community but also for emergency relief, for
13 food, for basic information about the pandemic. And
14 it has truly been through the investment of the City
15 Council in our centers that we have been able to
16 dispatch over 1,200 safe and better paying jobs for
17 day laborers over the past year.

18 We have also been able to disburse nearly \$3
19 million in cash assistance to a community that has
20 been largely left out of state and federal benefits.

21 We have also been able to distribute hundreds of
22 meals and hundreds of pounds of groceries to our food
23 insecure New Yorkers who were deeply impacted by this
24 pandemic economically and more than that, in recent
25

1
2 months, we have been able to connect over 1,000 to
3 the COVID vaccine.

4 We are so thankful for the support of Councilman
5 Dromm and the Council Members here that have made
6 this possible. It is through our existence that
7 immigrant workers who in other circumstances would
8 have had no one to turn to during this past year.
9 That we have been able to provide emergency cash
10 assistance, emergency food relief and of course,
11 continue to connect them to safe and dignified work.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 DIANA MORENO: It is our immigrant workers who
14 want to work, want to continue moving the city and we
15 know, we know more than at any other time but the
16 past year has proven the way that there are bases for
17 our economy and how they keep us moving as essential
18 workers.

19 Now, the challenges we face are getting them back
20 to work and getting a long-term economic recovery
21 plan on the ground for our immigrant workers. We
22 want to train them in health and safety and to
23 prevent injuries and death, which are unfortunately
24 way to common in the construction industry. Two
25 workers died just in the past week in construction.

1
2 We must stop this pandemic of health and safety
3 inadequacies in the construction industry.

4 Finally, we also have to help day laborers
5 connect workers to the Student Workers Fund that was
6 recently created. That is something that we're
7 working on and we need to have the resources to be
8 able to connect our members to these funds.

9 Finally, I just want to share that yesterday, we
10 went up to Albany to advocate at the state level and
11 on our way back on the bus, I remember hearing from
12 one of our members Monica, whenever we were
13 debriefing on that trip. She said, you know I used
14 to really back away from being part of this advocacy
15 actions because I was afraid. Because I was afraid
16 of being deported. I was afraid of being watched. I
17 was afraid of speaking up about my rights. But I am
18 no longer afraid. I am here because I am no longer
19 afraid to speak up. That is invaluable. That is the
20 kind of connection, not just to safe and better and
21 dignified paying jobs but the kind of connection to a
22 civically engaged life that we give to immigrant
23 workers.

24 This investment, your continued support, your
25 increased support will allow us to continue engaging

1
2 immigrant workers in this beautiful city and we thank
3 you so much for your support.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next person. Thank you so
5 much and you to Manny also for everything that you
6 have done in this community for the last 15 months.
7 You know, you have sustained people and gotten us
8 through this and you work with the most vulnerable
9 people who work for the most vulnerable people. You
10 know, it's just amazing to watch what you've done.
11 I've seen the videos. I saw the food distribution
12 myself personally along Roosevelt Avenue. Thank you
13 so much and you know, if we fight for anything; if
14 the City Council's learned anything, it is making
15 sure that folks like you and the people that you work
16 with get the funding that you need. So, thank you
17 for coming in and giving testimony.

18 DIANA MORENO: We so appreciate your continued
19 support Danny. It has really been an honor, thank
20 you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM Thanks Diana.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Yesenia
23 Mata followed by Lucy Sexton.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

1
2 YESENIA MATA: My name is Yesenia Mata; I am the
3 Executive Director of La Colmena. The only immigrant
4 rights and day laborer organization that had its
5 doors open on Staten Island during the entire
6 pandemic.

7 Thank you Chair Dromm and Immigration Committee.
8 Chair Carlos Menchaca for supporting us. La Colmena
9 is also part of the Day Laborer Coalition and since
10 the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, immigrant
11 workers and day laborer organizations were in the
12 frontlines keeping our city running.

13 Our center served as a critical tool in the
14 city's response. For example, La Colmena delivered
15 food and emergency cash assistance to immigrant
16 families where provided. Trained workers, inside
17 safety trainings and emergency preparedness and
18 helped immigrant workers achieve job security through
19 dispatching.

20 Our centers also provided legal services as it
21 relates to wage theft and provided COVID-19 testing
22 and vaccination and partnership with health and
23 hospitals. We actually had the first here on Staten
24 Island, the first vaccination bus arrive here in
25 Staten Island. They arrived at La Colmena.

1
2 And here as one in Staten Island, La Colmena
3 instead of falling, it didn't it grew. This is why
4 last week we opened up our second center and we came
5 back stronger than ever. We will be now able to
6 serve more workers throughout Staten Island and we
7 knew how to handle this pandemic and we have a lot
8 more to offer.

9 Therefore, we can't have an equitable recovery if
10 we do not support immigrant workers on Staten Island,
11 Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Bronx. So, I urge
12 you to fully fund the Day Laborer Initiative. Thank
13 you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
15 from Lucy Sexton followed by Madaha Kinsey-Lamb.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 LUCY SEXTON: Thank you Chair Dromm and members
18 of the City Council. My name is Lucy Sexton and I
19 lead the Cultural Advocacy Coalition, New Yorkers for
20 Cultural and Arts.

21 In recent months we have heard the Governor, the
22 Mayor, many elected officials rightly state that arts
23 and culture are the hardest hit sector and that our
24 city and state depends on culture to revitalize and
25 recover. Culture drives local economies, bringing

1
2 people to the street and into restaurants and small
3 businesses. We're the main driver of tourism,
4 critical to bringing visitors from across the country
5 and the world to our city and yet, relief to culture
6 in New York City has been lagging. I implore you to
7 act now.

8 Save culture so we can save our city and help the
9 economy rebound, so we won't be facing another budget
10 crisis when the federal relief runs out.

11 I have testified at Council hearings all year,
12 reminding you that the most fragile parts of our
13 sector are having the hardest time and I have
14 repeatedly said, that we cannot emerge from this
15 crisis with a more centralized and more White
16 cultural ecosystem.

17 Now the time has arrived where we can take action
18 to ensure the city that comes back is led by arts and
19 culture supported in every community, helping every
20 neighborhood and our entire city recover economically
21 and emotionally.

22 The cultural plan for recovery provides direct
23 relief to the most hurt parts of our sector. To
24 communities hardest hit by COVID, where families are
25 in dire need of the healing that arts can bring. To

1
2 the performing arts which we need immediate relief as
3 we ramp up over the next year.

4 It calls for a cultural equity fund, centering
5 organizations of color and beginning to build a more
6 equitable, more stable, more antiracist arts and
7 culture ecosystem.

8 CPR asks the City Council for \$30 million for the
9 DCLA, supporting both CIG's and program groups to get
10 us back where we were pre-COVID. It asks you to
11 restore invaluable initiatives like the Immigrant
12 Cultural Initiative and asks that we have long last
13 baseline support for the Coalition of Theatres of
14 Color.

15 The details of the cultural plan for recovery are
16 attached.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 LUCY SEXTON: Support the heart, sole and
19 economic engine of our city with this bold and
20 groundbreaking plan so New York City can set the
21 standard for the world on how to heal, recover and
22 thrive with arts and culture for every citizen.
23 Thank you for all your work Chair Dromm. Your care
24 and attention in hearing after hearing is deeply
25

1
2 appreciated. We will really miss you as Finance
3 Chair.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
5 from Madaha Kinsey-Lamb followed by Sophia Harrison.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 MADAHA KINSEY-LAMB: Hi, I am Madaha Kinsey-Lamb,
8 Executive Director and Founder of Mind-Builders
9 Creative Arts Center. Thank you all. You dedicated
10 public officials for your service and for this
11 opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders and
12 other community-based organizations. We're
13 continuing to train the next generation of New York
14 City Civic Leaders and cultural contributors. And on
15 behalf of the incredible youth families and
16 neighborhoods we are so honored to serve.

17 Since 1978, Mind-Builders has been located in the
18 underserved northeast Bronx. There were weeks and
19 months over the past year when our community has had
20 the highest infection rate in all of New York City.
21 In March 2020, we transferred all of our music,
22 dance, theater and community folk culture research
23 classes over to online platforms.

24 Still serving hundreds of young people and
25 families every week. Reopening with our PreK program

1
2 in September and launching additional hybrid classes
3 onsite last month. Our students come from every zip
4 code in the Bronx and beyond. Currently, we have
5 summer applications available on our website for more
6 than 200 classes including free spaces for teens to
7 participate in visual arts, dance, spoken word and
8 writing offered remotely and in person.

9 Including young people from African American,
10 Caribbean, Latinx, African, middle eastern and many
11 immigrant families. Much needed professional
12 counseling by a certified therapist is also provided
13 for youth and families. We employ 52 dedicated staff
14 coming from the five boroughs. Instructors, support
15 and Admin staff. Our work is woven into the fabric
16 of our neighborhoods and our staff continue to make
17 transformation in the lives of our young people
18 possible.

19 Mind-Builders Creative Art Center is also one of
20 42 grateful recipients of funding through CTC, the
21 Coalition of Theatres of Color.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 MADAHA KINSEY-LAMB: Artistic productions and
24 cultural organizations like ours are vital engines in
25

1
2 our community. Without the arts, there is no
3 recovery. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Sophia
5 Harrison followed by Taryn Sacramone.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 SOPHIA HARRISON: Good day Chair and Council. I
8 am Sophia Harrison, the resident of the 47th District
9 in Coney Island Brooklyn. I am the Founder and
10 Executive Director of Arts House Schools of Music,
11 Dance and Fine Art in Coney Island, serving children
12 aged 3-17 and Senior Citizens.

13 I am also the President of Arts House INC. A
14 WMBE company that provides arts services to private
15 and public schools throughout New York City and I am
16 a Teacher in the DOE.

17 As the only not-for-profit cultural institution
18 in Coney Island that serves children year round, we
19 boast that the last three graduating classes have
20 entered college. Students before them have gone to
21 college and come back to our communities as nurses,
22 educators, social workers and one is currently
23 working on her law degree. While they decided to
24 pursue careers outside the arts, it was the arts that
25 insisted in strengthening their self-confidence,

1
2 motivating them to effectively communicate skills and
3 discipline.

4 Council, please remember that arts are more than
5 the theaters on Broadway and the Museums on 5th
6 Avenue. Arts and culture is a child receiving
7 flowers at their first performance. It is the
8 teenager that plays the piano to help clear their
9 mind. It is the pride of having your art work
10 exhibited at the age of 10. I speak to the Council
11 today as citizens of New York City, from who I have
12 one request. Put substantial support behind arts and
13 culture and arts education. Arts has schools like so
14 many not-for-profit cultural institutions and
15 severely devastated by the pandemic.

16 However, we have committed ourselves to continue
17 to serve our communities by operating on prayers and
18 hope. Today, it is my hope that the Council will
19 decide to continue to strengthen the self-confident,
20 self-esteem of New York City's children, especially
21 in culturally underserved and traditionally
22 underfunded neighborhoods. By passing a budget that
23 includes \$70 million or more in funding for the
24 Department of Cultural Affairs, as detailed in the
25 Cultural Camp of Recovery.

1
2 These funds will help line the path to the future
3 of the city. Confident, well-rounded, tolerant and
4 talented children become awesome adults.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 SOPHIA HARRISON: I am asking \$70 million for
7 DCLA. I would also like to show some of my kids that
8 we're actually in class right now working. Thank you
9 for your time. Have a good day.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Taryn
11 Sacramone followed by Fran Garber-Cohen.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 TARYN SACRAMONE: Thank you. I am Taryn
14 Sacramone, Executive Director of the Queens Theatre
15 and Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group. We are
16 grateful for the Council's vital support, especially
17 in this past year.

18 Regardless of where we were in the COVID-19
19 crisis, culture never closed. Despite staggering
20 losses, the CIG alone collectively lost \$410 million
21 in earned income. We worked to advance our missions
22 and serve New Yorkers even while many of our doors
23 remain closed or our capacity was restricted.

24 While shutdown, 10 million New Yorkers were able
25 to continue to access quality education and arts

1
2 programing online or find sanctuary in a garden or
3 zoo. CIG members transform stations for
4 distribution, COVID testing, blood drives, census
5 outreach, COVID vaccination sites and are not
6 offering pre-tickets to incentivize vaccination.

7 With your support, the CIG will have a major role
8 in galvanizing the full recovery of New York as it
9 did in 2008 and after 911. Investments are critical,
10 not only for New York to reemerge as the cultural and
11 financial capital of the world but for the cultural
12 community they will lead the way in reflecting and
13 creating a more equitable city.

14 The CIG leverages its significant reach to
15 advance the strength and growth of the larger
16 cultural sector. Last year, we were honored to
17 welcome our colleague institution, Weeksville
18 Heritage Center as the newest member of the CIG.
19 Following incredible efforts of the Brooklyn Council,
20 City Council Members and a broad collation of
21 cultural organizations.

22 Unfortunately, there currently is no formal
23 process for a cultural organization to be added to
24 the CIG. We would like to work with the Council and
25 the Administration to establish a transparent and

1
2 inclusive process to ensure that the CIG continues to
3 evolve and reflect the broad diversity of New York
4 City.

5 I also join my colleagues across the cultural
6 sector in respectfully asking your support of the
7 cultural plan for recovery and add \$70 million to the
8 cultural budget in Fiscal '22.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 TARYN SACRAMONE: Just the details real quick.
11 Included is a request that the Council restore the
12 \$20.2 million for culture that was added in Fiscal
13 '21, with an addition of \$9.8 million for a total
14 request of \$30 million divided equally between the
15 CIG's and program groups. Restore all cultural
16 Council Initiatives to Fiscal '20 levels and baseline
17 the Coalition of Theatres of Color.

18 The help and strength of the cultural sector is
19 foundational to the health and strength of New York
20 City and it calls for equity to be structurally
21 incorporated as outlined in the cultural plan for
22 recovery. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Fran
24 Garber-Cohen followed by Dominic Quavis(SP?).

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 FRAN GARBER-COHEN: I'm Fran Garber-Cohen,
3 President of Regina Opera. For 51 years, each year
4 Regina Opera has offered fully staged operas with a
5 full orchestra and ticketed concerts. We provide
6 affordable entertainment and accessible venues for
7 audience members who might not otherwise attend live
8 performances. Especially for senior citizens who
9 make up at least 65 percent of our audience. We
10 perform three full operas each season. Each
11 featuring four ticketed and one totally free opera
12 performance. And many free concerts and parks,
13 libraries and festivals and ticketed concerts in our
14 theatre in Sunset Park, an underserved and low-income
15 community.

16 All these bring foot traffic to local restaurants
17 and shops, assisting them financially. Due to COVID-
18 19, Regina Opera lost the ticket income and private
19 sponsorship from 16 months of live productions. As
20 we pivoted to posting archived operas and new
21 recorded concerts on our You Tube page.

22 Regina Opera, as well as a huge number of arts
23 and cultural organizations have relied upon
24 Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council
25 members funding. Such as that of Council Members

1
2 Menchaca and Brannan to stay afloat. Paying for
3 rent, insurance, phone, phone answering services and
4 other necessities.

5 We at Regina Opera make the following requests
6 that will help to ensure that all arts and culture
7 can reopen in the fall. \$30 million to be allocated
8 to the Department of Cultural Affairs to go to the
9 Arts groups. Funding for initiative such as CASA and
10 SU CASA be restored. Baselining for Funding
11 Coalition of Theatres of Color and the support of the
12 cultural plan for recovery. Which asks for \$40
13 million to support New York City culture as we try to
14 recover from this pandemic. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
16 We will now hear from Dominic Quavis followed by
17 Chantel Fernandez.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dominic Quavis, are you able
20 to accept the unmute request?

21 Okay, we'll move to Chantel Fernandez followed by
22 Holly Smeltzer.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
24
25

1
2 CHANTEL FERNANDEZ: Good afternoon to all. My
3 name is Chantel Fernandez and as many, I am here
4 trying to ensure funding for Fair Futures.

5 I am one of the fortunate foster care children
6 that has the courage to guide me through life topic
7 obstacles. I can list so many examples of where Fair
8 Futures has been there supporting me but I really
9 want to share this strong meaningful moment that
10 happened a few days ago.

11 In the moment, I was broken down and upset. I was
12 crying uncontrollably and mourning past events. And
13 Holly, Fair Futures Program Director sent me a
14 message and drew a wild smile across my face. Yes,
15 one message made a huge difference. With that one
16 message that she sent, she gave me the motivation to
17 get up and keep moving forward. I need her support
18 and Gabulane(SP?), the young adult success specialist
19 to keep moving forward with me.

20 I don't have parent figures to help me and guide
21 me through like obstacles but I do have them and
22 their support is fundamental. Please fulfill your
23 promise to young people in care and baseline funding
24 for Fair Futures to ensure no young person will lose
25

1
2 their coach, Fair Futures Coach, tutor or specialist.
3 Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
5 now hear from Holly Smeltzer followed by Kaitlyn
6 Chavez.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 HOLLY SMELTZER: A mentor once reminded me that
9 anyone person can be a change maker in any other
10 persons life. The more positive role models a young
11 person has in their corner, the greater the
12 opportunity the young person has to meet a change
13 maker. Fair Futures coaches, tutors and specialists
14 have been these change makers for young people in
15 foster care in New York City.

