

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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December 8, 2025

Start: 10:22 a.m.

Recess: 2:23 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Alexa Avilés, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Erik D. Bottcher

Gale A. Brewer

Carmen N. De La Rosa

Shahana Hanif

Rita C. Joseph

Shekar Krishnan

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Tiffany Cabán

Julie Won

A P P E A R A N C E S

Mule Herrera, Mixteca

Socheatta Meng, Executive Director at Mekong NYC

Medha Venugopal, Senior Staff Attorney with the
Center for Family Representation

Brianna Abreu, Social Worker with the Center for
Family Representation

Rosa Cohen-Cruz, Attorney at Bronx Defenders
reading testimony on behalf of client, Kelvin

Julissa Bisono, Director of Base Building at Make
the Road New York

Ana Vera, New York State Youth Leadership
Council

Mina Farahman, New York City Union of Students

Giovanatta Marangon, New York City Democratic
Socialists of America

KC Wagner, Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers
Network

Alana Tornello, Human Services Council

Jason Smith, New York State Youth Leadership
Council

Deborah Lee, Attorney-in-Charge of the
Immigration Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society

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

Catherine Gonzalez, Associate General Counsel at
Brooklyn Defender Services

Scott Foletta, Managing Attorney for the
Immigration Defense Team at the Neighborhood
Defender Service of Harlem

Brittany Brown, Supervising Attorney of the
Collateral Consequences Unit at New York County
Defender Services

Tania Mattos, Executive Director of UnLocal

Rosa Cohen-Cruz, testifying as Director of
Immigration Policy for the Bronx Defenders

Muhammad Musah, Lead Community Organizer at
African Communities Together

Arash Azizzada, Co-Director of Afghans for Better
Tomorrow

Mahabuba Masud, Health Justice Program at New
York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Leslie Allen, Director of Legal Services at the
New York City Anti-Violence Project

Zachary Ahmad, Senior Policy Counsel at the New
York Civil Liberties Union

Dave Basnet, Senior Manager of Immigrant Rights
Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition

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

Yasmine Farhang, Executive Director of the
Immigrant Defense Project

Tsering Lama, Senior Manager of Organizing and
Policy at Adhikaar

Nat Moghe, Advocacy Coordinator at the Asian
American Federation

Wai Yin (Joyce) Wang, Program Coordinator of
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan, New
York

Manuel Castro, self

Alejandro Grajales, Workers Rights Organizer and
Caseworker at Workers Justice Project

Reverend Chloe Breyer, Executive Director at the
Interfaith Center of New York

Mohammad Razvi, Executive Director and Founder of
Council of People's Organization

Samantha Sanchez, Common Cause New York

Dr. Steve Auerbach, New York Doctors Coalition

Karen Adelman, Co-Chair of the Corrections and
Community Re-Entry Committee, New York City Bar
Association

Alejandra Melgar Chay, paralegal at The Door's
Legal Services Center

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

Shraddha Joshi, paralegal at The Door's Legal Services Center

David Moss, Legal Defense Fund

Durga Sreenivasan, Livable Future Package

Hadia Ali, Livable Future Package

Amadou Ly, Founder of the Amadou Ly Foundation

Michael Loeb, self

Kader Guerrab, self

Raul Rivera, self

Andrew Walsh, Managing Attorney for the Detained Program at Kids in Need of Defense, New York Office

Rex Chen, Supervising Counsel for Immigrant Rights at LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Rachana Shah, self

Jodi Ziesemer, Policy Director for Immigration Emergency Response at the New York Legal Assistance Group

Heather Maria, self

Jenna Jaffe, self

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. This is a
3 microphone check, Committee on Immigration located in
4 the Chambers recorded by Tasha Sherman. Today's date
5 is 12-8-2025.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the
8 Committee on Immigration.

9 At this time, can everybody please
10 silence your cell phones.

11 If you wish to testify, please go to the
12 back of the room to fill out a testimony slip, even
13 if you are already registered online.

14 At this time and going forward, no one is
15 to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
16 the dais.

17 Chair, we are ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [GAVEL] This
19 Committee is called to order. Good morning, everyone,
20 and welcome to today's hearing of the Committee on
21 Immigration. I am Council Member Alexa Avilés, Chair
22 of the Committee.

23 Today, we will consider four bills.
24 Proposed Introduction 214-A, Introduction 1268,
25 Introduction 1272, and Introduction 412.

I'd like to begin by thanking the members of the public and my Committee Colleagues who have joined us here today. We are joined by Council Member Shahana Hanif, Council Member Tiffany Cabán, and Council Member Rita Joseph.

So, while the First Deputy Mayor and the Commissioners enjoy a taxpayer-funded job, they seem to have decided that being held accountable for their work is not worth their time. It is clear by the empty chairs before you that this Administration thinks very little of our communities. Shame on every last one of these so-called public servants. During such an important time and scary time for immigrant New Yorkers, their absence is not only supremely offensive, but it underscores why Eric Adams is a one-term mayor. We will remember who cut the deals to keep themselves out of jail. We will remember who decided they can't show up to a hearing. We will remember who is not doing the work of New York City service while they are getting paid through December 31st with pension. We will remember who decided to not show up to hearings while every administration for the past 100 administrations have done their duty. We will remember who was really petty and

cowardice, potentially incompetent, or simply just didn't care for immigrant New Yorkers. It is a damn shame. For the record, Commissioners can indeed show up in their personal capacities to testify if they cared, but we see no such action.

With that, in the people's house, we will move to public testimony. So, I want to start with a procedural note. Given the number of witnesses signed up to testify today, we may be in testimony for several hours so please plan accordingly and please maintain decorum. If you wish to express support, use the silent approval gesture, and I sincerely thank you for your patience and interest in this hearing.

Our City has been at the forefront of creating legislation that directs municipal resources away from enforcement of outdated and xenophobic federal immigration policies and agencies that weaponize them. These safeguards ensure that our City does not conduct civil immigration enforcement and that it instead upholds dignity of all residents of our sanctuary city. At this hearing, the Committee will examine legislative proposals to consider what more the City can do to marshal our resources and

protect all New Yorkers, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

First, we will hear Proposed Intro. 214-A, sponsored by Council Member Shahana Hanif, in relation to creating a private right of action related to civil immigration detainers in cooperation with the federal government authorities. This bill would create a private right of action in the City's civil immigration detainer laws, allowing individuals held by New York City Police Department, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Probation to bring an action alleging a violation of detainer laws in any court of competent jurisdiction. Even with the successes of New York City's detainer laws, non-citizen community members have been victims of violations of these local laws. A recent report of the New York City Department of Investigation, for example, found that the Department of Corrections officers had violated the City's sanctuary laws by sharing information with federal immigration authorities about two individuals in DOC custody. In February of 2023, the Committees on Immigration and Criminal Justice held a joint oversight hearing in which advocates and impacted individuals testified

that the Department of Corrections had overtly colluded with ICE to transfer immigrants from DOC to ICE custody in violation of our laws. Proposed Introduction 214-A would provide non-citizen New Yorkers with recourse when NYPD, DOC, or DOP officers violate the detainer or other relevant local laws.

Second, we will consider Intro. 1268, which I sponsor, in relation to signage describing certain constitutional and legal protections. This bill would require the Commissioner of MOIA, in consultation with the New York City Law Department, to develop signage that clearly describes the legal protections enacted in key provisions of the law. The signage would also clearly identify examples of non-public areas of City property and list the rights individuals may invoke when interacting with federal immigration authorities. The MOIA Commissioner would prepare the signage in plain language, translate it into multiple languages, and make it available to City agencies. City agencies would conspicuously post the signage, and MOIA Commissioner would conduct outreach regarding the contents of the signage. While our non-profit providers are strapped providing workshop after workshop informing our immigrant

communities of their rights, the City must come up with a way to more consistently deliver this message, not only to those impacted, but to each city agency across all levels of staffing.

Third, we will take up Intro. 1272, sponsored by Council Member Hanif, which would restrict employers from using E-Verify or any other employment eligibility verification system to check the employment authorization status of an employee or an applicant who has not been offered employment, except when federally required. This bill would also require employers to post the notice of their enrollment in the E-Verify system in an area that is visible to both prospective and current employees. Employers additionally would be required to issue a tentative non-confirmation notice to employees if they are not found within the E-Verify system.

Finally, we will hear Intro. 1412, sponsored by Council Member Tiffany Cabán, in relation to redefining terms concerning immigration enforcement to account for current enforcement practices and prohibiting the maintenance of an office or quarters on property under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections by federal

immigration authorities. Local Law 58 of 2014 prohibits ICE from maintaining an office at the Rikers Island Detention Facility to enforce civil immigration law. However, Local Law 58 provides the mayor may, by executive order, authorize federal immigration authorities to maintain an office or quarters on property under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections for purposes unrelated to the enforcement of civil immigration laws. On April 8, 2025, First Deputy Mayor Randy Mastro signed an executive order to allow ICE to maintain an office on Rikers Island. The Council sued, and the New York State Supreme Court invalidated the executive order due to the impermissible appearance of a conflict of interest. Perhaps that's another reason why they are not here today. Intro. 1412 would bar federal immigration authorities from maintaining offices or quarters for any purpose on land over which DOC exercises jurisdiction. It would explicitly supersede any conflicting mayoral executive order or memorandum of understanding entered into by New York City. Finally, it would amend several definitions of the Ad Code to account for current immigration enforcement practices.

These bills seek to reinforce New York City's proud sanctuary city status by dedicating precious resources to protecting workers and sharing actionable information with community members, rather than facilitating extreme immigration enforcement agenda of the White supremacists known as Donald Trump, Stephen Miller, and Tom Homan.

I look forward to discussing the legislation at today's hearing, and I would sincerely like to thank all the Committee Staff for their work on this Committee over the past two years, and on this hearing in particular, including Senior Legislative Counsel Nicole Catá; Senior Legislative Policy Analyst Rebecca Barilla; Principal Financial Analyst Carolina Gil; Council Finance Assistant Director Florentine Kabore, who are, quite frankly, exemplary public servants and always have showed up for our communities. And finally, I'd like to thank my Staff, Chief-of-Staff Edward Cerna; Deputy Chief-of-Staff Christina Bottego; Communications Director Winnie Mariam; and Legislative Fellow Lily Yeung. Thank you to all the hands that make these hearings run smoothly, our security team, our IT team, and Council Staff.

As my last hearing as a Chair of Immigration in this term, I would like to take a special note around what a great honor it has been to engage, to interrogate, and to advocate for immigrant New Yorkers and their family. This field has some of the most compassionate and courageous advocates and activists, and I see you and I thank you for all that you have done for communities. I want to also thank Megan Lynch for her dedication, her focus. It is fitting that she grew up in Sunset Park. She is a fighter, and we must be clear that when Eric Adams and his Administration went silent and absent while our communities were being terrorized, it was this Council, under Speaker Adrienne Adams, with Faiza Ali and Megan Lynch at her side who led the charge and delivered for immigrant communities. And so for that, I am eternally thankful.

And I'd like to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Bottcher.

And now I will turn it over to Council Member Hanif for her brief remarks on her bills.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif.

Thank you, Chair Avilés, for convening today's hearing and for including two of my bills.

First, I'd just like to share that I would like to associate myself with the comments of Chair Avilés.

Coming to my bill, Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act, and Intro. 1272, the Protecting Employees from Misuse, Discrimination, and Surveillance Act, or PEMDAS, on the agenda. Thank you also to everyone joining today to share testimony in support of these bills and our immigrant communities.