16 They have helped youth stay on track with
17 academic and career goals, secure safe housing and
18 much more.

19 Good evening, my name is Holly Smeltzer, I am a
20 New York City Foster Parent. I am also the Fair
21 Futures Program Director at the Coalition for
22 Hispanic Family Services and I work with Chantel.

23 Just over a year ago, we launched our coaching
24 program. Throughout the year, we have witnessed
25 young people making enormous strides towards

1
2 accomplishing their goals. Our young people have
3 invested in themselves, their communities and our
4 city.

5 Fair Future's staff have celebrated our young
6 people as they have received college acceptances,
7 academic and athletic scholarships, taken on
8 leadership roles, amplified their voices to advocate
9 for themselves and their peers and much more.

10 Let us show our young people we are here to
11 support them and getting not only to a better place
12 but a great and self-sustaining and independent
13 place. We are calling on the Mayor to stand behind
14 his words that New York must do more to support kids
15 in foster care by working collaboratively with the
16 City Council to baseline \$20 million to save Fair
17 Futures so it can continue to provide foster youth
18 with the supports they need and deserve to be
19 successful adults.

20 As a member of the Fair Futures community and as
21 a foster parent, I've witnessed first hand the impact
22 of Fair Futures programming on young people. We must
23 invest in our youth now to ensure they have a fair
24 shot at success later. We must allow Fair Futures
25 coaches, tutors and support staff to continue being

1
2 the change makers in the lives of our young people,
3 so they themselves can become change makers for the
4 next generation.

5 Thank you so much to the Committee and Chair
6 Dromm for the opportunity to speak and have a great
7 night.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Kaitlyn
9 Chavez followed by Zeniah Sinclair.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 KAITLYN CHAVEZ: Good evening. Thank you to the
12 Committee and Chair for listening today. Thomas
13 Edison once said, many of life's failures are people
14 who did not realize how close they were to success
15 when they gave up.

16 In only two years of serving, Fair Futures has
17 helped pave the way and help uncover a bright future
18 that is often lost in the experience of being in
19 foster care. Our kids have come such a long way.
20 With success finally at reach, we cannot give up now.

21 My name is Kaitlyn Chavez, I am a Young Adult
22 Success Specialist at Coalition for Hispanic Family
23 Services and just one of many advocates fighting to
24 give our youth a fair chance at having a fair future.

1
2 Besides providing basic supports and resources,
3 Fair Futures has allowed youth to identify with and
4 become comfortable in a system that so often feels
5 negligent. The harsh reality is that there is an
6 abundance of youth who see ACS as the enemy, hate
7 their agencies and roll their eyes at the mention of
8 help, support or a social worker.

9 These kids have been through it all already but
10 they have never been through it all with Fair Futures
11 by their side. As they begin letting their guard
12 down and welcoming help, a sense of pride eventually
13 develops which inspires them to join youth advisory
14 boards and understand how crucial this program and
15 funding for it is.

16 Not guaranteeing this funding, will be taking
17 away their sense of stability. Almost like putting
18 them back in the system for the first time. No
19 check-ins for Chantel when she is fighting with
20 depression and has no will to respond. No tutoring
21 for Steph when she's been an A+ student but the
22 stressors of a global pandemic have made keeping up
23 unbearable. No job placement support for Michelle
24 when she already has to debunk the stereotypes
25 attached to her by having a learning disability.

1
2 Our youth are not defined by their current
3 situations but their futures are dependent on whether
4 or not they receive the supports they need for Fair
5 Futures to even visualize the success that lies ahead
6 of them. Which myself and all of my colleagues
7 already see in our youth before we have even begun to
8 work.

9 From reengaging this connected youth to providing
10 a safe space for them to have a voice. Fair Futures
11 is an absolute necessity in the foster care system
12 and not baselining the funding for basic needs will
13 be a disservice not only to our youth but New York
14 City as a whole. Thank you for this opportunity to
15 speak.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
17 from Zeniah Sinclair followed by Destiny Kelly.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 ZENIAH SINCLAIR: Thank you honorable Council,
20 staff and esteemed guests. My name is Zeniah
21 Sinclair and I am the Educational Supervisor at Youth
22 Development at Forestdale. It's a youth family
23 services agency headquartered in Queens. I am asking
24 for your support of the Fair Futures Initiative, as
25

1
2 well as many other people here are which I am excited
3 about.

4 The people that were serving our young people in
5 foster care who were given the foundation they need
6 to succeed and Fair Futures continues to be a
7 phenomenal success. The initiative helps thousands
8 of New York City young people find jobs, advance in
9 school, attain stable housing and develop healthy
10 relationships as they prepare to exit care.

11 We are asking that you allocate at least \$20
12 million for the coming year to ensure that these
13 vital services are not cut. Right now, I'm thinking
14 of a young woman I will call Rayna. She came into
15 care not knowing what the future would hold for her
16 and she grew up in an environment where she witnessed
17 ongoing violence and drug abuse.

18 With all the support that Fair Futures has, she
19 was able to create a new life for herself with a life
20 coach and she worked with her on truly envisioning
21 her future, setting goals, getting a driver's
22 license, so that she could access jobs and services
23 and to also recommit to her education. We also
24 provided her with tutoring through the Fair Futures
25 funding and we advocated with her, for her through

1
2 her first year of college to help her pass all her
3 classes and I just want to say this is all during the
4 pandemic, which many of you have said. So, many of
5 our youth have been resilient in that way and Fair
6 Futures helps us to provide them the services to do
7 that. So, facing the pandemic alone in her dorm
8 could have derailed her but with the Fair Future's
9 staff and all the funding provided through that she
10 was successful and she was able to complete her first
11 year of college and she is planning a career in
12 social work.

13 We want to make sure that every young person
14 exiting foster care across New York City has the same
15 opportunity as Rayna, why? Because the national
16 statistics for these youth are frightening. Only
17 about 50 percent of older foster youth will have been
18 employed by the age of 24.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 ZENIAH SINCLAIR: Okay, just a few more minutes I
21 promise guys. I know we're at the end here. Still
22 there is good news, there are only about 8,000 New
23 York City young people ages 15-26 who have been in
24 care and we can make sure that they get the supports
25 to their coach through academic help and career

1
2 services. And this is what Fair Futures is about.
3 With the intense academic support that Fair Futures
4 provides such as middle school tutoring, coaching.
5 All the wonderful things that help these young people
6 have great futures. We cannot give up on them. We
7 must baseline the \$20 million. This is what we're
8 asking for the New York City Council to do for us.
9 And the New York City Council has taken the lead on
10 this and we are grateful. We are extremely,
11 extremely thrilled that you are understanding how
12 important this is and most important, thank you so
13 much for all the efforts again because our youth are
14 surviving because of this program and I am a former
15 foster youth myself.

16 So, when I was around, we didn't have Fair
17 Futures and it was a tough road. So, again, I am
18 just bringing to the table what we're asking for.
19 Please baseline the \$20 million. Thank you so much
20 all of you for your time and support.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. I will
22 now hear from Destiny Kelly and then we'll try
23 Dominic Quavis one more time.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

25

1
2 DESTINY KELLY: Good evening. Thank you to the
3 Council for holding this important hearing and for
4 allowing me to speak. My name is Destiny Kelly and I
5 am a junior in high school. I have been in foster
6 care for three years and I came into care because my
7 mom had got DUI. I am here today to share my story
8 and ask for your support in saving Fair Futures.

9 Fair Future staff have helped me to providing
10 with resources, connecting me with others and giving
11 me the time among others.

12 When I need assistance in any type of situation,
13 I know that I can count on my team to help me at any
14 time. For example, Shalampia (SP?), my education
15 specialist had not only provided me with academic
16 support such as getting tutoring for SAT prep through
17 the New York Foundling and helping me prepare for
18 college but also with career development support.

19 And by helping me apply to Summer Youth
20 Employment. She has also provided me with support
21 that I wouldn't have been able to get without Fair
22 Futures and she is also available anytime I need her
23 for that. Alone, I am very grateful to have someone
24 like Shalampia that I can count on.

1
2 I joined [INAUDIBLE 8:26:17] Comal(SP?), my Fair
3 Futures coach and Shalampia in October. What I like
4 about teen group is the welcoming community feeling I
5 gain from it. Although it is virtual, I still gain
6 the in-person feeling when participating Comal and
7 Shalampia are very helpful in building this type of
8 community because not only is it fun but
9 informational. So, we learn about things and get the
10 chance to hear others opinions on important issues,
11 such as social justice and mental health. And also,
12 I like that Comal and Shalampia are basically like
13 mentor's because they let us take the lead on things
14 and I am very grateful for the support that Fair
15 Futures has provided me in order to achieve my
16 academic and career develop goals. All foster youth
17 deserve this support in order to be a successful
18 adult and which is why Fair Future needs \$20 million
19 baselined.

20 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak
21 today.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
23 We will now hear from Dominic Quavis followed by
24 Tanika Mapp.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we'll move on to Tanika
3 Mapp followed by Paola Jordan.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

5 TANIKA MAPP: Thank you so much Chairman Dromm
6 and the City Council members for allowing me to
7 testify today. My name is Tanika Mapp, State
8 Committeewoman for the 68th Assembly District and a
9 parent.

10 I am testifying as a parent, a community activist
11 from AQE in East Harlem in the South Bronx and
12 elected official for East Harlem. Our city
13 government has a responsibility to invest in our
14 children and seniors by allocating funds for over
15 saturate organizations such as the NYPD.

16 Please consider reallocating the funds, funds to
17 help ensure our Black and Brown students and seniors
18 do not get the short end of the stick. We need to
19 invest \$705 million to ensure each school has a
20 nurse, early screening for dyslexia. Invest in \$445
21 million in infrastructure and tech. Universal
22 broadband and access to technology, ensuring we have
23 a library and a librarian in each school, so students
24 can understand how to thoroughly research fact from
25 fiction and reduce class size.

1
2 Invest in \$1 billion for real investment in
3 culturally responsive school programming and give
4 teachers the opportunity to adapt the curriculum to
5 help each child. Invest in \$1 million to support
6 students who are definitely able. Support our
7 students in foster care and the shelter system and to
8 ensure our English Language Learners and immigrant
9 families have access to translation to ensure they
10 can advocate for their children as well.

11 Invest \$1 million for universal childcare and
12 bring the current subsidy for our family childcare
13 providers up to a living wage. Invest \$2 million for
14 our seniors to open our centers and to ensure we have
15 staff that will not abuse our seniors. Increase
16 funding for older New Yorkers in direct homecare
17 service.

18 The last point I will make today is we must end
19 the school to prison pipeline by removing police
20 officers in our schools and ensure we have trauma
21 related mental health providers for each school.
22 Seeing opportunities in civic engagement throughout
23 the schools.

24 I will be submitting a written testimony and I
25 thank you for your time and I will leave you with

1
2 this quote from Nelson Mendillo. "Our children are
3 the rock on which our future will be built. Our
4 greatest asset as a nation. They will be the leaders
5 of our country and the creators of our national
6 wealth, who would care for and protect our people and
7 let's do right by our children.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
9 from Paola Jordan followed by Bella Week.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

11 PAOLA JORDAN: Thank you very much for the
12 opportunity for being here today. My name is Paola
13 Jordan and I am the Co-Director for the Metropolitan
14 Parent Center at Sinergia, one of the three federally
15 funded Parent Training and Information Centers in our
16 city. We provide training and information to
17 families of children with disabilities, as well as
18 the professionals that work with them. Our parent
19 center is also a member of the ARISE Coalition.

20 I am also the parent of 13-year-old twins, both
21 are in seventh grade and attended a community school
22 in District 3, my daughter is autistic and my son has
23 a learning disability. However, I am here speaking
24 on behalf of our parent center and the families its
25 serves. I would like to discuss the need to invest

1
2 in effective reading curricula and a small group
3 reading support in New York City schools. Our public
4 schools struggled to meet the academic needs of our
5 students long before the coronavirus pandemic, where
6 less than 50 percent of students were reading
7 proficiently.

8 During the last Fiscal Year, all the families who
9 have contacted our parent center looking for guidance
10 included school age kids who are struggling in
11 school. We observed that the students are on average
12 at least two grades behind academically, their IEP's
13 do not have clear language about evidence-based
14 reading curriculum and there is not additional
15 support offered to the families. The only option
16 they have to access additional services that will
17 help their kids to close the academic gap, is to
18 pursue an impartial hearing, something that is
19 difficult, especially if the family does not speak
20 English or does not have representation.

21 We would like to thank City Council for
22 recommending \$50 million for the new reading
23 curricula in your response to the budget. The
24 Mayor's budget proposal has \$500 million for academic
25 recovery and student supports but has no information

1
2 about how this money will be used. Please make sure
3 the final budget includes at least \$50 million for
4 evidence-based reading curriculum so that teachers
5 have the materials they need to teach students to
6 read in the first place and at least \$150 million to
7 provide one-on-one or small-group intervention to
8 students who need more help learning to read from
9 staff –

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 PAOLA JORDAN: Who have the training in
12 approaches that work. Thank you very much. I
13 appreciate the opportunity.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
15 We will now hear from Bella Week followed by Tazin
16 Azad.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Week, are you able to
19 accept the unmute request? Okay, we will move on to
20 Tazin Azad followed by Mon Yuck Yu.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

22 TAZIN AZAD: Thank you so much Chairman Dromm and
23 Council Members for this opportunity to share my
24 testimony. I am – my name is Tazin Azad and I am a
25

1
2 mother of three children as well as a selected parent
3 leader.

4 I am not going to waste your time but I want to
5 reiterate and empathize the importance of the
6 budgetary lines and suggestions that equity centered
7 advocacy groups such as [INAUDIBLE 8:33:30] RJPS uhm
8 and many other organizations have uplifted it.

9 Everything that they have said is that it has
10 uplifted and sort of advise by parents and students
11 and so, that I am fully in support of those
12 recommendations.

13 We know that the budgets are moral documents.
14 And so, we should also consider what – as we consider
15 whether it should include but we should also consider
16 what it should not.

17 We have heard from my students as they explained
18 how they do not want schools to include police.
19 Consider that as an adult New Yorker, we may or may
20 not encounter a person in uniform but our youngest
21 learners, some of our youngest will go through police
22 officers at the beginning of there school entrances
23 almost every day as long as they enter a public
24 school. And that should really make us sort of
25 consider what our moral compass is and where it lies.

1
2 In addition, for folks like me who are visibly
3 Muslim or folks who are undocumented are folks who do
4 not feel comfortable in presence of uniform. We
5 should also consider where they or how we consider
6 them as part of our school system if we continue to
7 uphold policing in school.

8 Furthermore, I am also offended by the -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 TAZIN AZAD: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll try again with Bella
12 Week and then we will go to Mon Yuck Yu.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will hear from Mon
15 Yuck Yu followed by Robin Vitale.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

17 MON YUCK YU: Good Afternoon. My name is Mon
18 Yuck Yu, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff
19 at the Academy of Medical and Public Health Services
20 or AMPHS. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

21 AMPHS is a not-for-profit healthcare organization
22 in Sunset Park that works to bridge the health equity
23 gap among communities of color by providing direct
24 health services like clinical screenings and
25 bilingual mental health therapy, health education and

1
2 social services to Latino and Chinese immigrant
3 populations, free of cost and regardless of
4 immigration status. We are also a member of the 15
5 percent and Growing Campaign.

6 Ms. Wong is an ESOL student who initially came to
7 us for help with her daughter's behavioral issues.
8 She was undocumented and unemployed, did not speak
9 English and did not qualify for insurance. Because of
10 a tenuous relationship with her daughter and the
11 isolation experienced from being undocumented, she
12 laid in bed every night contemplating ending her
13 life. COVID-19 aggravated the stress. Our team
14 counseled her, helped her get connected to in-
15 language family therapy services in Chinese, as well
16 as NYC Well.

17 Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have
18 provided Ms. Wong's family with weekly food
19 deliveries and she is one of the 250 families that
20 received cash assistance from the \$150,000 that we
21 have distributed to date. She is attending our Adult
22 Literacy classes weekly, which besides serving as an
23 educational space, has become a space for solidarity
24 and support. And our Chinese-speaking Community
25

1
2 Health Worker checks in and offers health coaching to
3 her.

4 Today, I would like to urge the City Council to
5 restore and baseline \$12 million for the Adult
6 Literacy Initiative, which was cut 15 percent in
7 FY21, and advocate for restoring Article VI funds for
8 the Immigrant Health Initiative, which have also been
9 cut from 20 percent to 10 percent and has helped us
10 offer these services for Ms. Wong.

11 I am also here to request your support for a \$4
12 million investment in the Recovery and Healing for
13 Asian American New Yorkers Citywide Initiative, to
14 support social services by Asian American-led and
15 serving community-based organizations to address the
16 rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate
17 impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lay the
18 groundwork for long-term healing for Asian
19 community.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 MON YUCK YU: What has been a mental stressor in
22 the past has now been exacerbated. Laid upon fears
23 and anxieties of COVID-19, our Asian community
24 members are now faced with the fear of being
25

1
2 attacked, brutalized and spit on simply because they
3 are a race.

4 And hate crimes against Asians have increased
5 1,900 percent across the city with over 3,800
6 incidents of Anti-Asian violence in the past year and
7 our members are feeling the stress in racism and
8 harassment every day when they are by the subway or
9 walk the streets and anxieties are increasing.

10 We have a waiting list of nearly 100 individuals
11 seeking support from a free mental health therapy
12 services, which we can not meet by our current
13 funding levels.

14 We are one of the few organizations offering
15 bilingual therapy services and the need is high and
16 funding cuts this past year has meant that we not
17 able to fund two of our therapists positions.

18 We also need to institute measures that protect
19 our most vulnerable community members from these
20 recurring attacks. And the Recovery and Healing
21 Initiative will not only provide critical mental
22 health services but also provide funding to help
23 expansile services for this population.

24 Of our bystander interventions workshops provide
25 support for services for vulnerable seniors and women

1
2 who are impacted by the increased violence and create
3 community business safe haven program to protect
4 communities from the tax.

5 We are here for our communities and we ask that
6 you be here to make our work possible. And I humbly
7 thank the City Council for supporting organizations
8 like AMPHS for making this work possible. And I will
9 provide for this testimony to expand upon our
10 request. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
12 now hear from Robin Vitale followed Greg Mihailovich.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

14 ROBIN VITALE: Thank you so much. Thank you
15 Chair Dromm and the members of the City Council. I
16 work with and I am at home right now without
17 childcare, so you might hear some baby noises in the
18 background. But greatly appreciate the opportunity
19 to share the support of the American Heart
20 Association for a few of our budget priorities.

21 My colleague Greg Mihailovich is going to come
22 in behind us and cover the rest of our remaining
23 list.

24 I am the Chair - I'm sorry, the Vice President of
25 Health for the American Heart Association here in New

1
2 York City. I am going to spend my time talking about
3 two key priorities. Both of which have been key
4 factors in the city's experience with the pandemic
5 and particularly patient outcomes for New Yorkers
6 that suffer from both hypertension, as well as
7 tobacco addition.

8 On the first issue, we are asking the city to
9 invest an \$1 million in support of the Health
10 Departments work to help New Yorkers access necessary
11 resources, particularly as our city has pivoted to a
12 telehealth model for accessing healthcare. We want
13 to make sure that New Yorkers, particularly those who
14 are uninsured or underinsured are able to access
15 blood pressure cuffs and needed support to help
16 manage their hypertension and this obviously is a key
17 issue for us. Disparities were obvious and
18 persistent before the pandemic but became even more
19 obvious during this past years' experience.

20 Secondly, I want to focus on the tobacco control
21 effort. Again, we ask the city to invest an
22 additional \$1 million to the borough of tobacco
23 control. We know that there has been a significant
24 decrease in the controls funding over the years.
25 Both the experience that we've heard anecdotally over

1
2 the last year with many New Yorkers turning to
3 tobacco as well as e-cigarettes.

4 Plus the burden that we knew existed before the
5 pandemic with the implementation of the HUD rule,
6 which created smoke free housing for our low-income
7 communities, as well as the expectation that further
8 tobacco control measures will be implemented in the
9 months to come.

10 We want to make sure that the Bureau of Tobacco
11 Control is prepared to help communities where we
12 access the necessary tobaccos cessation services.
13 Thank you so much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, we will now hear
15 from Greg Mihailovich followed by Laura Jean Hawkins.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins.

17 GREG MIHAILOVICH: Okay. Thank you Chair Dromm,
18 members of the Council Committee. My name is Greg
19 Mihailovich, I am the Community Advocacy Director for
20 the American Heart Association here in New York City.

21 You know at AHA, we believe that ever person
22 deserves the opportunity for a full and healthy life
23 and that's why we advocate for identifying and
24 removing barriers to good health and the written
25 testimony is going to go into a little more detail.

1
2 But I want to touch on a significant barriers, which
3 is food insecurity.

4 Every family should have access to food that help
5 support a balanced diet and a healthier life, but
6 unfortunately as many as one in five New Yorkers are
7 facing food insecurity. So, SNAP, the Supplemental
8 Nutrition Assistance Program, helps reduce that food
9 insecurity but when SNAP recipients are given
10 incentives to buy more fruit and vegetables, they
11 actually spend more of their benefits on healthy
12 foods and increase the quality of their diet.

13 Families buy healthier options and it helps
14 establish lifelong habits that support overall health
15 and wellness. And it's important because higher
16 intake of fruit and vegetables have been associated
17 with lower mortality rates.

18 So, we were very excited to hear that the city
19 was matching a \$5.5 million federal grant for a total
20 of \$11 million investment in New York SNAP incentive
21 programs. Namely Health Bucks and Get the Good
22 Stuff. But that's only a small step in meeting the
23 overall need.

24 To put it into perspective, \$11 million would
25 just be an additional \$5 a month for 185,000 SNAP

1 recipients. Additionally, there is a New York City
2 Program called Get the Good Stuff, which offers
3 sorry, Pharmacy to Farm. Which offers \$30 in health
4 bucks each month to SNAP recipients who fill a
5 prescription for high blood pressure medication at
6 select pharmacies.
7

8 So, not only are you getting your blood pressure
9 meds but you are also being prescribed healthy food
10 to increase the quality of your diet to treat your
11 hypertension.

12 So, our ask is that the city actually double its
13 match. So, we're getting \$5.5 million from the
14 federal government. We're asking New York City to
15 put in \$11 million of city money for a total of \$16.5
16 million investment in these programs. Let's expand
17 the reach and the effectiveness of health bucks and
18 get the Good stuff. And let's keep pharmacy to farm
19 rolling, so New Yorkers who need it can get the food
20 they need to live longer and healthier lives.

21 Thanks for your time have a good evening.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. I will
24 now hear from Laura Jean Hawkins followed by Chris
25 Hartman.

1
2 LAURA JEAN HAWKINS: Good evening Chair Dromm and
3 members of the Committee.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 LAURA JEAN HAWKINS: My name is Laura Jean
6 Hawkins and I serve as Advisory Board Chair of
7 Astoria Queens Sharing and Caring. Known to many of
8 you as Sharing and Caring.

9 It's been a long day and I know you have more
10 people that will follow me, so thank you all for
11 staying the course.

12 I am here today to urge the Council to increase
13 funding to the Council's Cancer Services Initiative
14 and to support Sharing and Caring's FY22 funding
15 request of \$250,000.

16 Last year, the world changed. Especially for our
17 city's most vulnerable populations, including Cancer
18 survivors. At Sharing and Caring, we have
19 experienced an increased demand for our services over
20 25 percent from 2019. Specifically for Counseling
21 and support and for emergent needs assistance.

22 People who pre-COVID would have been considered
23 housing, employment and food secure, are now reaching
24 out to us for assistance with medical bills,
25

1
2 transportation costs to and from treatment, rent,
3 utilities and food.

4 This increase demand for our services continues
5 to this day. In fact, yesterday, I participated in a
6 support group meeting and I heard firsthand the
7 continuing fears and concerns by cancer survivors and
8 the needs that they still need us to help them
9 address.

10 Increased funding from the Council in FY22 for
11 sharing and caring and other community-based cancer
12 support organizations will enable groups like us to
13 continue to serve our city's most vulnerable
14 populations. On behalf of our board, staff and those
15 we serve. I thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Chris
17 Hartmann followed by Rhonda Keyser.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

19 CHRIS HARTMANN: Hi, good evening. My name is
20 Chris Hartmann, and I am [INAUDIBLE 8:46:39] Sure We
21 Can, which is located Brooklyn.

22 Today, I'm asking that you, Chairman Dromm and
23 Committee Members that you ask Speaker Corey Johnson
24 [INAUDIBLE 8:46:57].

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2 As you are aware, there are many members that do
3 support

4 [INAUDIBLE 8:47:24----8:49:00

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will
6 now hear from Ronda Keyser followed by Ryan Castalia.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

8 RONDA KEYSER: Hi, I want to thank the City
9 Council and Chair Dromm for the opportunity to speak
10 today. My name is Ronda Keyser and I probably sit on
11 the Board of Sure We Can and as Chris said, it's New
12 York's only nonprofit redemption center. We're
13 asking the Council today to stand up on behalf of our
14 awesome excluded waste management workers.

15 Our unique organization has applied for a \$2.3
16 million in capital funds to purchase our lot and to
17 avoid eviction and protect our physical site from
18 gentrification. If Sure We Can isn't able to
19 continue its work, New York City will lose an
20 integral partner in waste diversion and in community
21 outreach with approval record of success in both
22 areas.

23 So, Sure We Can needs an economic development
24 exemption from OMB to the capital funding requirement

1
2 of three consecutive years of \$50,000 or more in city
3 contracts.

4 There are currently no existing city contracts
5 for community-based management of metal, glass,
6 plastic waste in New York City. This red tape in
7 capital funding process is currently locking Sure We
8 Can out of receiving city funding.

9 As an organization who in our ten plus years of
10 existence has clearly demonstrated proof of concept
11 as Chair Dromm has said in the past. We not only
12 provide a fair and safe redemption center for people
13 who redeem bottles and cans but our low income
14 entrepreneurs also contribute robustly to a 70
15 percent return rate for these materials.

16 Surely the closest and longest working diversion
17 rate of any materials in the city that the city comes
18 to in its stated goal of sending zero waste to
19 landfills by 2030. And if we are not able to raise
20 the capital to purchase our lot because of the
21 bureaucratic technicalities, we'll be forced to close
22 our doors.

23 So, the Board of Sure We Can is made up of 50
24 percent canners and we're committed to self-

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2 determination as a key to empowering our
3 marginalized, our most marginalized in our community.

4 I am sure that this capital funding process is
5 not meant to undermine a grassroots organization like
6 Sure We Can, who work on the ground every day,
7 providing community and civic connection for our
8 often marginalized members.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

10 RONDA KEYSER: Okay, our members, just so you
11 know we just want to thank Chairman Dromm for your
12 support. Your letter of support to OMB asking them
13 to honor our capital funding request and we also want
14 to thank the co-signers of your letter. Council
15 Members Reynoso, Rivera, Van Bramer, Riley, Ayala,
16 Rosenthal and Levine, more co-signers are coming in
17 every day. As the most progressive New York City
18 Council, we ask you to please help our remarkable
19 organization to continue our proven grassroots waste
20 diversion community outreach and economic self-
21 empowerment and allow us to continue to do this work
22 with our community. Thank you very much today for
23 listening for such a long time.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
25 from Ryan Castalia followed by Lee Gough.

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

3 RYAN CASTALIA: Thank you so much to the Council,
4 to Chair Dromm and to all who are here for the
5 opportunity to testify today. My name is Ryan
6 Castalia. I serve as the Executive Director of Sure
7 We Can, as you have already heard a lot about. Which
8 operates New York City's only nonprofit redemption
9 center, serving canners, those who collect bottles
10 and cans to earn income for a freelance community
11 level recyclers, pioneers in the circular economy and
12 climate change resilience. Whose indefatigable work
13 makes our lives measurably better.

14 Canning reduces street litter by over 70 percent.
15 It results in the diversion of over 200,000 tons of
16 recyclables annually across the state and no cost to
17 taxpayers. In the case of our organization, supports
18 the livelihoods of 950 low income families to the
19 distribution of over \$700,000 annually into the
20 community.

21 Despite these undeniable contributions, New York
22 City seems to prefer the canners work in the shadows.
23 Canners represent an intersection of many severely
24 underserved demographics, undocumented immigrants,
25 non-English speakers, people of color, as well as

1
2 those experiencing physical or mental disabilities or
3 homelessness. Many are elderly and everyone in New
4 York City knows what the canners do. Most
5 recognized, the canners that work in their
6 neighborhood and yet these same canners we know to be
7 integral to our communities work in the face of
8 constant stigma, including racism and fear of
9 assault, lack of basic labor protections, including
10 unemployment insurance or access to pandemic relief
11 and indifference to their humanity, dignity and
12 agency through the faceless advance of gentrification
13 that pushes them even further toward the margins.

14 Today, that force takes the form of our community
15 living under the threat of eviction from the space we
16 call home for over a decade. I am here today to ask
17 from the bottom of my heart, that the city recognize
18 the value of the canner community by supporting our
19 request for \$2.3 million in capital funding to
20 purchase our property and protect our community from
21 disbursal and destruction.

22 Preferred their application cannot continue
23 because we lack three consecutive years of direct
24 city contracts of over \$50,000 and this, despite the
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1
2 fact that no such contracts exists for the work that
3 canners and Sure We Can perform.

4 This logic, even as many in the city government
5 claim the need to invest in -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 RYAN CASTALIA: Communities in the marginalized
8 and sustainability in the circular economy is self-
9 defeating and absurd. We want to believe our leaders
10 are serious about transforming the status quo and
11 building a more supportive and sustainable city for
12 all New Yorkers.

13 I want to thank Chair Dromm. I want to thank the
14 Sanitation Chair Antonio Reynoso, our local Council
15 Member for their support and all the Council Members
16 who have signed on to the letter that's currently
17 circulating.

18 In that spirit, we call upon the Speaker and the
19 rest of the Council to do the right thing and
20 aggressively push for an economic development
21 exemption for Sure We Can to the city contractor
22 requirement for capital funding. Please, help us
23 secure our future and the future of this very, very
24 important work and thank you so much for your time
25 today.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lee
3 Gough followed by Oliver Wright.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Clock is ready.

5 LEE GOUGH: Hi, I am Lee Gough and I am here
6 today speaking personally as a member of 350 Brooklyn
7 and I just want to note that 350 is a grassroots, all
8 volunteer organization that works locally to address
9 the crime at crisis. And our organization has
10 submitted written testimony. As an organization, I
11 just want to note that this is my personal testimony
12 as a member of 350.org because I live in the
13 neighborhood of Sure We Can.

14 And I am today urging Speaker Johnson and the
15 Council to aggressively advocate for the Office of
16 Management and Budget to grant an economic
17 development extension for the application of Sure We
18 Can. To purchase their headquarter sight on 219
19 McKibbin Street in Brooklyn. Because Sure We Can's
20 landlord has given them an ultimatum to purchase or
21 vacate and because without the capital of the
22 purchase and no current avenue to raise capital under
23 city regulations, the only way they could currently
24 overcome this obstacle to their existence is for City
25 Council to wave the three year city contract

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2 condition requisite to their ability to raise capital
3 and continue to thrive.

4 So, I just want to say about Sure We Can that
5 they are a visionary organization of canners and they
6 do extraordinarily valuable and almost unspeakably
7 unrecognized environmental work. And they do this
8 work at manifest occupational risk to themselves, all
9 throughout the pandemic. You hear canners every
10 morning when you wake up. A lot of them are from
11 Sure We Can.

12 These are brave workers performing vital green
13 services for our community and filling in where our
14 city services fail us. They are essential workers
15 diverting tens of millions of containers annually and
16 distributing a most dignified income for hundreds of
17 people who may not have other ways to live and thrive
18 with dignity.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 LEE GOUGH: Right now this is a free no carbon
21 service to the city and they do not get paid
22 salaries, except for the worth of containers. They
23 are the most vulnerable – the vulnerable and I am
24 asking you to wave the three year city contract
25 condition for Sure We Can and not only that but

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2 consider subsidizing this essential work. It should
3 be subsidized and the humans that perform it should
4 be recognized.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will
6 now hear from Oliver Wright followed by Sean
7 Basinski.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 OLIVER WRIGHT: Good afternoon and thank you for
10 the opportunity to testify. My name is Oliver Wright
11 and I am the Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste
12 Advisory Board and our testimony relates principally
13 to the budget for the Department of Sanitation.

14 We welcome the financial commitment to improving
15 waste management and we do support the intent behind
16 the initiatives outlined in the recent budget.
17 However, we believe that as presented the budget does
18 little to establish the initiatives in a manner
19 that's equitable and financially sustainable. And it
20 also does not seek to promote the reduction of waste
21 as the primary means of bringing and cost and
22 environmental benefits to the city.

23 We have four key points to make around this. The
24 first relates to the proposed reintroduction of
25 curbside organic waste collections. The Brown Bin

1
2 program previously struggled with participation which
3 made it a cost burden to the city, while its
4 deployment only in selected neighborhoods led to
5 issues of equity and access.

6 It's proposed reintroduction will see the Brown
7 Bins returning exactly the same neighborhoods on an
8 opt in basis and therefore will leave the program
9 vulnerable to failure on exactly the same terms as
10 before.

11 Secondly, the additional \$33 million for waste
12 export is a reflection of the increasing quantities
13 of domestic waste as a result of COVID-19. And while
14 this is understandable, there is an opportunity to
15 offset this through initiatives around waste
16 reduction and increasing recycling. This should be a
17 budget for a concerted effort to make progress on
18 both these fronts instead of sending valuable
19 resources through environmental justice corridors by
20 truck to landfill or incineration.

21 Thirdly, the commitment to employ 10,000 staff
22 for the Precision Street Cleaning Initiative offers a
23 clear opportunity to work directly with reduction
24 centers such as Sure We Can who we just heard from at
25 length. And who already employ a network of street

1
2 teams throughout the city. In this way, the work of
3 the informal economy can be recognized and
4 compensated.

5 And finally, the formally improvisation to
6 implement commercial waste signs also offers the
7 potential to embed equity by ensuring inclusion and
8 engagement of local family run holders and micro
9 holders. This will ensure revenues from -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 OLIVER WRIGHT: Are not funneled exclusively to a
12 few large companies and will thereby retain money and
13 jobs within the city and foster the resilience of the
14 program.