I'm the proud daughter of Bangladeshi immigrants raised in Kensington, in Brooklyn's Little Bangladesh, an enclave where there has always been an ever-present sense of fear. As a 10-year-old, post-9-11 surveillance became the moment I first understood the precarity of immigration status and the reality of racial profiling and discrimination. The second and third defining moments were during Trump's presidency. Those fears have only been intensified since the new federal administration, which has already inflected extraordinary harm on immigrant communities. In just 11 months, we have seen federal immigration enforcement racially profile victims and

use excessive force, actions that routinely violate immigrants' rights, undermine our democracy, and erode the basic principles of due process. New York City is a city of immigrants, and our sanctuary laws exist to keep our communities safe, but too often, those protections are ignored. We've seen City agencies unlawfully share information with federal immigration authorities with no training, no accountability, and right now, no enforcement mechanism when our laws are violated. Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act, closes that gap and gives real teeth to our sanctuary protections. It creates a private right of action, a legal tool that allows New Yorkers to hold the NYPD, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Probation accountable in court if their rights are violated. Individuals unlawfully detained because the agency coordinated with ICE can seek justice. DOC has been found to repeatedly and clearly violate our detainer laws in multiple instances over nearly a decade, including as recently as 2024 and February of this year, as revealed in the Department of Investigations report released in September 25th. The report has also found that DOC provides no training to officers or staff on New York

City's sanctuary city laws, or its own policies issued under those laws. I would have asked them directly about these violations today, but in a show of disregard for this Council and for immigrant communities, DOC has chosen not to appear at this hearing, nor have they given us a statement. And I don't even want to go into MOIA's statement because it's equally as useless.

My second bill, Intro. 1272, the PEMDAS Act, protects workers from the misuse of E-Verify, a federal system meant to confirm work authorization. E-Verify errors harm tens of thousands of authorized workers every year, especially immigrants, and some employers use it to illegally screen or intimidate applicants. Intro. 1272 sets a clear order. E-Verify can only be used after a job offer, strictly to confirm work authorization, not to exclude or threaten workers. In this climate of fear, immigrant New Yorkers must be able to trust that our city will protect them, not profile them, not hand them over, and not let employers abuse them.

I urge my Colleagues to support both Intro. 214 and Intro. 1272. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member Hanif.

Now I will turn it over to Council Member Cabán.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. And thank you, Chair, for never mincing words.

We convene here today because something profoundly disturbing is occurring in our city. Federal agencies that have never had a role in civil immigration enforcement are suddenly being deployed as instruments of fear. Agencies designed to support and protect the public are being redirected to intimidate, to traumatize, and terrorize the very people that they were meant to serve. Seniors beaten, pregnant mothers shackled, children, including six-year-olds, forcibly taken from their parents' arms. These are not abstractions. These are kidnappings. These are acts of terror. And New York has long and proudly stood as a sanctuary city. Our sanctuary laws exist for one purpose, to keep people safe. To ensure that every resident can access services, seek assistance, and participate in public life without the threat of immigration retaliation. The evidence is unequivocal. Sanctuary counties are safer per

capita than non-sanctuary counties. That's why I'm proud to support the Safer Sanctuary Act. We refuse to allow any government agency, at any level, to be weaponized against our communities. This bill clarifies and strengthens our sanctuary laws, making clear that no federal agency may circumvent the protections this city has democratically put in place. It also ensures that ICE cannot embed itself in our jails, facilities where far too many New Yorkers have died awaiting care, and where the people most likely to be detained are those who simply cannot afford to buy their freedom. New Yorkers already disappear within those walls, and we cannot and will not allow our jail system to become an extension of a deportation machine.

Before I continue, I must address a matter that goes to the heart of accountability and democratic governance. The Adams Administration's directive instructing city agencies not to appear at this council oversight hearing is an unacceptable obstruction of transparency. I am looking here at empty chairs where the administration should be sitting, and I don't know where the hell the Mayor is, but I can tell you that First Deputy Mayor Randy

Mastro is downstairs. I saw him. I spoke to him. I said, I said, First Deputy Mayor, why aren't you sending anybody to testify at the hearing. He said, what hearing. And so either it is ignorance or a complete derelict of duty, but either way, every single New Yorker should be enraged. Not a single leader in the Administration deserves the right or the privilege to represent our City, because they should be here protecting each and every one of us and our neighbors and our loved ones. This Council has a legal and moral mandate to conduct oversight of the executive branch. Ordering agencies to defy that mandate undermines public trust, it disrespects the legislative process, and signals a disturbing hostility towards accountability. New Yorkers deserve answers and not evasions. They deserve a government that shows up. And I want to state clearly, the people will not be deterred and we will not be silenced. The Council will show up, even if the Administration fails to, to listen to the testimonies of our neighbors. Let's also be clear, fear doesn't make us safe. Kidnapping children does not make us safe. Disappearing elders does not make us safe. Driving families into the shadows does not make us

safe. Safety comes from community, solidarity, and collective care. The Safer Sanctuary Act is one of the tools we need to keep us safe. And with your voices, your power, and your organizing, we will pass it. We will protect our neighbors and we will keep our families together. (SPEAKING SPANISH) Thank you, Chair, and let us all continue the work.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member Cabán.

I'd like to recognize we've been joined by Council Member De La Rosa.

Now we will hear from a panel of community witnesses. Please come to the witness table when I call your name.

Actually before I open it to public testimony, I'd like to share with all of you who made time today to come. I wish you could all zoom in. But this is the testimony from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, three teeny tiny paragraphs. This is what the New York City Mayor and his Administration thought was fitting to do in today's climate regarding today's bills, regarding the work that all of you are doing. This. Department of Corrections wasn't any better. They double-spaced

theirs, but it's probably similarly three paragraphs. Of course, they don't agree with anything because they want loopholes. They want to continue to collude, be above the law, and not be held accountable. I'm going to save my choice words. Actually, for the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, they agree that this signage law would be important. I think they actually do good work, and they haven't been so disrespectful. So, I'm going to commend the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, who needs more resources, for their efforts and for their leadership. The other two agencies, not so much. I just needed to share that with you all because I'm so offended by this whole situation. Yeah, you all can join me in anger.

So now we're going to open to public testimony.

I remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out the appearance card with the Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized.

When recognized, you will have three minutes to speak on today's hearing topic. Proposed Introduction 214-A, Introduction 1268, Introduction 1272, and Introduction 1412.

If you have written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of the close of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

For in-person panelists, again, please come up to the table when your name has been called.

And now I will call our first panel. And please excuse me if I mispronounce your name. Mule Herrera from Mixteca, Socheatta Meng, Medha

Venugopal, Kelvin Servita-Arrocha (phonetic), and Julissa Bisoño.

MULE HERRERA: Thank you very much. This is my first time testifying, and English is not my first language, so I expect everybody to be patient because I need to read slow for you to understand.

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mule Herrera, and I am a queer Mexican immigrant, a community advocate at Mixteca, a community-based organization in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, that has served the Latina and indigenous immigrant community for 25 years. We want to welcome the proposal put forward by our elected officials, Alexa Avilés, Shahana Hanif, and Tiffany Cabán. My colleagues here in the room and I deeply recognize the urgency of these proposals at a time when our community continues to face constant attacks. Mixteca has decided to highlight Introduction 214 and Introduction 1268 because they address two critical gaps our community experiences daily. Regarding Introduction 214, which creates a private right of action related to civil immigration detainers and cooperation with federal immigration authorities, at

Mixteca we encounter multiplied cases every week where a community member has been detained illegally, often in spaces that should be safe for a dignified life for all New Yorkers. This proposal gives people and advocates like me the opportunity to seek accountability for local agencies. However, we must be realistic. Many members of our community do not have the resources or time to hire an attorney, and the justice system is not always accessible, particularly when the intersections are between Latina, indigenous, and migrant, a woman, and a queer person. For this reason, while we welcome this proposal as a small light of hope, local and concrete interventions are indispensable to ensure justice for all, not just for a few.

Regarding Introduction 1268, which focuses on education and right prevention through public signage, we value this initiative because it amplifies rights informed beyond community-based organizations. Placing this information in public spaces demonstrates the City's presence and oversight regarding ICE actions and empowers the community. Since January of this year, Mixteca has conducted 85 Know Your Rights workshops, reaching out more than

1,700 people, with just two team members, not including the daily consultations we receive during walk-in hours. Yet today, our community increasingly doubts the effectiveness of Know Your Rights workshops. People often question their utility, which underscores the need to update information to reflect the current reality. It is crucial that the community knows how the City can protect, assist them when their rights are actually violated. Therefore, we urgently need MOIA, who I need to say is not here, and I echo the embarrassment of that, MOIA needs to provide direct training to local (TIMER CHIME) agency staff, teaching them how to act and what steps to follow to protect New Yorkers when immigrant agents enter City spaces, more than just sending PDFs. Real safety depends on staff knowing how to intervene effectively, with City-established rapid response protocols and de-escalation measures. This is fundamental to realize the idea of a sanctuary city. As a community advocate, I want to be able to accompany someone to a hospital or school and trust that if ICE arrives, the staff will be prepared to intervene realistically and protect the people they serve, with the City's support.

In conclusion, we welcome these proposals and recognize the critical protection and empowerment they represent, but we must ensure the implementation is concrete, realistic, and be backed by direct City support. (SPEAKING SPANISH)

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

SOCHEATTA MENG: Good morning. Thank you to the New York City Council Immigration Committee for holding this public hearing, for your leadership, and for providing the opportunity to share our testimony today. My name is Socheatta Meng, and I am the Executive Director at Mekong NYC. Mekong NYC is a social justice organization dedicated to organizing the Southeast Asian community in the Bronx and throughout New York City. We are proud to be the only community-based organization providing Southeast Asian deportation defense work in New York. And today, more than ever, this work is urgent. Fifty years ago, the U.S. government brought over 1.2 million people from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to this country. Here in New York City, tens of thousands of our community members were resettled in the Bronx and Brooklyn after surviving unimaginable trauma, the Vietnam War, the Khmer Rouge genocide,

and relentless carpet bombing, all fueled by the U.S. military. The Southeast Asian community has long been invisible in this country, and in the landscape of detention and deportation, we remain overlooked and hidden in the margins. For the past 20 years, our community has experienced a deportation crisis with 17,000 people who faced deportation. Southeast Asian people are three to five times more likely to be deported due to prior convictions, even when community members have already served their time. Under the second Trump Administration, this crisis has escalated in horrifying ways. During the past year, hundreds of Southeast Asian people have been quietly rounded up, placed on charter flights, and separated from their families. For example, in May, during the Memorial Day weekend, 160 people were deported to Laos and Vietnam. In August, another 100 people were sent to Laos and Vietnam. And during the Labor Day weekend in September, 59 people were deported to Cambodia and Laos. And in this past October and November, 300 people were deported to Laos and Vietnam. ICE has even deported our people to third countries, including Panama, Libya, South Sudan, and Eswatini, sending people to places they

have never known. These are not isolated incidences. They are the consequence of a system designed to dehumanize, disappear, and discard. At Mekong NYC, as we fight every day to provide know-your-rights information, emergency planning support, ICE accompaniments, and case management, we have seen requests for support quadruple in the past year. Today, families in our community are afraid to drop their kids off at school. They're afraid to buy groceries, go to the park, or move freely in their own neighborhoods. This is displacement happening all over again. Fifty years ago, the U.S. brought our families here after devastating our homeland. Today, the U.S. is forcing our people to hide once again, no longer from bombs, but from ICE this time. With billions of more dollars coming in to fuel Trump's anti-immigrant agenda, (TIMER CHIME) we need the City Council's leadership to protect the Southeast Asian community and all of our immigrant siblings across the city. We call on the City Council to swiftly pass the New York City Trust Act, the Safer Sanctuary Act, and also, as a member of the Rapid Immigration Support and Empowerment, the RISE, Network, we also call on the City Council to protect and expand legal

services for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, to increase investment in language-accessible legal services, and to prioritize funding for small and medium-sized community-based organizations.

I'm going to wrap up now, but again, thank you to the Committee on Immigration for your leadership. We look forward to partnering with you to make sure that ICE has no place in New York City and that all of our immigrant communities can live with dignity and protection and safety. Thank you.

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Good morning, Honorable Council Members. My name is Medha Venugopal. I am a Senior Staff Attorney with the Center for Family Representation.

BRIANNA ABREU: Good morning, everyone. My name is Brianna Abreu, and I am a Social Worker with the Center for Family Representation where we work to keep families together.

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: We are here to share the harrowing story of our client, Jennifer, who to this day suffers from the trauma of ACS' collusion with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE. To best evoke our client's voice in telling her story,

Brianna will testify in Spanish, and I will provide the translation.

BRIANNA ABREU: Thank you. (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Hello. My name is Jennifer, and I am an immigrant mother, and I arrived in New York last year.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: When I came to New York, I came with many dreams to give my children a better life.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: But that dream turned into a nightmare when local agencies violated the law and my rights when they shared my confidential information with ICE.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: When I was at the shelter, I asked the shelter workers for therapy services for my children, and they said yes. and they said yes. and myself, because the trauma of our trip from my country to the United States was affecting us greatly.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

2 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Instead of giving us
3 therapy support, the shelter workers called ACS to
4 talk to my children.

5 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

6 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: When ACS arrived, I
7 didn't know they were investigating me and I was
8 under the impression that they were providing therapy
9 support.

10 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

11 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: After ACS spoke with my
12 children, I had an appointment with ICE. When I went
13 to my appointment, they detained me.

14 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

15 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: And when I asked ICE
16 officer when they were going to release me, he mocked
17 me and said that they were going to deport me because
18 there was an open criminal case against me.

19 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

20 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I was shocked because I
21 never had any contact with the police.

22 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

23 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I had a panic attack and
24 passed out and was taken to the hospital.

25 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

2 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: My lawyer later
3 discovered that ACS shared my confidential
4 information with ICE and that's why they detained me.

5 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

6 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I spent a month in
7 detention without being able to see or talk to my
8 children.

9 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

10 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: With the support of my
11 attorney, I was released, but I am still suffering
12 from the trauma of ACS's actions, and I am here to
13 reveal these injustices that also happen to many
14 families in New York.

15 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

16 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Under the Trump
17 Administration, what happened to me and my family is
18 happening to many more New York families without
19 impunity.

20 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

21 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I wanted to share this
22 testimony today to urge City officials to protect
23 mothers and families like mine from local agency
24 collusion with ICE.

25 BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I'm still living with the consequences of the actions of ACS, ICE, and the family separation system.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I don't want to see any more mothers and families like mine suffering like me.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I call upon this Committee to pass the New York City Trust Act, Intro. 214, to create a system of accountability for the violation of the sanctuary laws that exist in New York City.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: No (TIMER CHIME) agency should feel empowered to violate the law and there should be consequences for when they do.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Do what is right to keep families in New York City safe and together.

BRIANNA ABREU: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

MEDHA VENUGOPAL: Thank you for your time and this opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON AVILES: Gracias.

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Good morning, everybody.
My name is Rosa Cohen-Cruz. I'm reading testimony on
behalf of Bronx Defender's client, Kelvin.

In January of 2024, my life was turned
upside down. The NYPD claimed I was part of a violent
attack on officers in Times Square. They branded me a
gang member and a fugitive and they implied that
because of laws designed to protect immigrants like
me from abuse, they were unable to stop us from doing
something dangerous. All these claims were lies. I
never left New York. I was here the whole time
waiting for my court date. I was never part of a gang
either. And it was the NYPD who initiated the
violence that day as video evidence later revealed. I
never assaulted a police officer and that charge was
dropped. I pled guilty to a misdemeanor for kicking a
police radio after witnessing officers brutally
attack my friends. But now that the dust has settled,
you don't hear about any of this or the further
violations to me and my family. The injustice started
the night I was arrested by ICE. On a cold and snowy
February night, NYPD and ICE officers stormed into my
apartment together, guns drawn, shouting. I was
barefoot, half asleep and terrified. They ignored my

pleas not to scare the children and for shoes. They dragged me into the freezing cold and told me I was being deported. For days, my family was trapped inside the apartment by NYPD officers, guarding outside. They couldn't leave even for food. Our children went hungry. Why was ICE there? The NYPD says the law prevents them from working with ICE. But not that day. Not when they wanted to make an example out of me. After my arrest, they threw me into an immigration jail in Orange County, New York. It was like being buried alive. I couldn't shower, drink water, or even make a phone call. I never saw an immigration judge, never had a chance to ask for bond. Then they sent me to Rikers Island to wait for my criminal case. Even if I had posted bail, I wouldn't have been released because I was there as a borrowed prisoner from ICE. It's terrifying to realize how vulnerable we are as recently arrived New Yorkers. The laws that are supposed to protect us are barely holding on. And when they work, the NYPD violates them anyway without consequences to them. This isn't about letting anyone get away with anything. I care about living in a safe city. But it cannot come at the expense of our rights and

separating families based on lies and fearmongering. Immigrants shouldn't be afraid to interact with the government, and the government shouldn't make New Yorkers afraid of each other either. And when they do so based on lies and ignoring the law, there should be accountability. That's why I support Intro. 214 that would give people the power to sue when the NYPD and other agencies break the law. We all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter how long we've been here. That's the New York I believe in, and I believe most New Yorkers want that too. Thank you.

JULISSA BISONO: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Julissa Bisono, and I'm the Director of Base Building at Make the Road New York, the largest member-led organization in New York State. Make the Road has over 28,000 members in and around New York City. Our members and communities are under relentless attack right now from ICE and the agencies cooperating with ICE too. The phenomenon of a courthouse arrest and arrests at regular check-in appointments have received wide coverage. Make the Road New York has led in the fight against the humane conditions that

our communities are then subject to inside 26 Federal Plaza. That's literally a few blocks from here. What is well less known is that our members and that our loved ones are being literally ripped off the streets and disappeared in immigrant neighborhoods across the state, including in three of our New York City offices where we have offices are located in Corona, Queens. Every day, every day, we're seeing people being picked up. I was in the morning heading to work, dropping off their kids to school. Bushwick, Brooklyn, and Port Richmond, Staten Island. Agents are intentionally passing themselves off as police, are stalking our streets in the morning during rush hour and again in the evening as people go home. We had a member detained at a bus stop near our office in Bushwick. A member father who was just detained on a sidewalk literally this past weekend in Port Richmond. We've been working day in and out working with families to make sure that they stay protected. As they walk home with their children, as they step out to buy food. ICE is not looking for these people in particular. They're stopping Latino New Yorkers, questioning them and then disappearing them from our streets in a matter of seconds. Literally seconds. We

are grateful for the City's efforts on behalf of families impacted by ICE enforcement today. In particular, funding legal services so that we could get people representation and advice. Make the Road is a rapid response legal provider, and we assist dozens of families impacted by ICE enforcement each week. Our organizers are literally flyering, helping (TIMER CHIME) people knock on doors, telling them about know your rights so that we could keep each other protected because we cannot depend on this Administration to protect us. But we need real accountability against ICE blatant disregard for our sanctuary laws. Passing the New York City Trust Act will establish a private rights of action that will enable anybody whose rights are violated to hold local entities responsible. Families of immigrants will feel more secure when utilizing essential City services like attending school, making a police report, or visiting a public hospital as a result. Our members are scared. When Mayor Adams allowed ICE back into Rikers, it was a clear violation of our detainer laws. It showed to immigrant New Yorkers that we were reverting to our old ways that would seek to push Trump's agenda. It was not until the New

York State Supreme Court stepped in that we were able to block this. This is why Intro. 1412, which prohibits establishment of an office on New York City Department of Corrections property by any federal entity engaged in federal immigration enforcement. This also ensures that our sanctuary city rules apply to all federal entities involved in immigration enforcement. We cannot, and I say this again, we cannot allow any future mayors to use New Yorkers as a political pawn and truly ensure that ICE will not have a place at Rikers or in New York City. I want to thank Council Members Hanif, Avilés, and Cabán for their leadership in pushing legislation forward that will further secure our sanctuary laws and ensure that our members feel safe in New York City, the place they all call home. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

Before we open it up to questions for this panel, I want to recognize we've been joined by Council Member Shekhar Krishnan and Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. Not a question, but a comment. Please remind me of your name. Sorry.

2 BRIANNA ABREU: Hi. My name is Brianna
3 Abreu. I'm a social worker.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: The story that you
5 shared, devastating. And I feel a lot of, one, I want
6 to extend just an apology and that I am feeling shame
7 on behalf of my Colleagues in government for the
8 trauma, the fear, the violence. I know we're going to
9 hear lots more testimony like the ones that we just
10 heard, but I wanted to be up front and name that. And
11 thank you all, again, for showing up the way that you
12 do. I said it outside, and now I'll say it here. It
13 is you all that make me deeply, deeply proud to be a
14 New Yorker and to have the privilege to attempt to
15 represent you all well. Thanks.

16 BRIANNA ABREU: Thank you so much. Also on
17 behalf of our client, Jennifer.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Council Member Hanif.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: On behalf of your
20 client, Jennifer, could you just share how she's
21 doing right now and what are some upcoming
22 appointments or legal work that's coming up?

23 And then for Rosa, I wanted to ask about
24 from a defender's point of view, could you walk us
25 through the process of DOC honoring a request for

notification? How is it different from honoring a
detainer request?

BRIANNA ABREU: When I last spoke to
Jennifer, she mentioned the trauma and the impact
still impact her to this very day. Whenever she
applies for work, when she gets to the point where
they ask for a background check, that's typically
where she sees all her dreams come to a halt. Because
of the collusion between ICE and ACS, she feels that
she's unable to really rebuild her life. She so
desperately wants to, just like many immigrants,
including myself, I also am an immigrant, to rebuild
her life, provide for her family, and just be able to
move past the trauma that she already endured in her
home country and then to seek to rebuild a new life
here is impossible for her because ICE and ACS worked
together in order to prevent her from true
liberation. And so Jennifer, she isn't joining us
today because the fear still follows her, and so
we're here to tell her story, and we're so proud for
the opportunity and to be able to tell her story. But
saddened, it's a bittersweet moment, and we share the
rage as well because of how ACS and ICE and other
local agencies work together. It's not providing real

justice for families throughout New York, and that's why it's so important to advocate for this Introduction 214. And thank you to the entire Council for introducing these bills because it's so important that we advocate for the families like Jennifer's as well as the other stories that we heard today on this panel.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And you shared that she's got kids. Could you remind me how many and what age?

BRIANNA ABREU: Yes, she has two children. I believe they're both under 18 years old, and so she's so desperately wanting to provide for them who are both children. But it seems for her that it's impossible for her to truly have a clean slate, which is what she so badly wanted when she came to this country from her native origin.