15 In summary, we believe the initiatives outlined
16 in this budget should be supported by appropriate
17 resourcing of plumbing to ensure equity and financial
18 sustainability in the implementation. Thank you very
19 much.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Sean
21 Basinski followed by Shane Correia.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 SEAN BASINSKI: Thank you. Can you hear me?
24 Thank you. Can you hear me?

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

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2 SEAN BASINSKI: Great, so thank you. Thank you
3 Chair Dromm and other Council Members. My name is
4 Sean Basinski, I am also on the Board at Sure We Can.
5 Who some other folks have discussed here today and I
6 will send over some written testimony that I have.

7 What I wanted to focus is a little bit on this
8 community of people that we see out there every day
9 picking up bottles and cans on our streets and who so
10 often go unrecognized. And this community of 5,000
11 or maybe 10,000 people in New York City, we're not
12 sure has never really been organized and never, has
13 never made a request certainly to City Council for
14 legislation or for funding. There has never been any
15 ask. This population has never asked for a thing.
16 In fact, they survive as best they can eking out a
17 livelihood like five cents at a time by virtual of
18 the state bottle fill. It enables them to make a
19 livelihood.

20 Now some people say, well, why do they need a
21 home? Why do they need a place to go and redeem
22 their cans? Why can't they just go to the
23 supermarkets where they have the machines? And the
24 answer is, there are limits that are imposed at the
25 super markets such as if you are just doing it a few

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2 bottles or cans, you're fine but if you are doing it
3 as a livelihood, you need a place to go. And so,
4 Sure We Can is that place to go. The only nonprofit
5 center where this happens in the city and we have a
6 lot in Brooklyn, a big space where every day canners
7 go and sort and dig up the five cents per can or a
8 bottle and you can see them every day going there if
9 you want to.

10 I've been in there many times and it's an active
11 place of work, of organizing where services are also
12 done, where education, environmental education is
13 also done. And so, we're asking simply, in this case
14 it was at \$2.3 million. We've raised most of that.
15 It's really a \$1.2 million ask of City Council. A
16 capital ask.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 SEAN BASINSKI: We've raised most of the money
19 for the lot already and we would greatly this one
20 time, I think this will be the only time that canners
21 had to ask or will ask for Council's funding and we
22 greatly appreciate it, to save this space and to save
23 this community. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
25 from Shane Correia followed by Felicia Smith.

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2 SHANE CORREIA: Good evening. Thank you members
3 of the New York City Council for allowing me to
4 testify today. My name is Shane Correia and I am the
5 Deputy Director of Government Partnerships at the
6 Center for Court Innovation.

7 I want to focus this testimony on the most time
8 sensitive issues impacting our programming and cuts
9 in funding that were made during the pandemic.
10 During the Fiscal Year '21 budget, our funding under
11 the Innovative Criminal Justice Initiative was
12 halved. This funding permits us to flexibly respond
13 to the immediate needs we see in our communities,
14 pilot solutions and evaluate their impact.

15 Due to COVID, we focused on housing stability,
16 mental health responses and domestic violence
17 programming. For example, in the mid-town area, the
18 available funding supported our community first model
19 where credible messengers do outreach to individuals
20 experiencing street homelessness. We eventually
21 build up the trust with them, so that they can
22 connect the social worker back at the Mid-Town
23 Community Court. If any of these individuals end up
24 arrested for low-level crimes, their mandates are
25 tied to their social service needs and the same

1
2 social service team that we built a relationship with
3 them through.

4 This kind of integration between social services
5 and justice involvement is something we want to
6 explore in more of the sites throughout New York City
7 on other pressing issues, but because of the cuts we
8 experienced last year, we had to make hard choices.
9 Specifically, there was a reduction in support for
10 anti-gun violence programming, child trauma support,
11 wide screenings and assessments while traffic safety
12 debts reach some of the highest levels since the
13 start of a Vision Zero.

14 We ask Council to support a return to pre-
15 pandemic levels or more so, so that we can continue
16 to pilot solutions, evaluate their impact and public
17 safety policy with evidence of what works.

18 Separately, the future of Project Reset remains
19 uncertain. Briefly, Project Reset is a program that
20 takes low-level arrests out of the court process if
21 a person completes voluntary programming before their
22 arraignment.

23 Due to the pandemic, funding was cut by the
24 administration with services stopping in Brooklyn,
25 Queens and Staten Island. While there is a short-

1
2 term plan to leverage funding from the points of
3 agreement, which is intended for a broader array of
4 diversion, we're still uncertain whether reset will
5 relaunch at the start of the new fiscal year or due
6 to delays, much later.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 SHANE CORREIA: Which would impact local Council
9 when we report back next March.

10 Very quickly, we've already had to let staff go
11 at multiple sites once during the pandemic and the
12 lack of clarity will impact access to this diversion
13 for New Yorkers as we wait to find out when we
14 restart the process of rebuilding back in that
15 program into structure. Thank you so much for the
16 time.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Felicia
18 Smith followed by Kathy Price Park, uh, Kathy Park
19 Price.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 FELICIA SMITH: Thank you. On behalf of Youth
22 Justice Network, I thank the Committee on Finance for
23 the opportunity to speak.

24 My name is Felicia Moseley Smith and I am the
25 Associate Executive Director at Youth Justice

1
2 Network. We were founded over 30 years ago as
3 friends of Island Academy at the Alternative High
4 School on Rikers Island. We recently changed our
5 name to Youth Justice Network to better reflect who
6 we are and to disassociate from the legacy of Rikers
7 Island.

8 I came to our organization four years ago, to
9 help lead our Youth Reentry Network. An innovative
10 four year New York City pilot demonstration, which
11 became a model for transitional and neighborhood
12 based post release services.

13 In partnership with over 30 youth based
14 organizations, Youth Justice Network engaged 3,600
15 young people in jail upon their admission of whom
16 2,900 were discharged to neighborhoods across New
17 York City. And supported by our small army of
18 neighborhood based youth advocates. The power of
19 those lifelines is clear. Nearly 60 percent of our
20 youth voluntarily connected with their advocates
21 after their release from custody.

22 The Nunez Monitor 11th Report points to DOC's
23 structural inability to keep young people safe while
24 in custody at Rikers.

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2 Hiring more correction officers won't make young
3 people or community safer or provide them the
4 services and tools they need to be successful once
5 they leave jail. Nor will it reduce the likelihood
6 of recidivism.

7 The way to make people and communities safer is
8 to start shifting the balance of the financial
9 investment away from custody and into community. As
10 just one example, the average annual cost of the
11 Youth Reentry Pilot represents one-third of one
12 percent of the DOC's proposed 2022 Budget.

13 Today, there are fewer than 50 18-year-olds held
14 on Rikers Island. But is the group small enough and
15 young enough to create alternative settings to long
16 term detention? Not to advance further violence and
17 indignity. We ask City Council to redirect -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 FELICIA SMITH: Intentional investment to support
20 young people involved in the correctional system in
21 ways that allow them to grow, learn and thrive. This
22 is how to ensure public safety.

23 Thank you for the opportunity to address this
24 Committee.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Kathy
3 Park Price followed by Gabby Torres.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 KATHY PARK PRICE: Thank you Chair Dromm, the
6 Finance Committee and extra credit for anyone who has
7 been on the call since it began nine hours ago.

8 My name is Kathy Park Price and I am a Public
9 Schools Advocate, as a Member of the Panel for
10 Educational Policy. But I am here today as the
11 Founder and Administrator of Garden Train. The
12 public school garden consortium and a member of the
13 Play Fair Coalition.

14 One of the reasons I am testifying is to advocate
15 for the full funding of our parks. And it serves our
16 students too. This [LOST AUDIO 9:09:17]

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I think we lost -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We lost her.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Park Price, so we'll move on
20 to Gabby Torres followed by Josefa Marin.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 GABBY TORRES: Hello, my name is Gabby Torres. I
23 have worked at Sure We Can for almost a year and a
24 half now. Over this past year, during the pandemic,
25 I have personally led weekly mass distributions in

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2 our neighborhood, taking community members to go get
3 tested for COVID and taking community members to go
4 get the vaccine.

5 I have seen our community really survive this
6 pandemic and working at the desk at Sure We Can every
7 day, I've seen people who have found themselves out
8 of work, turn to canning and turn to recycling as a
9 way to put food on the table. But even before the
10 pandemic Sure We Can has been facing a crisis. For
11 the past few years, we have been trying to evade
12 eviction by acquiring capital funding in order to
13 purchase our lot. This constant fear of moving has
14 really kept us in the state of remote. Prevents us
15 from doing our important work to the greatest
16 capacity.

17 We need an economic development exception to the
18 capital funding requirement for three consecutive
19 days. Informal way of speaking is leaving currently
20 a global movement to reorganize and redesign waste
21 management systems around the world. Because waste
22 management systems around the world, as the one in
23 this city are failing and at an astronomical pace.
24 And canners play a huge role in keeping informal
25 waste pickers and general canners in New York City

1
2 play a huge role in keeping single use plastics and
3 aluminum within our waste system.

4 As a city, we need to be exploring how we can
5 improve our waste management systems and canners have
6 been exploring this for decades now. If our mission
7 resonates to you if the work we are doing here at
8 Sure We Can to support, represent and empower canners
9 and former workers recycling and recyclers to be at
10 the center of this conversation of redesigning the
11 way our city deals with our waste, please use your
12 voice and your position of power to speak up and
13 grant us this much needed exception.

14 I hope it goes without saying but I feel obliged
15 to mention that in 2021 we are experiencing a global
16 climate crisis currently and this is only the
17 beginning. The actions we take this year have an
18 impact on this climate crisis. Every action and we
19 must take actions with prioritize environmental
20 justice movements and spaces.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 GABBY TORRES: And share with environmental
23 justice. Thank you.

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will now hear from Josefa Marin followed by Camilla Salvagno.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JOSEFA MARIN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 9:11:54-9:12:03] -

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please continue Ms. Marin.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 9:12:18-9:12:20].

JOSEFA MARIN: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 9:12:21-9:13:51].

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Please stay safe. Is a member of Sure we Can. She continued today to advocate on behalf of canners. She would like us to make sure that we work with them do be able to secure the space in Brooklyn and she is very much in support of that and she hopes that the City Council will be able to support the request for the canners at Sure We Can. [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGAUGE 9:14:27]. Let's go to our next person.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes Chair. We will now hear from Camilla Salvagno followed by Rene Del Carmen.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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2 CAMILLA SALVAGNO: Hello everyone and thank you
3 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is
4 Camilla Salvagno, I am the Community Development
5 Program Coordinator at Sure We Can. We are like my
6 colleague have said, we are a not-for-profit
7 redemption center. A place where folks who collect
8 bottles and cans are able to exchange these
9 recyclable materials for money. We serve a large
10 population of majority full-time, independent, expert
11 recyclers, known as canners. And also, folks doing
12 this work part-time that have discovered a
13 spontaneous source of income in New York City.

14 Sure We Can offers two vital services. First, we
15 provide canners with an economic possibility of life
16 in a city where so many are excluded from secure
17 work. Second, our canners provide a service to the
18 city by reducing litter, contributing to current
19 sustainability efforts and ultimately beautifying the
20 city's scape.

21 Sure We Can provides to all the possibility of
22 survival. If you were to step foot onto our lot, you
23 would see an efficient and highly productive
24 recycling operation. Built and run by canners
25 without any assistance from the city's legislation.

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2 You would feel a tightknit community that operates
3 under the ethos of acceptance and protection. And
4 you would witness the outcome of over a decade's
5 worth of irreplaceable community outreach that is
6 threatened to be displaced due to the circumstances
7 we are here to discuss.

8 Today, over 900 canners bring their recyclable
9 materials to Sure We Can annually. Thanks to their
10 hard work, over 10 million bottles and cans are
11 redeemed annually. That otherwise could have ended
12 up in the landfill or in our water. Canners spend
13 their days on foot. We all see them. Navigating the
14 bumping terrain of the city with their carts full of
15 containers. I personally feel a great sense of
16 relief knowing that after a long day of this hard
17 work, canners can arrive at Sure We Can and be met
18 with a welcoming environment.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 CAMILLA SALVAGNO: Can I finish please?

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes please.

22 CAMILLA SALVAGNO: I'm glad – I feel comfortable
23 – I feel a great sense of relief knowing that after a
24 long day of this hard work, canners can arrive at
25 Sure We Can and be met with a welcoming environment.

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Space to comfortably sort their materials and access donations of food, clothing and PPE.

We are asking for the New York City Council to support us to keep Sure We Can intact. We need an economic development exemption to the city contract requirement in order to continue our pursuits of capital funding. The ability to purchase our lot would quell the anxiety of our community. It is time that New York City recognize the canner community by protecting Sure We Can from destruction. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We're going to go back to Kathy Park Price who was cut off mid testimony before and then move on to Alain Laforest.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

KATHY PARK PRICE: Hi there. Hi there, can you hear me? Hello?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

KATHY PARK PRICE: Hi, okay, sorry I was cut off earlier. I moved today and I don't have Wi-Fi but I really wanted to participate in today's hearing. Thank you again so much Chair Dromm and the Finance Committee members. I was saying earlier that I am a Public Schools Advocate as PEP member but I'm here as

1
2 the Founder and Administer of Garden Train of Public
3 School Gardens consortium.

4 This year, Garden Train advocated for the
5 implementation of outdoor burning for our students to
6 provide a healthier environment because as we learn,
7 it was healthier to be outside. It was a successful
8 initiative that involved several agencies including
9 the DOE, the NYPD, DOT, Parks.

10 The Chancellor has said recently that she would
11 commit to continuing to explore outdoor learning and
12 to keep it as part of the schools reopening plan.
13 So, when we look at the largest school district in
14 the country with it's \$1.1 billion students, that's
15 one example of how we are expecting more from our
16 parks. And I respectfully request that the funding
17 is restored to our parks. Because as we have learned
18 during COVID, parks are critical infrastructure, not
19 only for our students but for all New Yorkers.

20 And the other reason I am here today is to
21 advocate for the funding of the allocation of funding
22 to reduce class sizes. As Chair Dromm said much
23 earlier in today's hearing, one thing that we know
24 that works is that the DOE hasn't tried is the
25 reduction of class sizes. I would add that we have

1
2 yet to have a meaningful conversation about this, a
3 serious conversation. And when we talked about
4 important and ambitious programs, we find the
5 funding. We find the space and that is one of the
6 initiatives that will — that where now is the time to
7 address. You know, even in normal times, the
8 research shows that smaller classes lead to better
9 outcomes for all kids.

10 So, I thank you for your attention on these
11 matters and that's my testimony. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Kathy and I
13 can't believe that you got to give testimony on the
14 day of your moving. That's very dedicated. Thank
15 you so much.

16 KATHY PARK PRICE: I'm committed. Thank you
17 Chair Dromm.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You are committed. Thank you
19 Kathy.

20 KATHY PARK PRICE: Okay.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Actually, we're
22 going to go back now to Rene Del Carmen who I called
23 before and then inadvertently missed before
24 continuing on with Alain Laforest.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 RENE DEL CARMEN: I'm speaking Spanish [SPEAKING
3 IN SPANISH 9:21:10-9:23:22]

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

5 RENE DEL CARMEN: I'm speaking Spanish [SPEAKING
6 IN SPANISH 9:23:23-9:23:26].

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 9:23:31-
8 9:23:37]. Rene said that he is a canner also. That
9 he come to the City Council to give his greetings and
10 to ask for support for the canners in Brooklyn. Not
11 only do the canners make a living out of collecting
12 the bottles and the plastics and helping to recycle
13 it but it also helps to keep New York City clean.
14 And he has come today to basically ask us for support
15 for the organization and for the work that they do.
16 They are not rich. They don't wear suits. They
17 don't wear ties but they are important people and
18 they deserve the opportunity to have this
19 organization and to support the canners and Sure We
20 Can. [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 9:24:17] Rene.

21 RENE Del Carmen: Thanks so much for everything.
22 Thanks for your help.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Alain
24 Laforest followed by Lauren Bradley.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 ALAIN LAFOREST: Thank you Speaker, Chairperson
3 Dromm and the Finance Committee Members for the
4 opportunity to speak with you today.

5 My name is Alain Laforest and I am a Master of
6 Science and library and information science candidate
7 at Pratt Institute. Prior to Pratt, I received my
8 Bachelor of Arts in the English language and
9 literature from Brown University. I was awarded as a
10 social innovation fellow for founding the Science
11 Bowel Pilot Program.

12 A summer program to promote a stem based academic
13 tournament for Road Island High School students.
14 More recently, I volunteered as an individualized
15 Literacy Tutor and mentor with the read 718 program
16 in Bedford Stuyvesant. A nonprofit that serves
17 students in grades three through eight. The
18 experience reminded me of going to the library on
19 weekends with my father. My father is a clerk with
20 the New York public library who would take me to work
21 with him. This ultimately led to me pursuing a
22 career as a librarian.

23 As a librarian, I am passionate about developing
24 young adult services through collection and program
25 development that holistically serves the needs of all

1
2 teens in the community. Librarians are essential
3 workers who supplement of the efforts of educators
4 throughout the city. Funding for libraries is
5 important to maintaining the pipeline of talented
6 individuals who wish to enter their profession.