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Thank you, Council Member. I'll first just note that I'm actually going to be testifying again in my public defender capacity. This was me reading Kelvin's testimony, but I'm happy to answer your question now or with the other panel, whatever you prefer.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: You can give us a preview.

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Yeah, great. I'm happy to do that. Yeah, so your question is a very important one. It speaks to one of the ways we've seen the Department of Corrections continue to violate the detainer laws. As you may remember, back in 2023, the Department of Corrections testified that they had never been presented with a judicial warrant by ICE, but to transfer custody to honor a detainer, the Department of Corrections, the requirement is a judicial warrant and one of the 177 convictions. What they do instead is they say that they're honoring a request for notification, which by the text of the statute and sort of just the plain language is supposed to be just to notify ICE of when someone is being released. Instead, and you'll hear myself and my colleagues and the defender colleagues testify about this, they allow ICE to actually physically enter Rikers Island, walk into someone's cell, and take custody of them. That is a transfer of custody. There's never a moment of liberty that that person has. So they claim that they're just notifying. They claim that they are following the law by notifying,

but in fact we're seeing a transfer of custody, and I'm personally hoping that under the next Administration we'll see the Department and MOIA work together to implement much stronger guidance on what it actually means to follow this law, and I'm hoping, of course, that your bill, Intro. 214, will pass to really hold these agencies accountable to, in fact, following the law.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So just to follow up, you're saying that ICE agents don't need a warrant? Once DOC is notified, they can just go in without the judicial warrant?

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Under the law, they absolutely need a warrant. What they have been doing is using the request for notification to get around the judicial warrant requirement. I was hoping they would be here today so they could be asked whether they've been presented with any judicial warrants this year. It doesn't look like their testimony includes any of that information either, so it's hard to know, but my guess is, and what we've seen in the public defender community, is that they continue to essentially effectuate honoring detainers without the

2 judicial warrant requirement being met, and we've
3 seen that happen this year multiple times.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, and I know
6 that has been a request of the community for a long
7 time to get clear guidance, and MOIA has ignored
8 their responsibility to correct this issue
9 administratively, so thank you all for your testimony
10 today. I really appreciate it.

11 We're going to call our next... oh, don't
12 go. Sorry. Spoke too soon. Council Member Krishnan.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you,
14 Chair. Sorry.

15 Just one question to follow up on that. I
16 think it's egregious that these warrant and detainer
17 laws are not being followed. You kind of alluded to
18 it at the end, but have you seen DOC increasingly
19 ignoring or doing away with the warrant requirement
20 and honoring detainers? Has there been an uptick in
21 the last year since the presidential elections last
22 fall? I'm just curious to know what you all are
23 seeing in the public defender community.

24 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Unfortunately, this
25 practice has been consistent, and that's why it's a

real shame that we even have to be here today still talking about the New York City Trust Act because in the oversight hearing two years ago, we testified in great detail, the defender community testified in great detail about this practice. And since then, we have seen the Department of Corrections and the NYPD being found to have violated the laws, as Chair Avilés spoke about in her introductory remarks so it's really shocking that these patterns have continued, and there's been no training, no guidance, no attempt at creating accountability, and I think all of this speaks to the need for the law. So, yeah, unfortunately, it hasn't even been an increase, although I'd say that the treatment and the egregiousness and sort of the expansion of ICE in every facet of our life and I'd say the involvement of NYPD and their explicit collusion with ICE has increased under this Administration.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Council Member Brewer.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sorry. I know
3 we want to keep moving, but what the hell did ACS
4 tell you about this?

5 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I, unfortunately, am not
6 the attorney that worked on this case. I'm happy to
7 provide the attorney's testimony on what exactly the
8 response was. If I remember correctly, I think it was
9 a lot of pointing fingers probably, but I'm not
10 exactly sure of the specifics.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

12 MEDHA VENUGOPAL: I'm sorry about that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's okay. It's
14 shocking.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you
16 to this panel.

17 We're going to call the next panel.
18 Giovanatta, Mina Farahman, Ana Vera, Jason Smith,
19 Alana Tornello, and KC Wagner.

20 Great. Thank you so much for being here.
21 I guess you want to start? Just make sure to press
22 the button.

23 JASON SMITH: Hello, everyone. I was not
24 expecting to go first, but here we are...

2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: You could pass it to
3 your neighbor if you want.

4 JASON SMITH: Okay.

5 ANA VERA: Good morning. Thank you to the
6 Committee on Immigration for holding this public
7 hearing to address the urgent need to protect our
8 immigrant communities in New York City. My name is
9 Ana, and this is my first time testifying at a City
10 Council hearing and I'm very excited to be here today
11 representing the youth of the New York State Youth
12 Leadership Council. The NYSYLC was founded in 2007
13 and was the first undocumented youth led organization
14 in New York, and we work with immigrant and
15 undocumented youth in the city to empower them to
16 create change in their communities. The NYSYLC is
17 most known for writing and introducing the New York
18 State Dream Act in 2011, and the NYSYLC envisions an
19 inclusive society where currently and formerly
20 undocumented youth belong and thrive and are
21 unafraid, which is what's currently being attacked.
22 Less than a year less than a year into a second Trump
23 presidency, it has become horrifyingly clear how far
24 this federal administration will go in its efforts to
25 detain and deport immigrant members of our

communities. We have also witnessed the mayoral administration's attempt to evade and undermine our City's long-standing hard-fought protections for immigrant New Yorkers in order to serve the Mayor's own self-interest. New York City sanctuary laws are essential to maintaining trust among community members and ensuring the safety of all New Yorkers. As our City government enters another period of transition, it is imperative that the City Council acts swiftly to ensure that our City's commitment to welcoming and protecting immigrants is ironclad. Our local laws must provide clear prohibitions against colluding with immigration authorities and must also include real disincentives for violating those laws. For those reasons, I am testifying today on behalf of all of the New York State Youth Leadership Council Members to urge this Council to act swiftly to pass a New York City Trust Act and Intro. 1412. When immigrant New Yorkers lack confidence that City agencies and their representative won't communicate and collude with ICE, either due to rhetoric from local leaders or examples of violations of our laws, this gives way to mistrust while this gives way to mistrust and fear. Research has demonstrated how fear

and other barriers often prevent immigrants from accessing public services they're eligible for. Under the current presidential administration, the fear that undocumented immigrants carry as they go about their daily lives has escalated, deterring many from taking care of their most basic needs. About two months ago, a youth member of the NYSYLC got hit by a car and she did not seek medical help because she had seen reports that there had been ICE presence near Elmhurst Hospital in Queens. She feared that she would get (TIMER CHIME) detained. The heightened presence of the NYPD in our communities creates fear and an unsafe environment, and there is so much uncertainty of the NYPD collaboration with immigration officers. Just last week, we saw how NYPD showed up to Canal Street to protect ICE agents from the people who were protesting them and who were actually there to protect the immigrant community of Canal. How can we believe that the NYPD is here to protect and serve all New Yorkers when we see them assaulting and arresting community members to protect federal agents? The Trump Administration's continuous attacks on immigrants will only escalate. New York City needs to be prepared for what is to come and not

waver when it comes to protecting the rights of millions of immigrants and undocumented residents who called this city, our city, their home. The Council must act now to pass the New York City Trust Act and Intro. 1412 and continue to fortify and reinforce the New York City government entities will not collude with immigration authorities. We will continue to fight for the liberation of our people, and we hope that you join us on that fight. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

MINA FARAHMAN: Okay. Thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Mina Farahman, and I'm here from the New York City Union of Students. We're also here from the Livable Future Package, a youth-led movement speaking in support of the New York City Trust Act, Intro. 214 The federal administration has shown us that their immigration agenda is one that disregards the core of our human rights. Only a few days ago, they separated and detained a six-year-old child from his father, and the Trump Administration fired eight New York City immigration judges last week in an effort to make it easier for the federal government to conduct a mass deportation agenda. I speak for my fellow youth and

their families when I say this is unacceptable.

There's no sign this federal agenda will get better without us fighting back, putting teeth on our

sanctuary city laws as the ICE budget finds a nearly fourfold increase. We are in a state of emergency,

and the NYPD has been found complicit with this

agenda. A report last week found on November 21st,

2024, an NYPD officer assigned to a homeland

security investigations violent gang task force

placed automated alerts on individuals sought for

potential civil immigration enforcement, allowing

notifications if they appeared in NYPD systems. The

Department of Investigations in New York City

determined this violated both Department policy and

City law. What you are hearing from us today is that

New York City collaboration with the federal

draconian immigration enforcement agenda is

completely unacceptable. New York City agency's

history of illegally working with ICE must go on no

longer. In this state of emergency, we need to act to

stop our City's complicity with an anti-human rights

agenda. The New York City Council must pass the New

York City Trust Act to enforce our sanctuary city

laws because financial restitution is a strong and

effective deterrent against breaking our human rights laws, and it gives power to the people irreparably harmed by collusion with ICE. Our sanctuary city must extend to every part of this city, including Rikers Island, which is also why I speak in favor of Intro. 1412. New York City Council, make the right choice. Stand for strong sanctuary city laws in the state of emergency and end our complicity with an anti-human rights agenda.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Mina.

GIOVANATTA MARANGON: Thank you honorable Council Members for this opportunity to speak in front of you all. My name is Giovanatta Marangon. I currently reside in Midtown. I'm a student at CUNY proud granddaughter of immigrants, and I'm here from New York City DSA and more than 12 other youth organizations in the Livable Future Coalition, Council Members, according to The City as of three days ago, since July through October, ICE has kidnapped off the streets at least 858 New Yorkers. In CUNY, more than a third of students were born in another country. Half are the first to receive a formal education. An estimated 5,000 as of 2019 are undocumented. Yet just last year, 20 Baruch students

had their visas canceled and their future in the city brought into question for simply exercising their constitutional rights and risked for deportation from ICE. I think of my family. My grandparents who had to experience the horror and terror of police interrogations because they came from the criminal country known as Italy during the Red Scare. Now 70 years later, this continues and only worsens with our fascist administration. In times of lawlessness in Washington, it is our duty to pick up the flag as New Yorkers and in City Council and be the face of law. In times of cowardice, it is our duty to be the face of courage. History will not be kind to these xenophobic attacks on our immigrant neighbors. But we have to stand up and do our part here in City Council. I plead with City Council to pass Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act, because we need real accountability from above. Our rapid response networks across the city and Know Your Rights training are merely harm reduction, but we need to fight back in City Hall. To bring this to my own experience, CUNY has sanctuary city laws on the books already, but nothing stops this from being reversed in a heartbeat by CUNY which receives millions in

funding from the federal government. We need to protect our immigrant neighbors here by establishing a legal pathway to enforce these sanctuary city laws against city employees who may collaborate with ICE, and that includes the NYPD especially. And I also want to extend this as well and urge to pass Intro. 1412. I spent a lot of my life in Rockland County, only an hour train ride and bus ride away from the city. In Rockland, there are few to no protections for our immigrant neighbors. And I was at my best friend's birthday recently and she told me that she did not feel safe, she didn't feel a future in New York, that she hopes her family who came from Pakistan remains untouched by ICE even though they're here legally. It is our duty here in New York to protect everyone in our metropolitan area by denying ICE's operation at every turn in New York to ensure our neighbors cannot be kidnapped by (TIMER CHIME) ICE to New York City using Rikers Island and deny them a hub in the center of this metropolitan area and protect all of our immigrant families across the tri-state area. Once again, I urge you to pass Intro. 1412 and 214. Thank you so much for this opportunity and speaking on these today.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

KC WAGNER: Thank you to the Committee on immigration for holding this hearing. My name is KC Wagner, and I'm a member of Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network, a national organization of families, older adults, and disabled New Yorkers who employ care workers including nannies, homecare workers, and house cleaners. Immigrant workers, many of whom are undocumented, have green cards or naturalized citizens and are facing real threats. ICE continues to racially profile and collude with City agencies like the NYPD and Department of Corrections, putting families and workers at risk of detention, deportation, and family separation. These attacks don't just harm individuals. They undermine the care systems we all rely on. As a member of Hand in Hand, we also partner with domestic worker community-based organizations and New York affiliates of the National Domestic Workers Alliance in addition to local electeds and I lift up my glass to Council Member Hanif in her incredible support of the work that we have done with Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association. I am a proud and eternally grateful granddaughter to both my sets of grandparents who

came through Ellis Island and became naturalized citizens. I am also a proud and eternally grateful past employer of four immigrant caregivers to my elderly mother as she suffered with dementia over a decade, especially when they were there during her dying days. They provided love, compassion, and provided eternal support so that they made my ability to work possible. This bill would create a private right of action, allowing anybody whose rights are violated by the City, and the bill I'm referring to is the New York City Trust Act, Intro. 214. It will allow anybody whose rights are being violated by City agencies to bring a lawsuit and hold those agencies accountable. Right now, violations of New York City's sanctuary laws happen regularly including documented cases of DOC and ACS sharing information with ICE, but there is no clear way to enforce the law (TIMER CHIME) or seek recourse. Strong sanctuary protections are essential, not only for immigrant safety, but for the safe and health of our city as a whole. When immigrant New Yorkers fear local agencies, it erodes trust, discourages reporting of crime, and prevents families from accessing essential services. Passing the Trust Act ensures the City agencies cannot

violate these protections with impunity and that immigrant families can live without the constant fear of detention or separation. I urge the City Council to act swiftly and pass the New York City Trust Act and protect the safety, dignity, and rights of immigrant New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, KC.

Alana.

ALANA TORNELLO: Thank you, Council Members, for this hearing and for this opportunity to testify. My name is Alana. I represent the Human Services Council. We're a coalition of over 180 human services providers in New York, and we provide lifelines for millions of New Yorkers. New York City is our home, and we need to make damn sure that this home is a sanctuary. For us human services workers, this is what sanctuary and safety means. It means housing, food security, employment support, legal services, and the many other ways we show up for one another, especially for our immigrant neighbors including the ways we're showing up today including the legislation that you're proposing. Lifelines that we are providing are being disrupted because our neighbors are afraid to leave home, because our

workers are targeted for providing care, and our sanctuary laws that protect us are being violated, and this is a profound test and the test is dangerous federal overreach and abuse of power. We witness communities being torn apart by legal enforcement and policies that are targeting neighbors regardless of legal status or history. Meanwhile, New Yorkers still lack affordable and secure housing, food, and other essentials even as organizations who provide these essentials are being targeted with unprecedented cuts and politicization. This is creating a poly crisis and what's really needed is access to community support. We do not need and New Yorkers do not want expanded federal enforcement, which is exacerbating our pre-existing crises and it would make New York City and is making New York City less safe for everyone. With that in mind, City leaders and human services leaders must act in close coordination to prioritize community support and to strengthen protections for our City's sanctuary infrastructure. So with that in mind, we support the proposed local laws including Intro. 214, The New York City Trust Act, Intro. 1268, Intro. 1412, Intro. 1272. Additionally, the City should join human services

leaders in our crisis response, emergency budgeting scenario planning, and advocacy to create a more comprehensive strategy to protect communities, and this includes prioritizing expansion of human services, especially legal services and the use of emergency resources. As many of my colleagues have already said, I believe being a New Yorker means being in covenant with one another and that means we show up for one another during crisis. As we heard, the crisis has been here. Crisis is also coming and the proposed legislation and other actions that I'm hearing from my colleagues here today are critical in getting ahead of the incoming storms. So, thank you and please refer to our written testimony for more recommendations.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

Jason.

JASON SMITH: Yes. Good morning, everyone.

I stand here as a future emergency room physician at a New Yorker and community member this is my first time testifying and I represent and NYSYLC. I would first like to thank our Council Members for taking the time to listen to us. This truly means a lot. Before I start, I would like to acknowledge all of

our siblings who were stripped and disappeared from us? I would also like to acknowledge Marie Ange Blaise, a Haitian national, and the many others who negligently died in ICE custody. Personally, I would like to share that I was a victim of an assault and was afraid to report due to the complexities of our justice system. This assault resulted in an expensive journey, whereas I had to spend hundreds of dollars on therapy, medication management, stable housing, and anxiety. I should not be afraid to seek justice. With the passing of this bill, people like me would not be afraid to seek help with the fear of possibly being placed on the radar or having personal information shared with federal officials. This very same issue is prominent and constant. There are many undocumented individuals afraid of reporting due to this matter. Every single day, our oppressors try to tear us apart and isolate our communities and, in spite of their plans to do so, we become even more united. In spite of their divisive tactics, we grow stronger as a community. Let me be clear, I'm not catering to any municipal government official who are simply unable to put their money where their mouth is. Too often we are seeing elective officials show

up only when there is large crowds or an abundance of cameras and media crew. It hurts my heart to see NYPD officials assaulting vulnerable members within our communities such as elderly people, disabled people, and so on. The reason being is simply because members of our communities are placing their bodies on the line. Furthermore, from my mouth to your ears, I want to make it very clear that our rights are not trends and bandwagons to be hopped on. Our human rights are not political platforms, only convenience to boost platforms for elections. We're not numbers. We are human beings. It saddens me to know that our local government has the power to protect us and yet we're currently pleading for the passing of the New York City Trust Act, specifically Intro. 214. We have so much on our plates to address already. Therefore, I'm calling on our elected officials to join us at the table and address what's on our plates. I'm calling for a moral renewal and a sense of civic grace and virtue within our municipal government. Let me be clear. The harmful practices that are taking place deters New York City residents from seeking justice of any wrongdoing. It further handicaps a system that is already not so just. We require a

renewed sense of hope within our justice system.

Unfortunately, the justice system we require is not

dispensable by machines or upheld (TIMER CHIME) by

any form of institutional systems. Our justice is

upheld by the people, and it is clear today that the

people of this great city demands justice and

accountability. We demand a city whereas all of our

residents can flourish and live peacefully, free from

external control suppression. We demand a City

government that will uphold and honor our laws and

people. I'm calling for a city whereas all of our

precious students can attend and attain an education

without fear. I'm calling for a city whereas

residents in need of medical care can confidently do

so. If not, we require full transparency and we also

demand the full protection of our neighbors. In other

words, despite all of the atrocities taking place

within our city and beyond, I remain hopeful and

optimistic that a just and equitable future lies

ahead of us. The people of this great city always

wins. So, I'm asking that this local government help

sustain a foundation for us to win. Human rights

should never be a debate or herring. Human rights

ought to be automatic, respective of sex, religion,

2 ethnicity, race, social position, or immigration
3 status. It is my hope that our city can get it right.
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Jason. For
6 your first time, pretty good. You survived.

7 JASON SMITH: Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I just wanted to
9 underscore. I mean, I think one of the common themes
10 in many of the testimony here is something that Ana
11 said and certainly you all say is that when New
12 Yorkers lack confidence in our institutions and in
13 our government, it continues to make us significantly
14 less safe, and I hear you very clearly when you're
15 saying do better because we deserve better as New
16 Yorkers, and we will continue to commit to do better
17 So I just want to thank the panel for their
18 testimony.

19 Do you have questions?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. I Just
21 wanted to say that the antidote to fear is organizing
22 and each one of you are contributing to that work
23 that City government is failing to or delaying to do
24 and it just shows the humanity that exists in our
25 city and the ability to Make New York what it is. We

want people to be safe. We want young people to understand that their peers have their back. The college and high school organizing that I've seen taking place, and this was also happening I would say 10 years ago when I was an undergrad at Brooklyn College, really catalyzed how I advocate for my community and for specifically young leaders, and so I just want to thank the Youth Leadership Council, YDSA, Livable Futures, you all have been on the front line for many, many months now to get 214 to the finish line and, trust me, your voices are being heard by the Administration, whether they like it or not. They are hearing you loud and clear, and I'll tell you they are really annoyed but the great thing is we're going to keep at it so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you Council Member.

We're going to the next panel. We'll have Deborah Lee, Catherine Gonzalez, Scott Foletta, Tania Matos, Brittany Brown, and Rosa Cohen-Cruz. Again, one more time, Deborah Lee, Catherine Gonzalez, Scott Foletta, Tania Mattos, Brittany Brown, and Rosa Cohen-Cruz.

Would you like to start Deborah?

DEBORAH LEE: Yes. Thank you. Good morning, Chair Avilés and Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today. In particular, I'm going to focus on Intro. 1412, the Safer Sanctuary Act, and Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act. My name is Deborah Lee, and I'm the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society. These bills are essential to preserving the integrity of New York City's sanctuary framework, a framework built on hard lessons from our past. Before the City Council passed the 2014 detainer laws, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, had a pervasive presence on Rikers Island. Federal agents combed through New York City Department of Corrections, DOC, data to identify foreign-born individuals, conducted coercive interviews of such individuals without counsel or interpreters, and pressured them to sign away their rights in languages they did not understand. These practices violated due process, prolonged incarcerations, and tore New York City families apart, all while eroding trust between immigrant communities and local government. The Council acted decisively in 2014 because these harms were real and

widespread. As Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito said at the time, these protections were about dignity, fairness, and keeping families together. They were designed to ensure that people held on low-level charges or simply because they could not afford bail would not be fast-tracked for deportation. Sanctuary laws were passed to protect New Yorkers and uphold the integrity of our justice system, regardless of who is our president. Today, the Council is buttressing those protections. Intro. 1412 closes a dangerous loophole by prohibiting ICE from maintaining an office or quarters on land under DOC jurisdiction. This ensures that our jails do not become hunting grounds for immigration enforcement and that the trust immigrant communities place in the City is not betrayed. Intro. 214 strengthens enforcement of our existing detainer laws by creating a private right of action against City employees who violate these laws. This is critical because laws without remedies are hollow. When local agencies violate detainer laws, that harm is profound not only to individuals and families, but to public trust in government. Accountability is the only way to ensure compliance and uphold the promise of equal justice.

For nearly 150 years, the Legal Aid Society has fought to uphold equal justice for all New Yorkers. Last year alone, we served over 480,000 individuals, including thousands of immigrants who rely on us to defend their rights. We know that when local government stands (TIMER CHIME) firm against federal overreach, communities thrive. These bills are essential to maintaining that commitment. Thank you for your leadership and for standing with all New Yorkers.