7 Many of my fellow upper classmen have be
8 furloughed from positions in the New York, Brooklyn
9 and Queens public libraries. Without funding, many
10 talented librarians who hope to serve the city are
11 seeking opportunities elsewhere. On behalf of Urban
12 Librarians Unite, I ask that you commit to funding
13 our city's libraries. Thank you so much Speaker,
14 Chairperson Dromm and the Finance Committee Members
15 for both your time and consideration.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Alain.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lauren
18 Bradley followed by Lauren Comito.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 LAUREN BRADLEY: Hello, my name is Lauren Bradley
21 and I am testifying today with Urban Librarians
22 Unite. I want to thank the Committee Chair,
23 Committee Members and Speaker Johnson for the
24 opportunity to testify today.

1
2 Unlike my library colleagues who will also
3 testify, I personally do not work in a public
4 library. I am an academic librarian working at a
5 small private college in Manhattan. I'm very proud
6 of this college library but I am equally proud to be
7 an unofficial New York City public libraries
8 ambassador for my college community.

9 As a college library, we only provide services
10 that directly support our curriculum. However, our
11 students, faculty and staff are dynamic, holistic
12 people with interests and needs that go beyond our
13 scope. The public libraries are key for providing
14 the services and materials that we as a college
15 library cannot possibly cover.

16 I constantly make referrals to the public
17 libraries, which is why I am here tonight to lend my
18 support to them. A few examples of these referrals
19 from the past month, I helped an adjunct instructor
20 sign up for NYPL's Interlibrary Loan Services. So,
21 she could continue working on a book project in her
22 quest for full-time employment.

23 I introduced a new graduate and budding
24 entrepreneur to the extensive resources available
25 through the Thomas Yoseloff Business Center at the

1
2 brand new Mid-Manhattan location. I also emailed a
3 student instructions on how to download and use the
4 public library's e-reader app, Simply E, so she could
5 continue reading her way through the tedious boredom
6 of staying home. The responsible thing to do during
7 a global pandemic.

8 These are the types of services that make our
9 public libraries incredible world class institutions
10 of learning and access available to everyone in New
11 York City. I urge this Committee to continue to
12 invest in our public libraries. Thank you for your
13 time.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much and we're
15 big believers in libraries so, thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lauren
17 Comito followed by Djaz Zulida.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 LAUREN COMITO: Thank you. Hi, my name is Lauren
20 Comito. I am the Board Chair of Urban Librarians
21 Unite. A nonprofit dedicated to supporting and
22 advocating for library workers in urban areas and
23 libraries in urban areas. I want to thank the
24 Committee Chair, Members and Speaker Johnson for the
25 opportunity to testify today. But also, thank you

1
2 for your vital support in past years. Its been
3 deeply appreciated.

4 Libraries are a space and a service that works to
5 amplify the potential of our neighbors and library
6 workers in our city have worked tirelessly during
7 this pandemic to maintain connections. And our
8 neighborhoods do virtual programs like story times,
9 employment help and grab and go book blending.

10 That's if work goes both ways though. Sometimes
11 the community comes out to reciprocate and help build
12 connections with the library. Just a few weeks ago,
13 over 25 neighbors came out to volunteer, to clean up
14 and beautify the back yard at the Leonard Library in
15 Williamsburg and turn it into an outdoor reading
16 room. Because of the work of these neighbors, the
17 Mutual Aid, the Friends Group and all these
18 volunteers, we are now able to provide a space for
19 patrons to safely use Wi-Fi and plug in their laptops
20 for parents to sit with their kids and read and for
21 people – for us to start to do story times at Outdoor
22 Ukulele meetups.

23 This green sort of bird filled and God the birds
24 are so loud. Oasis in the middle of Williamsburg,
25 wouldn't be available without their help and

1
2 libraries won't be as available to the public without
3 your help.

4 Providing library service at a pandemic is hard
5 work but we are up to it and by pushing back on the
6 Mayor's budget cuts, you can help us continue to
7 create these Oasis in our communities and I hope you
8 will. Please invest in our neighborhoods, in our
9 neighbors and in our communities by investing in the
10 heart of those communities, our libraries. Thank
11 you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Djaz
13 Zulida followed by Juana Flores.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 DJAZ ZULIDA: That background didn't work out for
16 me. Thank you to everyone for allowing me to speak
17 today. My name is Djaz Fredrick Zulida, I am a
18 Transgender Librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library.
19 And I am also a member of the Urban Librarians Unite
20 Board.

21 I, in my daily work and throughout the pandemic
22 have thought to bring resume and career help services
23 to our library patrons. Normally, we would travel to
24 them in various neighborhood locations to help folks
25

1
2 create a new resume to apply to jobs to find other
3 training opportunities to help advance their careers.

4 During the pandemic, we had to pivot to virtual.
5 Although it's not the same and our capacity is much
6 reduced and there are technical barriers, we still
7 have reached over 500 people during the pandemic to
8 help them with resume revisions, cover letters and to
9 really help them target their career search during a
10 really difficult time.

11 We also are doing a lot of work right now to make
12 sure our libraries are truly welcoming, open and
13 valid and safe places for transgender people and we
14 need library funding in order to be able to help
15 career seekers to help queer members of the community
16 and to support the librarians who are doing this
17 work. Thank you so much for your time and I'm done.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I just want to say I
19 love transgender librarians. So, thank you for being
20 here. I wait for the musical performance. I see
21 some ukulele's and people waiting all day and I am
22 waiting. Counsel, can you call up the next
23 witnesses?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. We will now hear from
25 Juana Flores followed by Kat Savage.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 JUANA FLORES: So, good evening everyone. My
4 name is Juana Flores and I am a Children Librarian,
5 as well as a ukster, a ukulele player for the
6 Brooklyn Public Library and all the public libraries
7 in New York City. I testify today with the Urban
8 Librarian Unite. I want to thank the Committee's
9 Chair, Committee Members and Speaker Johnson for the
10 opportunity to testify today.

11 At the viewing A Man Get Lynch a year ago to this
12 day, actually it happened May 25th. Many of us
13 children librarian felt the need to combat systemic
14 racism in every aspect of our librarianship. We
15 develop and created the anti-racism story time and
16 stream into our patrol via your Facebook and Zoom.
17 Many may not be aware but children see race as early
18 as six months. Therefore, we believe that we need to
19 overturn the implicit biases, weird dells instilled
20 in our children by our own behavior.

21 Therefore, our story time focuses on social
22 equity and justice, teaching about empathy, self-
23 actualization and that each person matters regardless
24 of gender preference, body types in the city or race.

1
2 Librarian's across New York City are using this
3 skill to help build a better community and you can
4 help us by providing the funding to allow us to do
5 that.

6 I also take in the time to learn an instrument
7 while we were quarantined and I am going to leave you
8 with a song. [PLAYS SONG 9:35:00-9:35:40]. Invest
9 in our libraries. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
11 now hear from Kat Savage followed by Lisa Marie
12 Vargas.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

14 KAT SAVAGE: Hi, good evening everyone. My name
15 is Kat and I am testifying with the Urban Librarians
16 Unite. I want to thank Committee Chair Dromm and the
17 Committee Members for the opportunity to testify
18 today.

19 I am a Children's Librarian at a public library
20 in New York City and in 2020, I learned how to do my
21 job all over again. Quickly learning digital tools
22 and ways to present my story times to children and
23 their families, whether on Facebook live or Zoom.

24 Storytimes are a cornerstone of early learning
25 and we are grateful also for the support of the City

1
2 Council's city's first readers initiatives, which
3 supports New York City families.

4 With that said, broad support for libraries,
5 including operating funds and capital budgeting is
6 necessary for us to provide consistent and high
7 quality services to all kinds of New Yorkers.

8 Children introduced a reading of books early on do
9 better in school than their peers who have less
10 access.

11 We know that by doing five simple things every
12 day, reading, talking, singing, writing and playing
13 will enable parents and caregivers to prepare their
14 children to get ready to read. I spent over a year
15 sharing my story time from home as well as the
16 library. I saw a patient recently who was so
17 grateful to have the consistency when we took it
18 first on Zoom and it was really nice to hear that
19 from somebody.

20 I wanted to take 30 seconds and also share with
21 you a favorite song of the kids and one that you
22 might know to. So, here we go. [PLAYING SONG
23 9:37:29-9:37:49]. I yield the rest of my time with
24 tremendous gratitude. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, you have really livened
3 up this hearing. I got to tell you, what time is it
4 now? 7:43, I wish I could keep you for another hour
5 but yes, you have made an impression that it's a
6 lasting impression and one that I will remember.
7 Thank you so much. Both of you, those are both
8 ukulele's?

9 KAT SAVAGE: Yes sir.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh boy. They are going to
11 have ukulele library time in Jackson -

12 KAT SAVAGE: Yes, it is a ukulele and we - during
13 a pandemic, librarians, we got very creative and we
14 all decided to learn how to play a ukulele as well
15 and our time. We volunteer our own time Sunday and
16 we meet up to practice various children songs. So,
17 yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, you know, one of my
19 favorite singers is Bette Midler and she plays the
20 ukulele too. So, you got to my heart believe me.

21 KAT SAVAGE: So, since you say that, I am going
22 to play the Rose, I think she sings the Rose, the
23 song right she sings?

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank
3 you so much. I really appreciate it. Thank you for
4 coming in.

5 KAT SAVAGE: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Lisa
8 Marie Vargas followed by Cheyanne Deopersaud.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

10 LISA MARIE VARGAS: Hello, good evening everyone.
11 That's definitely a hard act to follow, that music
12 was excellent.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [LAUGHS]

14 LISA MARIE VARGAS: My name is Lisa Marie Vargas,
15 I am the Director of Family Foster Care at Lutheran
16 Social Services of New York and I am here today to
17 advocate for the Fair Futures program, which we've
18 heard much of throughout the day. As this Council is
19 aware, we are calling on the city to baseline \$20
20 million to save Fair Futures and to continue to
21 provide foster youth with the supports that they need
22 to be successful adults.

23 Out of the approximately 125 children and youth
24 that are placed with Lutheran Social Services. The
25 average length of time in foster care is three in a

1
2 quarter years. With 18 of our children being placed
3 in foster care for five or more years and four that
4 have been in foster care for over ten years.

5 Of the 18 youth that have been in foster care for
6 five or more years, eight of those youth have a goal
7 of what we call independent living. Those eight
8 children have spent most of their life in foster
9 care, so the idea of aging out often brings anxiety
10 and fear over the sudden lack of consistent support.
11 Having a coach who will work with them to ensure
12 their successful transition to adulthood would have
13 lasting benefits for these young adults.

14 In recent communication with former foster youth,
15 our agency has identified several key areas where
16 youth struggle once they leave foster care. This
17 includes financial literacy and budgeting, housing
18 support and educational and vocational achievement.
19 Youth with these struggles would benefit from the
20 assistance of a coach who can provide emotional
21 support, guidance and direction both before and after
22 their 21st birthday or that aging out date.

23 One young adult the agency spoke to said that
24 since leaving foster care, her life has gone off
25 course. Another said that she has felt lost since

1
2 leaving our residential program because there was
3 nobody to help her navigate adulthood. Many young
4 adults have expressed an interest in working with a
5 coach to help them circumvent the challenges they
6 have faced since leaving foster care.

7 In 2019, Lutheran launched the Dreams Program, a
8 Fair Futures funded program named by the young adults
9 currently in our program. A young adult also
10 designed our program logo that we are proud to
11 prominently display on all of our flyers and letter
12 head. The funding provided and the New York City
13 budget allowed –

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 LISA MARIE VARGAS: To hire – ooh just a little
16 bit longer. Two full time coaches. One of them was
17 spoken about earlier, Egypt who has done amazing
18 things with our young adults. Just last week, three
19 of them were escorted to the DMV to test for their
20 permit after just a little bit of study time and all
21 three passed, which is a valuable tool for future
22 growth.

23 Inclusion, Lutheran is dedicated to the continued
24 building of the Dreamers Program but this building
25 will not be possible without appropriate funding

1 through the annual budget. Young adults have been an
2 integral part of the structure, design and
3 implementation process and their voice must be heard.
4 Lutheran is committed to this model and has seen the
5 clear effects on young adults who receive coaching
6 and other services through the Fair Futures program.
7

8 The program provides opportunities for youth to
9 practice skills and gain valuable life experience.
10 With active participation of young adults and the
11 straight forward inclusion of their thoughts,
12 opinions and feedback, Fair Futures aims to create
13 healthy, independent and confident young adults who
14 meet their educational and vocational goals. Both
15 while in foster care and long after leaving
16 placement.

17 This should be the ultimate goal of all social
18 service activities and the goal of this council to
19 better the lives of the most vulnerable young adults
20 in New York City. Fully funding the Fair Futures
21 program is a significant and important step in
22 achieving that goal.

23 Again, we are calling on the city to baseline \$20
24 million to save Fair Futures and continue to provide
25 foster youth with the support that they need to be

1
2 successful young adults. Show them that they matter
3 because they do. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
6 Cheyanne Deopersaud followed by Demetrius Napolitano.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Thank you Chair Dromm.
9 Thank you for listening to us today. I sat on this
10 call since 10 a.m., so I know exactly how you feel.
11 I've been here since 10 a.m. with you, right here
12 with you. I just wanted to say that I have been in
13 the system for about — since I was 15-years-old.
14 Right now, I am 19-years-old. I go to John Jay. I
15 am a freshman there and when I first came into the
16 system, I could tell you the horror stories of my
17 whole entire life. I could tell you about my past.
18 I could tell you that my mom died when I was two-
19 years-old. That my dad abused me physically,
20 mentally, emotionally, whatever you name it till I
21 was 15-years-old.

22 I went into the foster care system at 15 and I
23 think it was one of the best decisions I have ever
24 made because when I got into there, I got a Fair
25 Futures coach and she definitely was there for me as

1
2 that mother figure. She showed me how to be, how to
3 do everything from like my first period to school
4 work to sobbing, crying at 12 a.m. about my boy
5 problem and this is not the first you know instance
6 that this has happened. I feel truly blessed that I
7 have a Fair Futures coach to this day and I feel like
8 that, I wouldn't know what to do without my Fair
9 Futures coach.

10 I think that this organization and me just
11 sitting here since 10 a.m. you know willingly. I
12 didn't even go to work today. I didn't go to work
13 today because I wanted to come and share with you how
14 important this organization and this is for all the
15 other thousands of youth in foster care in New York.
16 How important this is to us. I know that I could
17 definitely not have survived this pandemic in a
18 foster home without my coach. Even though everything
19 is virtual, she still means the world to me and I
20 know that she is one of those people that's going to
21 be there through thick and thin. Because I haven't
22 had that you know that motherly support. I haven't
23 had that family figure. I haven't had anything to
24 you know say that this is mine and this person is
25 here to truly help me.

1
2 And I don't want other kids to go without a coach
3 or have to say that they never have had one. And I
4 wanted to say, the last thing I wanted to say was
5 that, please help other youths in foster care because
6 this organization, this, this is really important to
7 me and other youth in the system and I know that
8 baselining this will help every other youth. Every
9 single youth in the system and it will make a big
10 difference and investing in us will definitely, it
11 will show you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Cheyanne. You
13 know, it's people like you who give me hope for the
14 world and for the future and the fact that you've
15 been here since ten o'clock in the morning is just
16 amazing and I mean, I don't know, I didn't think
17 anybody could beat the ukulele's but your testimony
18 certainly has put a smile on my face and hope in my
19 heart and I just thank you for staying you know all
20 this time because hearing your story, it will make us
21 very hard not to do what you asked us to do. Thank
22 you so much.

23 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Thank you.
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I know, I know Council
3 Member Adams is here and she wants to say a few words
4 also to you. Thank you Cheyanne.

5 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Definitely.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Hello my love. How are
8 you?

9 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Doing so well. Doing what
10 I do best.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Cheyanne, uhm, I just
12 can't tell you how proud I am of you. To know you
13 and like I said to you on our 101 on Instagram a
14 couple of weeks ago, we got to hang out because you
15 are mine and daughter of Richmond Hill. You and I
16 are going to hang out very, very soon. I got to get
17 your information though so that we can get together
18 and I mean that. I want you to come to my house. I
19 want a lot of stuff for you and me.

20 So, I already told you this. You are mine and I
21 am yours and I just wanted to make sure to reenforce
22 that. I am going to be fighting with everything in
23 me. You already know that. To baseline Fair
24 Futures, one of the best organization for our youth
25 out there. So, uhm, keep on looking up my darling

1
2 and we're going to do everything that we can to make
3 sure that you are taken care of. That your
4 colleagues are taken care of, your coaches because
5 you so, so deserve it and we're so proud of you
6 Cheyanne. So, so, proud of you for hanging out and
7 hanging on all day long. I'm on three different
8 devices, I saw you pop up and I said, there is my
9 baby. Let me get on here and let me just let her
10 know how much I appreciate you and you are doing such
11 a great job.

12 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Thank you so much. That
13 means the world to me. I just hope that we can get
14 this baselined.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Me to, me to. We're going
16 to do everything that we can to do that. Take care.

17 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Thank you guys so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much. Thank
19 you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
21 from Demetrius Napolitano followed by Katherine
22 DeLeon.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 DEMETRIUS NAPOLITANO: Hi, just real fast, I'm
25 going to read my testimony and then Angel, his last

1
2 name is Vitamer(SP?) I believe. He is in a hospital
3 after he attempted suicide, so he is not here if
4 that's okay Speaker, it will just actually 30
5 seconds.

6 So, my name is Demetrius Napolitano and I am
7 testifying today to ask the Mayor and the City to
8 baseline \$20 million and support a Fair Futures so
9 young people in foster care can have the one on one
10 supports they need to thrive.

11 When I was two months old, I was placed into the
12 New York City's foster care system where I spent the
13 next 21 years of my life. I lived in nearly 30
14 different homes, experienced a failed adoption,
15 experienced all forms of trauma and abuse and then
16 aged out of the system. However, the system did give
17 me one support that forever changed my life's
18 trajectory. Someone who believed in me, someone who
19 never gave up on me.

20 At the time, we didn't have Fair Futures funding
21 for coaches but this one agency staff decided exactly
22 what a Fair Futures coach does today. She met me on
23 my level, provided me with the emotional support and
24 was the first person to believe in me and my goals
25 and dreams and help me see them through. Today,

1
2 because of that one on one support I received from
3 our coaches and mentors over the years and because of
4 my inmate resilience [BROKEN UP AUDIO 9:49:28] that
5 foster youth have. I am proud to say that I
6 represent the 20 percent of foster youth with a high
7 school degree and three percent with a bachelor's
8 degree. I received my BA from NYU and have been a
9 professional speaker, mentor and advocate for over
10 ten years including on Capitol Hill.

11 I recently launched my own nonprofit called
12 Fostering meditation and traveled to India to receive
13 deep training and certification and yoga meditation
14 and mindfulness that have brought the work to the New
15 York City's foster care system. I currently give
16 meditation classes to nearly 400 Fair Futures staff
17 each month through the Fair Futures system where I
18 learn in communities. I have met nearly 150 coaches
19 across all 26 agencies seeing their faces and felt
20 their authenticity and their dedication to supporting
21 the young people they coach in foster care.

22 My story is not unique in that hundreds of young
23 people with Fair Futures coaches have been able to
24 change their life trajectories. I am here today to
25 serve as the voice for the 3,000 young people that

1
2 Fair Future serves. I am here today to also ask the
3 city to not tear away -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

5 DEMETRIUS NAPOLITANO: 30 more seconds please. I
6 am here today to ask the city to not tear away from
7 their Fair Future's coaches and staff from these
8 young people. The staff work so hard to build
9 trusting relationships with the young people and they
10 are deeply trained on how to help them with their
11 goals and dreams. Please do not be the cause of more
12 trauma and destruction in their lives. In my work
13 with Fair Futures staff, I can honestly say that this
14 is the most authentic impactful program that foster
15 care has ever seen and that is because it is truly a
16 community and family and just another 25 more seconds
17 please, if I can. Angel, like I said, he recently
18 attempted suicide because he was having his own
19 mental challenges but before he did so, he did send
20 me his speech for today.

21 So, it goes, I have had my fair shares of
22 negative experiences with the law. I was young,
23 reckless and misguided until I came across great
24 coaches, mentors and genuine human beings who helped
25 change my perspective on the possible success. It

1
2 take a village to raise a boy into a man. It is safe
3 to say that my mentors have helped enlighten me from
4 the dark places I was in. At a point and time, I was
5 homeless. However, I was able to secure housing
6 through the assistance of one of my coaches who
7 continues to provide unconditional support to my
8 wellbeing. I don't have a close bond with my parents
9 as your typical 19-year-old would, mainly because of
10 the lack of trust between them and I.

11 Honestly, I feel more comfortable sharing
12 confidential things and certain ideas with my mentor
13 rather than family giving. I don't feel judged by
14 him. I'm personally asking for more funding for Fair
15 Futures so youth like myself can prosper out of the
16 dark abyss we're often placed within.

17 Thank so my mentors, I have graduated high school
18 and have six amazing jobs on my resume already. I am
19 blessed to be in a position I am in today. More
20 importantly however, are my brothers and sisters
21 still within the system who need to same guidance I
22 was given and am still receiving by my coaches.

23 No one can do it alone. For surely Bill Gates,
24 nor did Martin Luther King Jr. make it without a
25 strong support system. Please don't underappreciate

1
2 our heroes who don't wear a cape but help us elevate
3 mentally every day.

4 Thank you so much Speaker and like the young lady
5 before me, I was on here as well since 10 a.m. just
6 because this is extremely important to myself and all
7 of my brothers and sisters in the foster care system.
8 Thank you once again Speaker, I appreciate it.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you so much Demetrius.
10 You brought to mind a song. I don't know if you've
11 heard of it but it's called, if my friends could see
12 me now. Look at you. Look how sharp you look. You
13 got dressed, you've been on this call you know since
14 ten o'clock in the morning and you're representing
15 and supporting your friend Angel. Stick by him. He
16 needs help and you are probably someone who has
17 brought a lot of stability to his life as well. And
18 don't worry about taking the burden. I am not saying
19 you know, carry a burden but be there for him for
20 support because he needs you and we need you. We
21 need you to keep advocating for Fair Futures as we
22 fight. But just say, look at me now. Look at me
23 now. Thank you. Thank you Demetrius.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
25 Katherine DeLeon followed by Cal Hedigan.

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 KATHERINE DELEON: Thank you. My name is
4 Katherine Deleon, I am a Member of the Legal Services
5 Team on Make the Road New York. Programs funded by
6 the Council that play a key role in supporting
7 immigrant New Yorkers. We respectfully request that
8 the Council restore and baseline the \$12 million.
9 Invest \$10.5 million in the Adult Literacy Pilot
10 Project that the NYC Coalition for Adult Literacy
11 have to pull and ensure that every adult has the
12 necessary hardware and free internet to be able to
13 learn on line.

14 To enable us to continue to provide Know Your
15 Rights and other trainings for our communities, we
16 request that the Council restore funding for the
17 Consortium for Welfare Education and its network. We
18 request renewed and expand the funding for the low-
19 wage worker support services in the amount of
20 \$500,000 in legal services funding through the Low-
21 Wage Worker Initiative and \$300,000 in outreach and
22 organizing funding under the Low-Wage Worker Support
23 Initiative.

24 We strongly urge this delegation to baseline \$4
25 million for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative and \$1

1 million for the Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative.

2 We request continued funding in the amount of \$1
3 million for the Rapid Response legal Collaborative
4 and an additional \$250,000 in discretionary funding
5 for Make the Road New York Deportations Defense
6 Project, so we can support immigrants who are
7 detained or at risk for being deported.
8

9 We ask that the City Council allocate \$150,000 in
10 funding under the legal services for the Working Poor
11 Initiative to support our legal department in
12 handling over 10,000 cases annually.

13 We ask the Brooklyn Delegation to support our
14 recent initiative for community health workers and
15 increase funding for \$22 million for the Emergency
16 Food Assistance Program to support more than 500
17 pantries and soup kitchens in the city.

18 To support youth and hate violence and increase
19 the safety of our community, we request the
20 following: Restore the Hate Violence Prevention
21 Initiative; Defund the NYPD by reallocating public
22 funds for policing and redirecting those funds to
23 expand services in marginalized communities.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 KATHERINE DELEON: And \$52 millions towards
3 expanding restorative practices citywide. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Katherine.
5 Appreciate you coming in. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Cal
7 Hedigan followed by Joyce Ma (SP?).

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 CAL HEDIGAN: Thank you Chair Dromm and members
10 of the Finance Committee for your sustained attention
11 today. I am Cal Hedigan, CEO of Community Access, an
12 organization that has been supporting the self
13 determination of people living with mental health
14 concerns since 1974.

15 Our 350 staff work daily to support thousands of
16 New Yorkers through Supportive Housing, training,
17 advocacy and other healing focused services. I
18 direct your attention to my written testimony, which
19 goes into greater detail on a number of budget
20 issues. I will focus on just a few. Community
21 Access is a founding member of the Correct Crisis
22 Intervention Today in New York City Coalition or CCIT
23 NYC. While the Mayor's proposal to invest \$112
24 million in a rollout of mental health response teams
25 for people experiencing mental health crisis is a

1
2 step in the right direction. CCIT NYC has number of
3 concerns with the proposed plan, two of which I
4 highlight here.

5 The city estimates that more than 30 percent of
6 calls will still be answered by Law Enforcement.
7 This could lead to more people in crisis being killed
8 in police encounters. Adding to the 18 New Yorkers
9 who have been killed since 2015. We must completely
10 eliminate the police as responders.

11 And secondly, response teams must consist of a
12 trained peer, someone with lived mental health
13 experience and an independent EMT. Critical to
14 transforming the current corrosive system into a
15 compassionate and person centered approach.

16 CCIT NYC urges the City Council to dig into the
17 details of the Mayor's proposed plans and push for
18 changes such as those I have highlighted. Failing to
19 do so places the city at risk of replacing one flawed
20 system with another.

21 I would also like to thank the City Council for
22 its budget advocacy on behalf of the nonprofit
23 sector.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.
25

1
2 CAL HEDIGAN: Securing the restitution of ICR
3 funding. There is much more to be done. City
4 contracts for human service organizations are
5 structured in such a way that nonprofits cannot pay
6 our work force. 80 percent of whom are women of
7 color, a living wage.

8 Last year, the city allowed the COLA for Human
9 Services workers to expire. A three percent COLA
10 must be restored. In addition, city funding levels
11 must increase to address the inequitable salary
12 structure in this sector. And lastly, we need to
13 reimagine public safety in our city. Increasing
14 investment in community services that address
15 people's real needs. Access to affordable housing,
16 equitable educational opportunities, quality
17 healthcare for all, living wage jobs. These are all
18 elements of public safety. A militarized police
19 force and bloated carceral system are not the answer.

20 We spend over \$400,000 per year to imprison one
21 person in a city jail. With equivalent funds, we
22 could house 16 New Yorkers in supportive housing.
23 Our budget priorities must shift to reflect our
24 values. We must make it a priority to stand for
25 racial justice and a just recovery. One that

1
2 strengthens communities and furthers equity, rather
3 than pouring money into broken and racist structures.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and
5 thank you to the librarians and the canners and the
6 Fair Future people for inspiring me this evening.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks Cal and there is
8 someone who had followed up who had mental health
9 issues. I appreciate you coming in and giving
10 testimony very much. Thank you.

11 CAL HEDIGAN: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, it looks like Joyce has
13 hopped off, so we will move onto Dr. Cynthia Maurer
14 followed by Bei Chen.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 CYNTHIA MAURER: Hello, I want to thank you for
17 allowing me to speak on behalf of a population that
18 is often overlooked and certainly amongst the hardest
19 hit during this pandemic, the elderly and mostly the
20 oldest old, 85 plus. Visiting Neighbors is the
21 agency that I work with and they were open and active
22 throughout the entire pandemic. Coming into the
23 office and basically being there to be able to meet
24 new people who wanted to volunteer but we needed to
25 make sure their ID's matched who they said they were

1
2 and coordinating activities. We did contactless
3 shopping because food – getting access to food and
4 supplies was utmost of importance to us. Once
5 medical procedures started to happen again, we got
6 our seniors to their doctors, helped them communicate
7 with their medical professionals, got them the shot,
8 helped them go voting and telephone reassurance,
9 which was a small program exploded in the course of
10 since the part – point at the beginning of the
11 pandemic, we literally made 13,000 hours of phone
12 calling to people just to be supportive. This
13 pandemic made people feel very scared, frightened.
14 We all felt it but our volunteers were just as upset
15 as our seniors were. We have people who survived, we
16 have people who didn't but we needed to be here for
17 all of our clients. I know the Council gets it.
18 They support us. Thank God for you. You kept our
19 doors open. We help people outside of own area that
20 we served. We took every phone call. We listened to
21 every story. We were there and we were there because
22 of the City Council.

23 We were there because you supported us. Please
24 continue to support the initiatives. Please continue
25 to help each of the Council Members have their

1
2 discretionary funds. We need that money to keep
3 doing what we do. We all want to be treated with
4 compassion and dignity as we grow old.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

6 CYNTHIA MAURER: We have 16 soon who will be
7 turning 100-years-old and may we all get there. Our
8 eldest 107 died in December but not of COVID, of
9 natural causes and surrounded by Visiting Neighbors
10 people who were there to let her know, she is not
11 alone. Together, we will make sure our seniors know
12 that they are not alone. Please continue to support
13 programs that are not senior center programs. These
14 are the small but mighty groups that are hanging in
15 there like the little engine that could getting up
16 those hills and helping our people.

17 Thank you so much for all of your support because
18 we love our Council. Our City Council is our – you
19 guys are angels. The Chair of our Aging Committee,
20 Margaret Chin, we love you. She has been amazing in
21 support of us because if we're all lucky, we'll
22 become one one day surrounded by loved ones and if we
23 don't have loved ones, hopefully we'll have a
24 Visiting Neighbors. Thank you very much.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and I want to
3 recognize our beloved Council Member Margaret Chin.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair Dromm. I
5 just wanted to thank Cynthia for Visiting Neighbors
6 for testifying. She comes every year and I don't
7 know why the Department for the Aging don't fund you
8 guys. I mean, it's like they have these friendly
9 visit programs but they don't really do what the
10 Visiting Neighbors do and definitely you serve the
11 most vulnerable. The frail, the 85 and above. I
12 mean, we got to take care of these seniors whose been
13 around for so long. We want to make sure they stay
14 healthy and strong. And we will continue to support
15 the work that you do because it's amazing and a lot
16 of my colleagues, a lot of the Council Members also,
17 you know support and you can count on us for that and
18 thank you to all the volunteers and the staff for
19 like, staying strong during the pandemic.

20 DR. CYNTHIA MAURER: I just want to say one
21 thing. That our volunteers represent the absolute
22 best of New York City. A city that cares. That
23 really does care. And seniors who are very
24 appreciative. Some a little more than others but
25 nevertheless, the all were able to get toilet paper

1
2 and PPP, uh PPE, sorry, stuck with letter. PPE and
3 the supplies they needed and food and volunteers
4 stood for hours on food lines and negotiated with
5 restaurants who weren't using food and managed to get
6 smoothies and yogurts. And I mean, the most creative
7 group of people I have ever met that really just care
8 and thank you from the bottom of our heart because we
9 intend. This is going to be our 49th year. You are
10 part of our 50th, soon to becoming history and we are
11 still here. And that's what we tell our seniors and
12 that's the theme of our 50th anniversary and we
13 expect our Council to be right alongside us to say,
14 we are still here.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Thank you so
16 much.

17 CYNTHIA MAURER: Thank you, muah, muah.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And thank you Chair Dromm.
19 He is also our star advocate for our elderly.

20 CYNTHIA MAURER: We need you all.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

22 CYNTHIA MAURER: We need you all.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you very
24 much. Alright, let's go to our next witness.

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Bei
3 Chen followed by Fatima Shama.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 BEI CHEN: Hi, my name is Bei Chen and I live in
6 Brooklyn with my husband and my three-year-old son
7 Erin. I am so nervous in front of you but I am doing
8 it because this is really important.

9 When Erin turned three, I learned that he has
10 autism. Erin's doctor told me to ask the DOE for
11 preschool special education services. At a meeting,
12 the DOE said that Erin needs a small special
13 education class and the sizes like 30 to help him
14 speak.

15 I tried right away to get Erin the things that he
16 need. The DOE did not have a space for Erin in a
17 small class for his speech, so I have to place Erin
18 in a preschool class that does not have speech
19 therapy. I am glad that I found a class for Erin
20 because I know how important it is for children with
21 autism to get services when they are young. Erin
22 feels happy in the school and he is learning so much
23 from his teacher, Ms. Angelina.

24 I know many families still do not have a
25 preschool special education class for their children,

1
2 since the city does not have enough space and they
3 are very scared. Thank you to the City Council for
4 saying that city should have preschool special
5 education classes for all children who need them and
6 should pay teachers in these classes the same as PreK
7 teachers.

8 And Ms. Angelina, that's a great job with Erin.
9 She should be paid the same as other teachers, so she
10 can keep working with the students like my son Erin
11 who need more help. Preschool \$85 million in the
12 budget for our preschool special education this year
13 and pay preschool special education teachers the same
14 as other preschool teachers. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
16 And we will now hear from Fatima Shama followed by
17 Matthew Shapiro.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 FATIMA SHAMA: Thank you so much. Thank you
20 Chair Dromm and to all of you that have been here all
21 day long. It's great to see you, its been a really
22 long time. To all the distinguished members of the
23 City Council, thank you for the opportunity to
24 testify during this virtual hearing. I want to
25

1
2 applaud you, the Council and the city at large for
3 prioritizing summer programming for youth.

4 My name is Fatima Shama and I have the privilege
5 of being the Executive Director of the Fresh Air
6 Fund. For 145 years the Fresh Air Fund has provided
7 the city's children with summer experiences that help
8 them thrive and succeed emotionally, academically and
9 socially. The realities of last summer as you know
10 and a global health pandemic, plaguing our
11 communities, the Fresh Air Fund suspended our
12 traditional summer programming. However, our team
13 was determined to provide New York City children with
14 the summer experiences we know and we knew that they
15 needed and deserved. In particular, in the
16 communities most hard hit by the pandemic.