CATHERINE GONZALEZ: Good morning. My name is Catherine Gonzalez. I am Associate General Counsel at Brooklyn Defender Services. I thank you for this hearing, for introducing these bills that are pending to update and strengthen the laws that we already have in our city. At Brooklyn Defender Services, we represent thousands of people in New York City who are accused of a crime, facing the removal of their children, or deportation. Through specialized units, we provide extensive wraparound services to meet the needs of people with legal system involvement and, as public defenders representing these people, we saw firsthand how ICE agents profiled and coerced people in Department of Corrections custody as Miss Lee has

testified prior to the passage of the detainer laws in 2014, and those activities by DOC and ICE back then violated due process and targeted New Yorkers based on racial and national origin profiling. The actions of ICE agents back then interfered with people's involvement in the legal system and trampled on their due process right to being able to access New York City Courts and the legal system, and the City ended that direct corroboration with ICE a decade ago in order to reduce inequities and disruptions and to safeguard due process. With the issuance of New York City Executive Order 50 earlier this year, we saw a profound magnifying of the fear that immigrant New Yorkers are seeing in their communities. Since then, many people that we serve and their families have expressed real fear, not only that being incarcerated at Rikers might expose them to ICE, but even simply visiting a loved one there at Rikers could subject someone to immigration enforcement. That fear has lingered even after the judge's ruling issuing that the executive order is null and void. Even though that court decision was supposed to bring finality and did bring finality to the issue, in the time since then, many of the people

that we represent and their families continue to express this heightened anxiety at any contact with Rikers Island, that ICE might show up or that their presence there could trigger immigration enforcement in some messed-up way. Because of this lasting damage, the moment is now for the City to act decisively. Passing the New York City Trust Act, Introduction 214, and the Safer Sanctuary Act, Introduction 1412, to update and strengthen the City's detainer discretion laws would help ensure these needed protections, reinforce the sanctuary safeguards that already exist, and rebuild trust with immigrant New Yorkers who should not have to choose between supporting their loved ones and fearing deportation. Thank you for your time.

SCOTT FOLETTA: Good morning. My name is Scott Foletta, and I'm the Managing Attorney for the Immigration Defense Team at the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, a community-based holistic public defender office that has provided high-quality representation to residents of Upper Manhattan who can't afford an attorney for over 30 years. In 2022, after a routine appearance in criminal court, a client of NDS who had lived in New York City for

nearly three decades was handed over to ICE agents despite the fact that he had no felony record and none of the triggers for compliance with our City's detainer law. Without knowing what was happening, he was put in a van and driven across state lines to a prison where other inmates told him we are going to be deported. He felt like he had just been kidnapped. Within days of his detention, he started to lose weight because of medical conditions that were not being treated, but it wasn't until he lost 50 pounds that he was hospitalized. He was terrified of the possibility of being deported to Ukraine, a country from which he and his family had fled from persecution decades earlier and which was now an active war zone. After filing applications, motions, appeals, bond requests, habeas, NDS was finally able to free him but only after he had spent 18 months of his life in detention. Around the same time, FOIL requests revealed that during the previous Trump Administration, employees of City law enforcement agencies had cooperated with ICE deportations, sometimes working behind the backs of defense attorneys to communicate with ICE and facilitate violations of the City's detainer law. When pressed

by this Council, this Committee, about these revelations, representatives of those agencies did not identify any discipline that was carried out or consequences that resulted from those brazen violations of our laws. They simply said that was a different administration. It already happened. Our city's residents can't afford a repeat of this scenario. We can't come back in a year, two years, three years, finding out belatedly that there have been violations of the detainer law through FOIL requests and then have these agencies sit here again to shrug and say what's done is done or not even show up. This Council must ensure that there's accountability for violations of our sanctuary laws by passing Intros 214 and 1412. Thank you.

BRITTANY BROWN: Thank you to the Committee on Immigration for holding this public hearing to address the urgent need to protect our immigrant communities in New York City. My name is Brittany Brown. I am the Supervising Attorney of the Collateral Consequences Unit at New York County Defender Services. The proposed New York City Trust Act legislation would not be addressing a theoretical harm. The most recent example of a violation occurred

just last week. On December 1st, 2025, one of our clients was released from DOC custody to ICE custody in clear violation of our City's detainer laws. When we asked DOC Legal about this, they told us that they are legally able to communicate with ICE and that it's safer for ICE to take custody of our client rather than make an arrest on the street. DOC admits there was no judicial warrant for our client. DOC clearly violated City law by handing our client to ICE. When pressed further as to their communication with ICE and any documentation, they told us to submit a FOIL, another disingenuous statement because a FOIL request requires a signature from the subject of inquiry and DOC knows or should know that when they handed our client over to ICE and ICE swiftly transferred him out of state, he became unreachable. Our client is currently in an immigration detention facility in Virginia without any family, without legal representation, hopelessly awaiting deportation. Our office also reached out to MOIA for assistance and received no response. This flagrant violation of the City's detainer law shows how critical the proposed legislation is. Without the New York City Trust Act, our client has no recourse and

without the New York City Trust Act, how will we ever get City employees to follow the law? Thank you.

TANIA MATTOS: Good morning, Chair Avilés and Council Members. My name is Tania Mattos. I'm the Executive Director of UnLocal. UnLocal is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving New York's immigrant communities through immigrant legal services and community education. UnLocal's team of lawyers, advocates, organizers, and social workers provide free services to immigrant communities throughout the five boroughs on immigration-related matters like workshops and legal representation, social work, supporting community events. Today, we are here to voice our strong support for all the bills, but especially for the New York Trust Act 214, Safer Sanctuary Act, and my testimony will focus on the New York City Trust Act. So, ICE has been in our communities and in the courts in New York and it's of vital importance that immigrant families feel safe and protected in our city. Every day, UnLocal community members tell us that they fear leaving their homes, go to work, drop off their children, and attend court or even come to our office. The Council must do everything in its power to show immigrant New

Yorkers that we remain committed to our promise as a sanctuary city, especially in such dangerous times. The New York City Trust Act will affirm the City's commitment to keep immigrant New Yorkers safe and send a much-needed signal to those living in fear, that the New York City Police Department will not collaborate with ICE.

And I'm going to go off a little bit from my testimony, but I read the letter from MOIA that was that was presented. I believe that MOIA has to show up when it's hard. They need to hold agencies accountable and work with agencies to follow the law. I see MOIA's role is to not follow the common path that they're following on now but they need to facilitate and defend against each and every arrest and deportation because that is what our communities are pleading for right now. That is exactly what they're asking for, is for our City and our leaders to defend our immigrant communities. So, we thank the City Council for your leadership when immigrant New Yorkers need your support the most. Thank you.

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Hello, again. My name is Rosa Cohen-Cruz. I'm the Director of Immigration Policy for the Bronx Defenders. For years, our office

along with the other public defenders you see here have been raising the alarm bells about the violations of sanctuary laws by DOC and NYPD, and we strongly support the Safer Sanctuary Act and the New York City Trust Act and urge their swift passage. ICE's presence on Rikers undermines due process for the people we represent, creates fear and uncertainty for the loved ones of people at Rikers and for the people sitting on Rikers themselves, and is simply unnecessary. Regarding Intro. 214 in the February 2023 oversight hearing, we detailed multiple suspicious practices that resulted in our clients going from the custody of New York City law enforcement agencies directly into the jaws of ICE, resulting in loss of liberty, undermining due process, and forcing families to endure trauma and separation. This happened regardless of the level of offence someone had been arrested for and even in instances where criminal cases had been dismissed. You've already heard about some of the ways NYPD and DOC have colluded with ICE in violation of our laws, but I'm just going to reiterate a few briefly. I'll start with NYPD. They've worked with ICE on home raids, claiming they are part of joint task forces,

but resulting in people being arrested for solely civil immigration enforcement. I did watch the body cam footage of the arrest of our client Kelvin Servita-Arocha and, during that arrest, NYPD and ICE were in an apartment having a chummy conversation while a family and children are sitting on the floor terrified, saying to each other is this guy yours or ours, not only dehumanizing the people in front of them but sending a clear message that their relationship with ICE is more important than their treatment of New Yorkers. In terms of the Department of Corrections, their abuses have continued. Repeatedly, we've heard about how they allow ICE to walk into cells to take custody without a judicial warrant. We saw from the IDP FOIL presented in 2023 that they were emailing DOC with the hashtag teamsendthemback, using clearly anti-immigrant animus in their illegal communications with ICE, and we've often believed and testified about the fact that DOC does what we call a slow walk of our clients where they delay administrative processes in order to buy time for ICE to arrive. I looked at DOC's testimony today where they said that the reason they oppose Intro. 214 is because it will be difficult for the

Department to differentiate in cases where an individual was held for an extended period of time due to a detainer versus other factors. That is just unacceptable. They are the Department of Corrections. They have the ability to and they should be accounting for every second that someone is in their custody, and the minute somebody goes beyond past their lawful time, they should be held accountable. It is truly unacceptable. It is an embarrassment, and I hope that the next Administration we see will make it clear to the Department of Corrections that there is no exception for their unlawful collusion with ICE. I want to say one last quick thing about MOIA, which is that in the past as you heard from some of my colleagues, we were able to reach out to MOIA for assistance. I remember in the last Administration, a client of ours being held for extra time in DOC custody and we reached out to MOIA on a weekend and they helped facilitate our client's release and that person was not obtained by ICE. That has not happened in the past four years. I hope to see a MOIA where that will that will happen again. I will cede the rest of my time to my written testimony, but thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you so much to this panel. It is certainly you all whom we all call at all hours of the day and night. In addition, Deborah, I think my last one was to you. Yeah, to support our community members so thank you for... we know your 24-hour job does not start and stop with us because you're getting other calls from other New Yorkers so I just want to first start by saying thank you.

Can you, I guess I wanted to know if you thought it would be helpful for the Council to amend reporting requirement language from "response to a federal authority request" to exchange of information regardless of who is initiated in the exchange as my group of lawyers? You don't necessarily... if you want to think about that some more, but I think that is an inquiry we want to receive your feedback on.

ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: I think that that could be helpful, but I think even more important than that is making it extremely clear that any type of information sharing starts and ends with the exchange of words, not the exchange of bodies.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

2 I don't know if anyone else wants to add
3 anything or?

4 DEBORAH LEE: Yeah, I'd be happy to submit
5 a written... I'd like to, yeah, maybe confer.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No. Thank you.

7 And also I think another question should
8 we require logs of every exchange between City
9 enforcement entities, NYPD, DOC, DOP, and federal
10 immigration authorities?

11 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Can you repeat the
12 question?

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Logs. Should we ask
14 them to maintain logs of every interaction?

15 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Yes, logs. Absolutely.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I know. It's like a
17 trick easy question. Clearly, they can't
18 differentiate in their testimony...

19 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Yes, they need to be
20 accounting.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: As you noted, which
22 is obscene, truly obscene.

23 Could you tell us what information a
24 criminal defense attorney receives to inform them
25

that a non-citizen client would be transferred to ICE custody?

CATHERINE GONZALEZ: As a former criminal defense attorney, generally we don't receive any information. I think historically in cases where we have seen our clients end up in immigration custody, there hasn't been any information to us prematurely. We're often looking for our clients when they are not brought to their court date or something like that.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Right. And so DOC never provides any advance notice to defenders of when they're communicating to ICE. We know this but I just for the record it's important to note.

CATHERINE GONZALEZ: They do not.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I guess turn it over to Council Member Cabán.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. Before I ask my question, I just want to put it on the record that the Commissioner of MOIA is downstairs in the rotunda. I just went and asked him why he wasn't upstairs in this room and he said well, you know, it's up to the Mayor. You know, the leaders in this Administration have less a month left in their posts and they absolutely could come up here and do the

right thing and stand up for the people that they had committed to protect and serve. Infuriating.

My question is for Ms. Brown. First, it's really nice to see you. Brittany and I were public defenders at New York County Defender Services during the first Trump Administration. I was a Staff Attorney. She was a Senior Immigration Attorney. And I just want to ask you what are sort of the differences that you were seeing from, if any, from the first time holistic public defense organizations have had to navigate a Trump agenda and this time around.

BRITTANY BROWN: I think one of the most striking things is how I would say every client that I interact with expresses fear, expresses uncertainty, and frankly, it's hard for me to provide any comfort or certainty because of the way that this Administration is acting. The chaos and the lack of clarity on why they are targeting certain people. And so I would say that is the most striking thing. And as Catherine mentioned, you know, we have to often be looking for our clients. I would say that occupies more of my time this time around than then last time just trying to track down where a client might be.

2 Maybe they're simply laying low because that's the
3 smart thing to do or maybe they've been swept up and
4 we just don't know. And it's nice to see you, too.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. So in
6 the 2023 hearing on the detainer laws, DOC testified
7 that ICE had never presented the Department with a
8 judicial warrant for clients of yours that had been
9 transferred from DOC to ICE custody. To your
10 knowledge, has there ever been a judicial warrant
11 presented?

12 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: Not for mine and it
13 didn't sound like for yours as well, yeah.

14 DEBORAH LEE: No.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. And then the
16 current scope of 214 is limited to the NYPD,
17 Department of Corrections, and Department of
18 Probation. We've heard examples of ACS colluding with
19 ICE. Could you all just describe, you know, is this
20 limited scope good to start with? What would you like
21 to see this bill address?

22 ROSA COHEN-CRUZ: I think certainly
23 including ACS and, honestly, extending it to all City
24 agencies would be really critical because as you've
25 heard from everyone today, all the panels and I'm

sure you'll continue to hear, there is widespread fear of engaging with City agencies at every level because people are afraid that information will be shared with ICE and, you know, in the earlier panel of directed impacted speakers I can share that the reason that some directly impacted speakers were represented by attorneys or other speakers instead is because this is a government agency and there is fear of attending even something like this, so I think, you know, making it really clear that New York City's laws are not only widespread but that there will be accountability for all the prohibitions in place against information sharing with ICE is critically important.

TANIA MATTOS: I second that, and I want to highlight the urgency of this because every week our office has to analyze federal memos, executive orders, and every week it feels like our clients' and communities' rights are taken away, and so we're just playing catch-up at this moment and vital, vital that New York City takes a stand immediately.

DEBORAH LEE: I just completely concur. I think expanding it to all City agencies would be much appreciated and I think would just put a sort of

stake in the ground in terms of sort of where New York City stands.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. I hope we will continue to put these stakes on the ground and fortify these laws and really demand accountability from the Administration in all the ways that we see skirting of laws. So, certainly I don't need to encourage it but because I know you not only will hold us accountable but continue to submit the real experiences of what is happening on the ground to make sure we close those loopholes and I think it's important to note data and electronic surveillance is probably one of the biggest challenges that we face that we need to really begin to look into and the tech companies that are colluding and ensuring that they evade laws.

So, I just want to thank the panel, and I'm going to call the next panel.

Next, we'll have Leslie Allen, Dave Basnet, Mahabuba Masud, Yasmine Farhang, Zachary Ahmad, and Arash Azizzada. So sorry if I mispronounce your names.

Oh, wow. I think we should just close this hearing to go down to the rotunda because we got

the Mayor, we got NYPD, we got MOIA, DCAS. They're all downstairs rather than being here accounting for how they are protecting immigrant New Yorkers. Unbelievable.

Okay. I'm sorry to this panel whom we called up. We thank you for being here, and I guess would you like to start?

MUHAMMAD MUSAH: Good afternoon, Chair Avilés and Members of the Committee on Immigration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Muhammad Musah. I am the Lead Community Organizer at African Communities Together at the New York City chapter. It's an organization founded by African immigrants for African immigrants, dedicated to ensuring that our communities and all New Yorkers can live with dignity, safety, and opportunity in the city. Since our founding in 2013, our mission has been clear, to empower African immigrants to integrate socially, engage civically, and advance economically. We do this by connecting community members to critical services, developing leaders across African immigrant communities, and organizing for policies that reflect our lived experiences and priorities. For more than 10 years, we have built a

grassroots membership that includes thousands of African immigrant members, facilitated the connection of thousands of families to critical services, legal, housing, workforce development, and language access support, and organized successful policy campaigns at the local, state, and federal level. In addition to New York City, we have offices in Washington D.C., the metro area, and Philadelphia, and we participate in a national network of more than 100 organizations with a similar mission to support African immigrants that operate across 41 states. Every day, we work directly with newly arrived and long-standing African immigrant families who remind me of my mother who was afraid to leave the apartment during our first year here in 1994 in fear of the current realities of ICE's terror and deceit. We routinely support people who are afraid to go to school, file a police report, or seek medical care because they do not trust the City agencies will protect their information. We see employees and families intimidated by employers and landlords when immigration enforcement is too closely tied to City systems. For these reasons, we support Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act. A private right of Action is essential to ensure that sanctuary

laws are real and enforceable. Our community members need to know they can safely access City services without fear. We also support Intro. 1268 requiring clear signage about sanctuary rights, Intro. 1272, the PEMDAS Act, which prevents misuse of E-Verify and protects immigrant workers, and (TIMER CHIME) Intro. 1412 which ensures federal immigration enforcement cannot operate out of DOC property. Collectively, these bills strengthen safety, restore trust, and help immigrant families, especially African immigrants to fully participate in city life. So, thank you for your leadership and for advancing policies that protect all New Yorkers and thanks for the opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, and just for the record, you're?

MUHAMMAD MUSAH: Yeah. It's Muhammad Musah.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Can you tell me your name?

MAHABUBA MASUD: Yes. My name is Mahabuba Masud, representing New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. So, I think we may have confused your names.

MUHAMMAD MUSAH: Yeah. It sounded like you said my name.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: All right. We just need for the record to have the panels done properly so we may check in with you again. Thank you.

Arash.

ARASH AZIZZADA: Good afternoon, and thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of voiceless Afghan immigrants and refugees in New York City. My name is Arash Azizzada. I'm the Co-Director of Afghans for Better Tomorrow. Our organization came out of a crisis moment, one that occurred in the summer of 2021. Since then, over 200,000 Afghans have come to the United States and thousands of them have come to this great city. During the migrant crisis of 2023, we started supporting hundreds of Afghans seeking asylum in the city, anticipating a potential Trump Administration and a crackdown on Afghans and other immigrants. What we've seen in the past two weeks is a scapegoating of the Afghan American refugee community. We've seen an Administration that is targeting, demonizing, vilifying, and targeting

Afghan refugees and immigrants who have newly arrived. Just down the street of Federal Plaza, ICE is targeting and detaining innocent and vulnerable Afghans. Between the press conference this morning and my testimony today, I received three more phone calls from our community members who've been called in for ICE check-ins and were anticipating either detention or continued surveillance by ICE and immigration enforcement. I will remind also that the conditions (INAUDIBLE) were co-created by American foreign policy and there's a great debt that is owed to Afghans, many of them served alongside U.S. service people. That is not to exceptionalize Afghan, but to say if this Administration in this country wants to get rid of Afghans, who does belong in this country. This policy of targeting Afghans is not just a betrayal of promises made to us, it's a policy rooted in Islamophobia and bigotry. This is an attempt to get rid of Black and Brown immigrants. We encourage the enforcement of existing sanctuary laws and passage of all four bills. With proper enforcement, the dignity of Afghans and other immigrants can be upheld and respected. Our community lives in deep fear, petrified of what will happen

when they go to their ICE check-ins, engage City agencies, come home to their migrant shelters in which they still live, or they asked me what if ICE comes to our home. New York City must not just pass these bills to protect our newest New Yorkers. It must show and present a framework to the rest of the country what it means to resist cooperation with the Gestapo-like officers who are breathing down our community's neck. This is the least Afghans and our other immigrant neighbors are owed when they are under attack. Thank you.

MAHABUBA MASUD: Thank you to the Committee of Immigration for holding this public hearing to address the urgent need to protect our immigrant communities in New York. My name is Mahabuba Masud. I'm speaking as part of the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. I'm testifying today from a health justice lens to urge the Council to pass legislation that will uphold the existing laws to protect our non-citizen community members from ICE enforcement. These actions are critical to preserve access to health care for all New Yorkers. When immigrant New Yorkers lack confidence that City agencies and their

representatives won't communicate and collude with ICE, they hesitate to access health care. These fears are compounded when ICE shows up in local hospitals. Since January 2025, this fear has only increased. We currently work alongside medical providers who themselves observed that ICE presence in the community has led to increased fear of deportation, not only among undocumented immigrants, but also among their U.S. citizen children and network of families and friends. This fear is causing health care avoidance, stress, and anxiety, all of which have profound effects on the physical and the mental health of our community members. When a non-citizen New Yorker is arrested and detained by ICE, they lose access to the health care they received in their communities. At the same time, their children and other family members frequently experience worsening physical and psychological stress with the removal of their primary caretakers. Many New York City residents detained by ICE are currently held at Orange County Jail in Goshen, New York. We have been working with our medical provider network who review medical records of individuals detained by ICE to assess the adequacy of their health care and the

health risks that individuals face. We have documented years of medical persistent neglect at this facility including lack of care for chronic conditions, a lack of medication access, a lack of follow-up care and improper management of medical conditions. Many individuals enter detention with medical issues that require regular treatment, but ICE has constantly neglected its basic health needs. People report that medication that they were taking when they enter detention often for years to decades is discontinued or altered once they're detained. This intentional harm towards detained individuals can result in severe health consequences, including death. Tragically, worsening health outcomes including preventable deaths due to inadequate medical care are not exceptional occurrences. They're the standard practice in ICE detention centers. It is now more important than ever for the Council to act to rebuild the bridge of trust between immigrant communities and New York City to protect your communities and their health. We urge the Council to pass the New York City Trust Act and Intro. 1412 to safeguard New York immigrant community workers and preserve their access to health care. Thank you.

LESLIE ALLEN: Good morning, Members of the Council. My name is Leslie Allen, pronouns she/her, and I serve as the Director of Legal Services at the New York City Anti-Violence Project where we work every day with LGBTQ and HIV-affected immigrant survivors of violence who are disproportionately targeted by federal immigration enforcement. New York City is and has always been an immigrant city. For decades, the Council has stood behind strong sanctuary protections because our safety depends on the ability of all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, to move through this city without fear that local agencies will funnel them into the hands of ICE. Those protections are not abstract. They determine whether a survivor calls 9-1-1, whether a person living with HIV seeks out medical care they need to thrive, and whether a person feels safe accessing emergency shelter while experiencing domestic violence. Right now, the federal administration is escalating violent attacks on immigrant New Yorkers and directly threatening the queer and trans communities AVP serves. We are seeing increased misinformation, intimidation, and growing fear across our client base that City systems will

not protect them. We need our sanctuary laws to be given teeth, enforced with real mechanisms for accountability. That is why AVP strongly supports the NYC Trust Act. Too many of our clients have been harmed because the NYPD, DOC, or DOP ignored or misinterpreted our detainer laws. When that happens, a survivor loses far more than trust. They can lose their family, their housing, and their only source of safety. A private right of action is essential. It creates consequences for unlawful collusion with ICE and gives survivors a path to seek justice. We urge the passage of the Safer Sanctuary Act. ICE should never have an office in the DOC property. Allowing federal immigration enforcement to embed itself in City jails is a direct threat due to process to safety and to the Council's own decade-long promise to keep our system separate from federal deportation machinery. AVP also supports Intro. 1268 to ensure clear and accessible signage so New Yorkers understand their rights when approached by federal authorities. Survivors deserve to know what protections exist before they're in crisis. Finally, AVP supports Intro. 1272. We hear regularly from workers, especially trans and gender non-conforming

workers, who are sidelined and intimidated by employers misusing E-Verify. Setting a lawful order of operations is a basic safeguard against discrimination. On behalf of AVP and the survivors we serve, I urge the Council to pass all four measures. Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to testify today.