17 Recognizing and knowing the needs of the children
18 and their families, we created four programs to
19 engage and support New York City's youth. My
20 testimony outlines the four programs but what I am
21 here to talk to you today about was actually a
22 program called Fresh Air Summer Spaces, which
23 basically turned the ten open streets across four
24 boroughs into safe places for children to play.

1
2 They serve children ages five to 13. The
3 Department of Transportation was a critical partner
4 last year in helping us identify open streets for the
5 Fresh Air Fund programming. I am delighted to say
6 that we were in several of your neighborhoods
7 Chairman Dromm. We were right in Jackson Heights.
8 You might have seen us on 34th Avenue on the open
9 street serving children. It was an extraordinary
10 opportunity last summer in particular.

11 I want to thank many of you because your
12 assistance and support in working with the city
13 agencies was what made the program a great success
14 last year.

15 We recognize and continue to work towards
16 elevating the safety and wellness.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

18 FATIMA SHAMA: For the children that we're
19 serving. We are aiming to do it again this summer
20 and we want to be in the very neighborhoods that are
21 most effected.

22 We are asking for your support of only \$50,000
23 from the Council to subsidize in particular the
24 summer youth employment model that we employ. The
25 program is free to all the children in the

1
2 neighborhood. We think it's a community development
3 strategy in particular because we employ young people
4 from the community. Where young people can see
5 perhaps their siblings playing and where parents can
6 walk by and see their children enjoying fun
7 activities they are enriching and engaging.

8 We are excited we have great partners like the
9 American Valley Theatre and the Queens Public Library
10 and Buy A Bus, all returning to partner with us
11 again, so that we can introduce dance, music and
12 books and literacy to all our children, in particular
13 during a year where learning loss has been critical
14 and where we need to sort of – we need to focus on
15 enriching and providing opportunities. We hope to
16 serve, over – to provide 19,000 slots for children
17 over 27 days. Thank you for listening and thank you
18 for being so extraordinary in being here all day.
19 And I just want to say listening to all of the
20 amazing work happening across the city as I know
21 giving my chapters, I was really moved by Cheyanne
22 and her colleagues from the Fair Futures New York
23 Program. So, I will be doing my own research to
24 support them as well.

25 Great to see you Council Member Dromm.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Great to see you
3 Commissioner, if I may call you Commissioner.

4 FATIMA SHAMA: That's very kind. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: As my days of Chair of the
6 Immigration Committee and some of the great work that
7 we did together. It's wonderful and wonderful to
8 know that you are at the Fresh Air Fund and I do
9 appreciate the work that you did on 34th Avenue last
10 summer. It was very successful and really important
11 and contributed you know, not only to the kids who
12 got the programming but also to the vitality of our
13 open street and that was important. You were one of
14 the first programming pieces that we actually had on
15 34th Avenue.

16 So, thank you Commissioner Shama and continued
17 good luck in your career. It's always good to see
18 you. Stay in touch, don't go far.

19 FATIMA SHAMA: I won't. I do, I do and I will be
20 in touch and I can't wait to see you and other
21 members of the Council visiting us again on streets
22 across New York City where like on 34th Avenue. It
23 really is an opportunity to bring the community
24 together and we're honored to be a part of it. It's
25 really community leadership and they invited us back

1
2 as many other community partners and so, it's about
3 our young people. It's about our communities and
4 it's about seeding that brilliance that happens so
5 richly. So, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, looking forward to
7 seeing you.

8 FATIMA SHAMA: Okay, will do. Be well. Thank
9 you everyone.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

11 FATIMA SHAMA: Thank you, bye, bye.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Matthew
13 Shapiro followed Prakash Churaman.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now. Mr. Shapiro,
15 we can't hear you. Nope, we still can't hear you.
16 It seems you're having issues with your audio.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll move onto the next
18 person and then we'll circle back with you. Perhaps
19 it's something with your headphones. So, we will
20 hear next from Prakash Churaman.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 PRAKASH CHURAMAN: Hello, thank you for this
23 opportunity. My name is Prakash Churaman. I was
24 arrested at the age of 15 in Queens New York and
25 coerced into falsely confessing to a crime I did not

1
2 commit. I was thrown in jail in Rikers Island for
3 nearly four years before I was afforded my first
4 trial. I was given my first trial and my first trial
5 was unfair. I was wrongly convicted and sentenced to
6 a term of nine-years to life in prison. My
7 conviction was overturned in June of last year. I was
8 recently released from Rikers Island in January of
9 this year on bail with the conditions of electronic
10 monitoring. I am now at home confined to my home
11 awaiting a new trial.

12 And I am here today to demand that City Council
13 please defund NYPD by at least \$1 billion and for
14 those funds to go towards resources such as mental
15 health, substance abuse, permanent affordable housing
16 and endless equal employment opportunity.

17 And I ask that you please contribute to anything
18 that will fix this miscarriage of justice. Once
19 again, my name is Prakash Churaman and as of right
20 now, I am fighting for my life, for my home in Queens
21 New York. And I am demanding that Queens DA drop
22 these charges. I spent the last six years
23 incarcerated for a crime I did not commit.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

25

1
2 PRAKASH CHURAMAN: Thank you. I really appreciate
3 it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Prakash. I have
5 been a strong advocate for criminal justice reform.
6 I hear the emotion in your voice. I don't know your
7 case in particular but you have given a very strong
8 testimony and you can always reach out to my office
9 and we'll see a little bit more and get a little more
10 information from you. And I just wish you the best
11 of luck moving forward with your case and thank you
12 for being here and for speaking out. It's very
13 important to hear and you know, you must have
14 suffered on Rikers Island a lot. So, my heart goes
15 out to you and I wish the best for you.

16 PRAKASH CHURAMAN: Thank you. I appreciate it.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I will now go back to Matthew
18 Shapiro followed by Maya Williams.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Hi, can you hear me?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We can hear you now.

22 MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Great, good evening. My name
23 is Matthew Shapiro and I am the Legal Director of the
24 Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center and
25 also a resident of Jackson Heights. With a staff of

1
2 eight, SVP is the only organization that works solely
3 with street vendors in New York City through direct
4 legal representation, small business development and
5 training, organizing support, leadership development
6 and strategic legislative advocacy.

7 We have connected nearly 3,000 street vendors to
8 resources and information about housing, food access
9 and loan and grant opportunities in the past year
10 alone.

11 With the New York City Council's support, we hope
12 to continue providing critical COVID-19 relief
13 resources to our members across the five boroughs.
14 We need your support to help us expand our
15 organizational capacity to meet the increased demand
16 for our services during the COVID-19 pandemic and
17 subsequent recovery. Throughout this year, SVP's
18 staff and leadership board have pivoted to meet the
19 needs of the members, some of the most vulnerable
20 workers in New York City while engaging in deep
21 community and base building efforts.

22 Our pandemic response has directly support,
23 excluded in underserved workers and small business
24 owners by connecting them to the resources that meet
25 their immediate needs.

1
2 As part of our emergency response, we supported
3 over 1,000 families with cash assistance ranging from
4 300 to 1,000. Distributed over 28,000 culturally
5 relevant meals made by 80 street vendors at 51
6 individual distribution sites. We connected 2,000
7 vendors to housing food and mental health resources
8 and created and distributed multilingual COVID safe
9 business operating guidelines as well as 7,000 masks
10 to our vendors. And consulted with over 400 street
11 vendors on legal services, small business grants and
12 loans, as well as making almost 1,000 calls to check
13 in on our members.

14 Beginning in May, our team launched food
15 distribution programs that both supply income to
16 street vendors and supported food insecure
17 communities in Sunset Park and Brooklyn, in Corona
18 Queens and across the Bronx and Highbridge, Melrose
19 and Mott Haven.

20 Through the program, street vendors were employed
21 for the first time since the outset of the pandemic,
22 allowing them the opportunity to return to the work
23 of feeding their neighbors.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.
25

1
2 MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Additionally in coordination
3 with the New York City's Office on Immigrant Affairs,
4 we have been assisting vendors by providing
5 multicultural and linguistic outreach, educate them
6 about vaccination appointments. Our work during the
7 pandemic has been critical in providing health and
8 financial resources to vendors across the city.
9 Thank you for your consideration of our proposal to
10 continue this vital programming.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Maya
12 Williams followed by Christine Henson.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 MAYA WILLIAMS: Good evening, my name is Maya
15 Williams and I am testifying on behalf of Communities
16 United for Police Reform. A multisector campaign
17 working to end discriminatory and abusive policing
18 and practices in New York. Thank you Chair Dromm for
19 hosting this hearing today.

20 I am a Black mother raised in Bedford Stuyvesant
21 and currently reside in East New York. Some of the
22 most overpoliced and burden neighborhoods in our
23 city. I am here to speak to the critical changes
24 that need to be made in budget priorities for the
25

1
2 livelihood of Black, Latinx and other communities of
3 color.

4 Although the Mayor has claimed his proposed
5 executive budget for Fiscal Year '22 as a recovery
6 budget that makes massive investments in working
7 families, when looking at the actual numbers, it's
8 clear, the Mayor is out of touch with what it will
9 take for communities of color to recover from COVID-
10 19. For example, he is proposing an ill-conceived
11 plan to deploy alternative mental health response
12 teams across the city. At a cost of \$112 million.
13 Even though the pilot program hasn't even begun.

14 While we think it is positive to consider
15 alternative mental health response, the Be Heard
16 Program Design does little to pre or post crisis
17 mental healthcare and does not make significant
18 investments in the community based mental healthcare
19 services that are desperately needed in our
20 communities.

21 Our communities need more than a band aide. We
22 need quality accessible mental healthcare from
23 culturally competent providers in community-based
24 settings. We don't need more trips to the hospital,
25 more wait lists and more clinicians that are out of

1
2 touch with our communities. We're calling on the
3 Council to make this happen. We're calling on the
4 Council to end NYPD's youth initiatives which pays
5 over 300 officers to interact with young people in
6 the neighborhood.

7 We're calling on the Council to stop investing
8 more money in the NYPD under the invention and
9 reforms. It's unacceptable that the NYPD is
10 potentially going to receive an additional \$14
11 million to hire community assistance and ambassadors
12 to do things like fix basketball hoops.

13 If neighborhoods do need these kinds of services,
14 none NYPD jobs should be created to fill this need
15 and community-based organization should be received
16 in these fronts.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

18 MAYA WILLIAMS: A few more seconds please. We
19 don't need more police officers. We need more
20 counselors, teachers, nurses and youth workers.
21 These are the common jobs that we needed this past
22 year and didn't have enough of but we have plenty of
23 officers in our streets on an exceeded overtime
24 budget.

1
2 Black, Latinx and other communities of color
3 deserve a real recovery budget. We deserve quality
4 public services. We deserve city invested in and
5 children's future deserves to be invested in. We
6 need a Council who will stop increasing the NYPD's
7 budget year after year. Who will take a bold new
8 approach to city budgeting and invest in services
9 that actually keep our community safe. Thank you for
10 your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from
13 Christine Henson followed by Scott Daly.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 CHRISTINE HENSON: Good evening Chair Dromm and
16 members of the Committee on Finance. It has been a
17 pleasure. I have been here since this morning. I
18 wish I could have met you sooner Chair Dromm.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My
20 name is Christine Henson and I am a member of the
21 Justice Committee. We're here to ask the Council to
22 make cuts that were promised last year in order to
23 defund the NYPD. I personally know what it's like to
24 be victimized and wrongfully accused of an act and I
25 also witnessed my son that is effected with autism

1
2 and he is severe and he also is a District 75
3 student. You know be victimized by police officers
4 and NYPD could have killed my son right before my
5 eyes and I still don't know why. You know our
6 intentions were to receive a speech evaluation;
7 however he was brutalized and to this day, I haven't
8 been told why. Based on that experience, I extremely
9 don't feel safe. I am frightened for him because his
10 speech is extremely limited. And I gave up my career
11 and my education, which I put on hold but I will
12 continue what I started. In order to just follow by
13 process [LOST AUDIO 10:25:05-10:25:12]. Sorry, my
14 connection you know he is severe. He repressed a lot
15 and unfortunately I look at the changes and with
16 limited speech, he's just always been a victim for
17 discrimination because someone doesn't like him
18 because he doesn't speak. Even staff members at the
19 schools know you know that he experienced that brutal
20 incident. That he exhibits fear when we see officers
21 on television. You know he cries and he frowns and
22 you know he does other things that exhibit fear. I
23 live in fear and I am uncomfortable.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

25

1
2 CHRISTINE HENSON: My dreams and passions were
3 put on hold so, I ask that the budget for NYPD can be
4 decreased and put into areas for better mental health
5 services, especially for people that aren't able to
6 vocalize the needs for once or feelings that are jobs
7 and affordable housing and especially resources for
8 education, public education and a lot of people need
9 to be educated on treating people with respect and
10 honor that. You know, because they deserve to be
11 respected. The city didn't move forward with firing
12 any police officers that killed many loved ones and
13 either brutalized people. You know, those officers
14 are still on the force while loved ones and people
15 such as myself are left to gather pieces or gather
16 strength in order to live in a city that is supposed
17 to be the greatest city for peace and opportunities.

18 I'm a native of the city. I have done everything
19 I was supposed to do. I don't know why it happened
20 to me, why we were selected from young some are
21 youth. I enjoy every experience that is presented or
22 obtained on my own side. I ask the City Council to
23 please think of what it feels like if you don't have
24 a voice. You don't have speech ability to vocalize
25 anything. How you feel or just to say hello. But I

1
2 ask that you please definitely make the cuts from
3 NYPD and provide funds so there can be mental health
4 services that are phenomenal to better assist people
5 and keep them safe and preserve lands. I ask you
6 again please, make the cuts that were promised last
7 year in order to defund the NYPD. And I ask on
8 behalf of my son that is unable to say much please.
9 Thank you for this opportunity. I hope you can help.
10 I've been asking for help since [INAUDIBLE 10:28:07].
11 Since Mayor de Blasio was a public advocate. I just
12 want my son to be able to thrive and accel and even
13 smile again or even enjoy the parks. Everything that
14 was discussed in this meeting today. The parks and
15 just nature and just safety. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Henson. We
17 will now hear from Scott Daly followed by Annie
18 Garneva.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 SCOTT DALY: Good evening everyone. Chair Dromm,
21 I don't know how you have done it this long. All the
22 members of the Council who are here and part of this
23 Committee. I applaud all who are still here, who are
24 like me and got on at ten o'clock this morning. Got
25

1
2 up and down and did somethings and actually ran away
3 for about an hour to go visit one of my locations.

4 Let me tell you what we do. NYJTL, we provide
5 free tennis to all kids throughout the entire City of
6 New York, all five boroughs and we're able to do this
7 because of the Council funding. That's where we get
8 this opportunity to do it. We bring tennis to each
9 and every Council Members district throughout the
10 years. We operate all four seasons, outdoors in the
11 spring, summer, fall. We have a 20-week indoor
12 program, the cost of which is just astronomical. We
13 are asking, we are seeking, we need the \$1.2 million
14 that we have applied for this year to continue our
15 programming. Everything is free.

16 In addition to the tennis, during the summer, we
17 being in when it's not a COVID year like last year,
18 but every summer before that, just D75 schools come
19 to our program over 1,000 each year come to it.
20 Provide teacher training. We teach gym teachers to
21 bring tennis into the school to provide an
22 opportunity for these kids who have never had a
23 tennis racket in their hand. We give them rackets,
24 we give them balls, we give them support staff. The
25 ethnicity that we serve. Think about a melting pot.

1
2 Throughout the year, 9,000 kids will participate. We
3 almost have an even breakdown between Asian,
4 Hispanic, African American 25 percent each. Nearly
5 25 percent is potpourri, made up of everything else.
6 The ages, the tenant under group, the youngest group,
7 two out of every three kids -

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

9 SCOTT DALY: Participate. We're open from 5 to
10 18 years of age. Two out of every three are ten
11 years old and younger. There are health benefits to
12 character development through sports. I just can't
13 say enough. Now that we're coming out of COVID, our
14 registration numbers this spring are up over the past
15 years where we fund spring programming. Over 100
16 percent. The attendance is likewise. I just want to
17 say thank you so very much to the Council who has
18 always provided this opportunity and I want to
19 particularly thank Chair Dromm, Council Member
20 Grodenchik and others who are leaving. It's been my
21 pleasure, my honor to be part and to be able to serve
22 your districts and this Council. Thank you very
23 much.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thanks so much Scott for
25 coming in. I know you have been here since early

1
2 this morning. I really appreciate it. I really love
3 New York Junior Tennis League who does so much with
4 the kids particularly in my district and throughout
5 everybody's district in the City Council. We look
6 forward to continuing to work with you and to support
7 your organization.

8 I know that Council Member Grodenchik has his
9 hand up as well and he may want to say a word.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Chair and
12 uhm, I just want to out Scott because he was with me
13 this afternoon at PS205 on Bell Boulevard in the part
14 of my district and that's where he was and there is
15 an overflow crowd there every day. There were over
16 50 young people there today. Very young children but
17 there is no better program than the New York Junior
18 Tennis League.

19 So, I want to thank the Chair for his support and
20 I want to thank Scott and everybody at the New York
21 Junior Tennis League for the work that they do with
22 our young people.

23 SCOTT DALY: Thank you very much.
24
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Margaret Chin has
3 been here a long time but she is shaking her head.
4 She knows, so thank you Scott.

5 SCOTT DALY: Council Member Chin, absolutely to
6 your District also. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think every Council Member
9 knows about New York Junior Tennis League. So,
10 thanks a lot Scott.

11 SCOTT DALY: Anytime. Thank you everybody.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Bye now.

13 SCOTT DALY: Bye, bye.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear from Annie
15 Garneva followed by Liliana Polo-McKenna.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 ANNIE GARNEVA: Hello, you caught me a little off
18 guard, so give me one second. Thank you. My name is
19 Annie Garneva, I am the Vice President of Policy and
20 Special Initiatives at the New York City Employment
21 and Training Coalition, which supports the workforce
22 development community and there are 180 member
23 organizations. Workforce development programs are
24 the critical beginning of a cycle that connects New
25 Yorkers who have been historically marginalized and

1
2 now hardest hit by the pandemic. To economic
3 opportunities that exist within all of the industries
4 that call New York home.

5 In order to ensure an equitable and inclusive
6 economic recovery, CITA leadership needs to
7 fundamentally shift and align systems, investments
8 and decision making processes that fuel our economy
9 towards a talent centric economic development model
10 that recognizes human capital as the primary pillar
11 and source of prosperity and growth within our
12 communities. Within the proposed budget, this means
13 bringing back workforce programs that were severely
14 cut last year. I will cover three initiatives today
15 but of course there is a wide number of them that
16 would love to be brought back.

17 So, the first is bridge program for workforce
18 development, which was funded as a pilot program at
19 \$850,000 through our Council Initiative with limited
20 contribution from the Administration. Bridge
21 programs provide New Yorkers with basic skill
22 deficits or barriers to employment. The education
23 and training required to skill up to enter an
24 industry training program and begin a career. Within
25 the FY22 budget, we urge the Administration to make

1
2 good on the 2014 career pathways blueprint, which
3 promises \$60 million per year for bridge programs
4 allocation by 2020. So, this year, we are asking for
5 at least \$20 million in investment.

6 The Digital Inclusion Literacy Initiative is the
7 second one we would like to highlight, which we
8 brought back to FY20 numbers of \$3 million and
9 expanded pass that to respond to the urgent digital
10 poverty gaps highlighted by the pandemic which has
11 exacerbated many New Yorkers ability to look for and
12 participate in work.

13 Unless the job training and placement initiative,
14 we traced over \$2 million in cuts last year and must
15 be brought back to the \$7.9 million level at minimum
16 and expanded to provide the over \$1 million
17 unemployed and unemployed New Yorkers with industry
18 training and up skill.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

20 ANNIE GARNEVA: Those are the initiatives we want
21 to highlight and overall, we just want to comment on
22 the fact that returning these Council initiatives to
23 the FY20 levels is the bare minimum. The city must
24 develop and invest in a serious workforce and
25 economic recovery plan to tackle the scale of

1
2 unemployment and business loss that New York City is
3 facing. With resources allocated for workforce
4 development on their way from the American jobs line,
5 now is the time for this administration and the
6 Council to seriously expand investments and
7 collaborations in education, job training, employment
8 services and economic development. The best position
9 is to reenter the workforce. We need a marshal plan
10 for training for training of jobs, a line to
11 industries projected to have significant growth over
12 the next ten years and shovel ready infrastructure
13 projects that grow the economy and provide career
14 pathways rather than the low-wage jobs.

15 We need to map the workforce system to provide a
16 skills bank and database for workers, training
17 providers and employers to increase effectiveness and
18 access the programming. And the current budget does
19 not reflect the scale of workforce needs that
20 millions of New Yorkers have and does not provide us
21 with an adequate and visionary jobs plan that would
22 help propel us out of the recession that we're in.

23 So, I thank you for the very long hearing. I
24 thank you for being so arduous and on top of things
25 and really listening a limit of the community that

1
2 has come before you today and we want to make sure
3 that we are working together particularly on the jobs
4 and skills needs of New Yorkers.

5 Thank you and I look forward to hearing from some
6 of our members such as OBT.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will
8 now hear from Liliana Polo-McKenna followed by
9 Caroline Iosso.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 LILIANA POLO-MCKENNA: Good evening. My name is
12 Liliana Polo-Mckenna and I am the Chief Executive
13 Officer at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow. One
14 of the member organizations of New York City
15 Employment and Training Coalition.

16 Thank you to the members of the Council for the
17 opportunity to speak today and for sticking through
18 on this marathon session. I am here to really talk
19 about the crisis facing New York City's young adults
20 and the opportunities we must act on now to support
21 them and just underscore the sense of urgency that
22 Annie Garneva was expressing in her testimony.

23 Founded in 1983, OBT is one of New York City's
24 largest providers of workforce development and
25 education services for opportunity youth, ages 17-24,

1
2 and adults who are disconnected from education or
3 employment. We exist to break the cycle of poverty
4 and inequity through education, job training and
5 employment.

6 We know that COVID-19 and this ensuing economic
7 hardship have really had a disproportionate impact on
8 low-income Black and Brown communities. As we have
9 been rooted in these communities for decades, we know
10 that our services would be more critical than ever.
11 There was no lapse in OBT's programming as we shifted
12 to remote programming, literally overnight.

13 And despite the resilience and hard work of
14 organizations like OBT, New York City's young people
15 are in crisis. Since the pandemic started, the
16 number of out of school and out of work young adults
17 has more than doubled. The most recent research
18 estimates that there are now between 257,000 and
19 310,000 young adults that fit this criteria, compared
20 to 110,000 in 2019. So, we must support young people
21 now. There is a real sense of urgency to ensure that
22 they could flourish and that our economy can recover.

23 In the short-term, we must increase funding for
24 what works. So, expanding training programs in high
25 growth sectors, like technology, healthcare and the

1
2 green economy, we know where the opportunities are
3 and will be and we need the funding to innovate
4 training programs alongside our partners that can
5 upscale New Yorkers into those opportunities now.

6 Expand bridge programming, so that advanced
7 training programs in those high growth sectors are
8 accessible to New Yorkers who are seeking to enter
9 those careers. This includes contextualized high
10 school equivalency programming and a focus on digital
11 literacy. It also includes baselining for \$12
12 million for adult literacy that we've heard over the
13 course of the day today.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

15 LILIANA POLO-MCKENNA: It also means supporting
16 Work-Based Learning opportunities. We know that
17 the research shows and we know, we've seen it
18 internships and apprenticeships help young people to
19 build those technical skills but also learn the
20 essential skills of how to navigate the workplace.

21 And finally, ensuring that all programming
22 includes wraparound supports, which is needed now
23 more than ever and I can't underscore this enough.
24 None of these programs work if our participants don't
25 have the support for food stipends, childcare

1 vouchers, transportation, mental health services.

2 This not only keep students engaged but makes it
3 possible for people to participate and to effectively
4 transition into whether it's higher education,
5 employment or further advanced training.
6

7 In the long term, we have to look at the
8 systemwide opportunities that were referenced in
9 earlier testimonies. The solutions have to be
10 sustainable and time to start those is now. We can't
11 wait two, three years down the line as we see the
12 economic development opportunities that are emerging
13 in different parts of the city. Now is the time to
14 start the training. Now is the time to fund and
15 support partnerships, to ensure that every New Yorker
16 can have an access to living wage jobs. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will
18 now hear from Caroline Iosso followed by Michael
19 Pope.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 CAROLINE IOSSO: Good evening. My name is
22 Caroline Iosso, I am the Director of Advocacy and
23 Strategic Communication at OBT. Thank you for the
24 opportunity to speak. As Liliana laid out, young
25 adults have borne the brunt of the economic fallout

1
2 and are now facing a steep uphill battle towards
3 economic stability. With tens of thousands more
4 young people now disconnected from employment and
5 education, with increased competition for jobs and
6 new requirements for jobs, building pathways to
7 living wage employment is even more important and if
8 the city cares about equity, we have an obligation to
9 support young people out of this crisis.

10 At OBT we're focused on three different
11 solutions, first, expanding training programs in
12 hybrid sectors. We offer advance programs in
13 healthcare and technology where well-paying job
14 opportunities continue to grow. These programs offer
15 a critical next step for those who earn their high
16 school diploma to build experience and paid
17 internships, network of employers and hone their
18 skills. OBT's medical administrative assistant
19 program had a 200 percent increase in applications.
20 And we are hoping to meet this need. We're also
21 seeking support for OBT's Cloud Support Engineering
22 program, which now we're very excited has a pathway
23 in through a bridge program and a pathway out.
24 Graduates now earn a semester of college credits at
25

1
2 CUNY SBS for free. This program is making tech jobs
3 more accessible for New Yorkers.

4 Number two, supporting students with work-based
5 learning and wrap around supports as they work
6 towards high school equivalency. A high school
7 diploma remains the gate keeper to living wage and
8 stable employment. OBT's programs provide
9 professional certifications, paid internship
10 experiences and individual case management.

11 In addition to adding seats for young adults, we
12 want to support more New Yorkers in achieving their
13 HSE's through an adult Spanish language high school
14 equivalency program. And finally, building digital
15 literacy into all educational and workforce
16 programming.

17 Basic technological skills are essential for all
18 workers. We know that, so clearly now and we must
19 address the digital divide through ensuring that all
20 ESOL and high school equivalency classes include
21 digital literacy.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

23 CAROLINE IOSSO: OBT and other workforce
24 organizations need your support in this budget so
25 that we can help young people thrive. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear
3 from Michael Pope.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MICHAEL POPE: Thank you for the opportunity to
6 testify. I also just want to uplift OBT
7 Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, an amazing
8 organization. Excited to see you all here.

9 My name is Michael Pope, I am the Executive
10 Director of Youth Represent. We are a legal
11 nonprofit in New York City dedicated to improving the
12 lives and futures of young people impacted by the
13 criminal legal system. We deeply appreciate the
14 support that the Council has given us so far. Just
15 to highlight, we're requesting a restoration of the
16 \$75,000 we received through the criminal justice
17 initiative.

18 And also an enhancement of \$10,000 to be
19 allocated directly into our emergency fund. I want
20 to take this opportunity to say, you know I have
21 highlighted and talked about the impact we've had
22 through the criminal justice work. But I want to
23 talk for just a second about this emergency fund
24 because it is an enhancement.

1
2 Essentially what it is, is it's a past year.
3 It's 100 percent of the \$10,000 request increase. It
4 goes into Youth represent and it goes out to solve
5 the emergency needs that our clients have through our
6 emergency client fund. What we found when COVID hit
7 was that you know sometimes there's problems that
8 need to solved but innovative policy and
9 collaboration and work and sometimes there's problems
10 that can be solved by cash. And we want to solve
11 those cash problem for our clients.

12 So, this is everything from, we had a client who
13 was pregnant and didn't want to get on the subway
14 because she was afraid during COVID. We paid for the
15 cabs right and emergency cash food that wasn't coming
16 through, we gave the funds to get the food back into
17 that house. And so, we've used \$15,000 for about 42
18 youth over the past year and our fund is out. So,
19 that is the little bit of context about the expansion
20 of the request that we have or rather enhancement.

21 Lastly, Council Member Chin, I had a really good
22 joke on how you can see your district in the
23 background. The sun has set, you cannot see your
24 district anymore, so you will just have to trust me
25 that the joke was pretty good. I apologize that the

1
2 sun has set and thank you everybody so much for your
3 time.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Which Council Member were you
5 talking about? Michael, I can't hear you.

6 MICHAEL POPE: There we go. It's uh, so, Council
7 Member Chin's District. It's very far in the
8 background but you cannot see. Unfortunately the sun
9 has set but it is there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Is it my district you are
11 talking about? District 1?

12 MICHAEL POPE: Yes, very, very, far in the
13 distant. It is there, I promise you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Michael.

15 MICHAEL POPE: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, I believe we've heard
17 from everybody who has signed into the Zoom but just
18 to be sure. If there is anyone who has not had the
19 opportunity to testify, who would like to do so,
20 please use the Zoom raise hand function and we can
21 call on you.

22 Seeing none, Chair Dromm, I'll turn it back to
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you so much.
25 This has been amazing day of testimony. So, many

1
2 stories, so many important causes. It's just been
3 very moving to me. Very emotional to know the needs
4 and wants of our, of our, of our New York City folks.
5 You know, so, we have a lot of work to do. I want to
6 thank Margaret Chin though; she hangs in there with
7 us throughout every budget hearing. She's just so
8 wonderful and I just feel so lucky to know her and to
9 have shared these last 12 years in the Council with
10 her. She is a dedicated, dedicated person and I
11 don't know, you've made a difference in my life and I
12 know that you've probably made a difference in a lot
13 of your constituents lives.

14 So, I want to turn it over to Council Member Chin
15 who wants to say a few words as well.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes. Okay, thank you.
17 Thank you Danny, I mean, it's been a pleasure serving
18 with you this past 2 years. This is our 12th budget.
19 So, I really wanted to make it the great one. And I
20 always enjoy really listening to all the stories and
21 all the testimony. I couldn't be here in the morning
22 because I had a groundbreaking ceremony in my
23 district, where senior housing, affordable housing, a
24 community center is going to be built in the lower
25 east side. So, but I wanted to come back and I

1
2 wanted to stay till the end because some of these
3 stories, especially the student who testified on Fair
4 Future. It just really touched; I think how hard that
5 we really have to fight hard in this budget to make
6 sure that those – that funding is baselined. Because
7 especially for the kids in foster care. I mean, all
8 that they went through and the mentoring program and
9 the coaches that they have and it's just wonderful.
10 And I think that for the public, I always urge people
11 to come and testify because by you telling us your
12 needs and your story, it really helps us advocate and
13 there have been so many programs that we have
14 started, right Danny? Initiatives? Uhm, and
15 funding? Because we heard from you, we heard from
16 the public and I am just proud that in this Council,
17 that we are able to do that and Danny, it's such a
18 pleasure working with you but we're going to stay in
19 touch. You and I are going to live the good life
20 after this year right Danny? We could be advisors
21 right? Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely Council Member
23 Chin.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Finance staff, I mean, like
25 you guys are great with all the reports and all the

1
2 information that we get but in the next couple of
3 weeks Danny, it's going to be really tough right?
4 We're going to have to fight on everything.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Your not kidding, we have a
6 real fight ahead of us. I hear you on your getting
7 it over a half a percent of the budget for our
8 seniors you know. I am going to make that your
9 legacy here Margaret you know.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, we got to make that
11 happen.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That happens, yeah and you're
13 right, I want to also just start off by thanking
14 Robin Forst who is my Finance Director. Yeah, she's
15 been great. She's hung in there with us this whole
16 time. Of course, Rebecca Chasan has been here with
17 us today. Thank you so much Rebecca and Stephanie
18 Ruiz who have also been with us here today. All of
19 the Sergeants who I try to make a point, as I begin
20 the hearings to say thank you to the Sergeants as
21 well. You got a lot of stamina and I am very
22 grateful to all of you. Let me read this closing
23 here and then we will take it from there.

24 Thank you to everyone who testified today.
25 Before we conclude the hearing, I'd like to take to a

1
2 moment to give a well-deserved public thank you to
3 the entire finance division of the City Council.
4 Every other year, they have worked incredibly hard to
5 ensure that the Executive Budget hearings have been
6 informative, thoughtful and comprehensive and it has
7 been a pleasure to work with you all both past and
8 current Council Finance Staff throughout my tenure as
9 Chair. I am so honored that I have been able to have
10 been the Finance Chair and to work with such a group
11 of high, highly professional competent fellow
12 individuals. You made me look good. You know, you
13 informed me. I was not on the Finance Committee but
14 you know, I am most grateful to each and every one of
15 you. Please start with the Director Latonia McKinney
16 for her work. To all of the Deputy Directors, the
17 Assistant Director, Regina, to the Councils, the Unit
18 Heads, the Financial Analysts, the Economists, and
19 support staff, thank you, thank you, thank you.

20 Today, I would also like to give a special thank
21 you to Monica Pepple who will be leaving the Finance
22 Division after two and a half years covering MOCJ.
23 The District Attorneys and the Office to End Gender
24 Based Violence as well as several very important
25 Council initiatives. We wish you the best of luck

1
2 with your wedding and with your next professional
3 endeavor.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, congrats.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Wait, wait, wait, do you have
6 a ring? And I would like to thank all the - there
7 you go, let me see. You got to show us. Alright
8 there you go. I'd also like to thank all the
9 Sergeant at Arms, the IT staff who kept these virtual
10 hearings very smoothly and finally, thank you to my
11 entire staff, Nick Roloson, who is my Chief of Staff,
12 [INAUDIBLE 10:52:07] who is my Deputy Chief of Staff.
13 Jacqueline Sanchez, Jacqueline Cosma(SP?), Kelly Wu,
14 Sebastian McGuire, I hope I got everybody Robin, did
15 I? I think I did and Robin Forst of course who I said
16 before. They sustain me and they keep me going. We
17 had a big pride celebration last night after a whole
18 day of hearings. A whole day of hearings today and
19 we're going to go right into budget negotiations
20 starting tomorrow and it is very soon. And almost
21 every day thereafter.

22 So, thank you. With that, I guess the Fiscal
23 2022 Executive Budget Hearing are now concluded.
24 Good night everybody and thank you. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 31, 2021