ZACHARY AHMAD: Good afternoon. My name is Zachary Ahmad. I'm a Senior Policy Counsel at the New York Civil Liberties Union or the NYCLU. I want to thank the Council, the Committee, and Chair Avilés for holding this hearing and giving consideration to the legislation on today's agenda, including the Safer Sanctuary Act and Intro. 1268, which we enthusiastically support and, of course, the New York City Trust Act which has been several years in the making and which we very much support. The Trust Act is all about accountability, and it's therefore especially glaring and disappointing that the outgoing Administration has refused to engage in even the most basic level of accountability by showing up today and answering the Committee's questions. And that's even more glaring in light of what we learned last week from the Department of Investigation about

how the NYPD has failed to follow our sanctuary laws in a number of different respects. As you know, last week the DOI released the findings of an investigation into the NYPD's compliance or lack thereof with various City sanctuary laws which was undertaken at the request of this current Council Speaker. And whatever the DOI might have said about the NYPD's diligence and follow-through on addressing the issues they found, the findings themselves are quite troubling. The DOI identified at least one instance of clear collusion that it believed was a violation out of the handful of examples that it that it looked at, but it also illustrated how the federal government is using various different agencies and law enforcement entities and the pretext of criminal investigations to entangle the NYPD into helping detain people for ICE under the premise that they are in fact needing assistance for criminal investigations. What's more, the report found something that many of us have long believed to be the case, which is that the NYPD is not accurately tracking or reporting on how often it receives and how it responds to requests for ICE assistance as it's required to by Local Law 228. And that is not

merely a dry bureaucratic issue. The lack of adequate reporting really makes it impossible to know how much collusion might be happening beyond the few examples that might get flagged and raised up for review. This is something we've testified to before. As you know, advocates are regularly identifying instances on the ground in which they believe that it appears that the NYPD and ICE might be in collaboration and the documented failure to track and report on the requests for assistance really makes it hard to dig down and know exactly what's going on in those instances. All of this ties back directly to the legislation on today's agenda. First of course, we need the Trust Act so our City sanctuary laws have teeth and provide a real deterrent against non-compliance in the first place, and we also need the Safer Sanctuary Act, which in addition to keeping ICE off Rikers for good, would also broaden our definitions of immigration (TIMER CHIME) enforcement and immigration authorities under the law to better reflect how this Administration is weaponizing agencies beyond just ICE and CBP to aid immigration enforcement and is using criminal law enforcement as a proxy for civil immigration enforcement. We did

submit longer written testimony. I'll yield the rest of my time. Thank you, again.

DAVE BASNET: Good afternoon, Chair Avilés and Members of the Committee. and thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the key legislation that's on the agenda and the critical steps that this Body must take to strengthen our City's existing sanctuary laws and ensure that New York City is protected from ongoing federal overreach. My name is Dave Basnet, and I'm the Senior Manager of Immigrant Rights Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition. The NYIC is a statewide network of more than 200 organizations that support immigrants and refugees across New York State. New York City has reliably been a national leader in upholding our municipal protections for immigrant communities. Through our long-standing sanctuary laws for decades, the laws have sought to protect our city's local resources and ensure that they are not wasted on collusion with federal immigration enforcement. In order to respond, however, to the Trump Administration and its cruel agenda of indiscriminate deportation and detention, our sanctuary laws need to be updated and strengthened so that they can be responsive to the

moment our city and our country is confronting, a moment where federal agents act with impunity, where rule of law and Constitutional protections are regularly and routinely undermined, and where immigrant families are being torn apart as a daily occurrence. Today, the NYIC alongside ICE Out! New York City's coalition is testifying to call for the swift passage of Intro. 1412, the Safer Sanctuary Act, and Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act. My colleagues have spoken extensively on the New York City Trust Act so I'll focus a little bit on the Safer Sanctuary Act. The Safer Sanctuary Act comes at a time when New York State Supreme Court upheld what was accomplished by advocates and the Council more than a decade ago, unequivocally rejecting ICE presence at Rikers Island. Mayor Eric Adams' attempt at restoring ICE presence at Rikers Island with Executive Order 50 stood in complete violation of our City's sanctuary protections, and ultimately the action was invalidated by our courts and New Yorkers were once again protected from federal government's overreach in our city, even if City officials tried to circumvent our City laws by opening a backdoor to collusion. We call on the Council to pass the Safer

Sanctuary Act to permanently prevent ICE from maintaining any quarters on the Department of Corrections property. Intro. 1412 would remove the ambiguity that allowed Mayor Adams to act with impunity in the first place and would revise how immigration authorities are defined to reflect the broad ways in which federal entities are being weaponized to enforce immigration law. Drawing on the previous large-scale immigration raid and attempted raid at Canal Street in downtown Manhattan as an example, the federal agents present to conduct immigration enforcement included agents from ICE, HSI, FBI, ATS, CBP, and as well as the IRS and DEA (TIMER CHIME) and much more. The tactics and strategies of federal immigration enforcement are changing and more federal resources are being diverted to aid the Trump Administration's mass deportation plan. The Administration has also diverted critical resources typically used for national security and emergency and disaster response to facilitate the expansion of deportation agents. To ensure that sanctuary laws are evolving at the pace that the Trump Administration's tactics are, we need the Safer Sanctuary Act to expand the definitions

currently written into our laws to ensure that we're fully protecting New Yorkers. The Council must urgently pass the Safer Sanctuary Act and the New York City Trust Act to create a private right of action for New Yorkers that are harmed by the collusion. The recent DOI report which found NYPD violated our City sanctuary laws in at least one instance is indicative of the necessity for tangible accountability and justice for New Yorkers. In the face of thousands of new immigration agents, billions of dollars of federal funding, we need to pass laws that strengthen the existing protections and create accountability for our City sanctuary laws so that we protect our immigrant communities from the federal government's overreach and ensure safety and well-being of every New Yorker. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much to this panel. Thank you for noting. I think others who testified also noted the DOI investigation and the importance of lifting up not only the need for the data to be able to track and truly understand the scale and scope but also of all the other failures and weaknesses that the report outlined that we should all be demanding very swift response and

correction too because it is clearly noted in that report. So thank you to this panel, and I will call the next panel.

Oh, and I'd like to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member Julie Won.

We'll try again. Yasmine, Tsering Lama, Wai Yin Wong or Joyce, Nat Moghe from Asian American Federation, Araceli (phonetic) from Mixteca, I'm not sure they're here, and Mamado Bali (phonetic) from ACT.

YASMINE FARHANG: Good afternoon now, everyone. My name is Yasmine Farhang, and I'm the Executive Director of the Immigrant Defense Project, which fights for justice for all immigrants, especially those targeted by the criminal and immigration legal systems. I will make my comments in just a moment, but I just want to make sure everybody who doesn't already know what's happening downstairs because it was alluded to. I got a little more detail. Our Mayor is downstairs together with NYPD Commissioner and Manny Castro, the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. They're hosting a press conference, and you can't make this up, it's about language access for immigrant New

Yorkers so we collude with ICE, but we do it with language access. I think that is the theme of, and I really hope that anybody who is in the press group downstairs is asking them about their behavior. So, that's wild and exceptionally disappointing, especially for Manny I hate to say it, but I have to say it.

I'm not going to repeat what so many people have already said. You need only listen to everyone else to understand how completely fundamental sanctuary is to New York as a city always, and especially now, and, you know, as I said earlier all our call is really simple. We're asking our own City government in New York City not to act as secret agents for ICE, right. When we talk about institutions that are already disproportionately targeting Black New Yorkers and New Yorkers of color, we need to minimally know that they're also not acting as secret agents for ICE. We have sat here too many times. I was speaking to some of our partners and I was saying that I feel like this is déjà vu. I think I have probably sat every single one of these chairs before this Council and had, you know, know some testimony here that I'm able to copy and paste

and we have told you everything. I know our Council Members who are here who are with us who are championing these bills know this well. I don't know where everyone else is. Because I think it is notable to say that we are missing not just our Administration but some of our fellow Council Members as well, and I don't really know what else could be more important a year into the Trump Administration when the Council hasn't passed a piece of legislation that actively addresses ICE policing, but, you know, one thing I just want to stress for the record and make sure it's clear for the record and this has been alluded to is that, you know, violations, we have celebrated our laws, many of us fought for the laws that we passed a decade ago and we're proud of those laws, but those laws are only as powerful as they are consistently upheld and, you know, we unveiled thousands of pages of email correspondence between the Department of Corrections and ICE as alluded to before which didn't just show systematic kind of practices of violating our laws with slowdowns of release communication to facilitate transfer to ICE but also a deep culture of collusion, and I think it's really important we understand this culture

piece. It has been said many times but it bears saying again that one of the emails from DOC was signed off with a hashtag teamsendthemback, right, and so this idea that there's sort of like one bad apple or like they just need more training and we'll fix the protocols and then everything will be fine. Like, it is beyond that, right, and so what we need to see is a culture change, not just a change in systems, policies, and protocol To date, this Administration has done nothing to address this. last time I sat here, we talked about how many, many, many (TIMER CHIME) efforts to contact MOIA about this had gone without response. I think thanks to Council Member Avilés asking why about this last time, they sent us an email a week after the last hearing. We had a totally superficial meeting and never heard from them again. You know, so we are calling on this Committee today as many people before me have said to ensure City agencies who systematically violate our laws are held accountable, to ensure that laws from over a decade ago evicting ICE from City jails are not undermined by prohibiting any federal agency carrying out deportation agenda from setting up an office on DOC property. The time is now. I won't be

redundant I'll pass it to to the other speakers on this panel. The time has passed. It's way past. It's time for us to pass these bills. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

TSERING D. LAMA: Good afternoon. My name is Tsering Lama, and I'm a Senior Manager of Organizing and Policy at Adhikaar. Adhikaar is the only women-led community center and a worker center that serves and organizes the Nepali-speaking community on workers' rights, immigration rights, youth empowerment, access to health care, and language justice. I'm here today testifying along our RISE network, a network of 20 Asian-led and Asian-serving organizations that provide immigration case management and legal services to support New Yorkers. As new immigrants, many of our members are temporary protective status holders of mixed family statuses or undocumented individuals who are forced to navigate a terrorizing and opaque immigration system that puts them at risk of deportation and detention. Our work in advancing immigration justice responds directly to these challenges. The central facet of this work involves provision of culturally competent case support to our at-risk members and particularly in

the intersection of immigration and workers' rights. Many of our members depended on TPS for their work authorization, their health care insurance, their business licenses, their travel documents, and TPS for Nepali nationals were terminated this year in August 5 by the Trump Administration leaving thousands in precarious situations. Day to day, our community is living in fear as a community continue to be kidnapped. The current presidential administration has brought drastic policy changes at the federal, state, and local levels, and New York City's sanctuary laws restrict cooperation with civil enforcement. Yet, these events indicate these protections are often overlooked. With the threat of militarized violence in our city and the lack of protection and training from New York City NYPD officers, immigrant New Yorkers' rights to continue to be violated and individuals with lawful immigration status continue to be detained without due process. We are grateful for the FY26 City Council funding that was provided to the RISE network partners and our New York City Coalition of Domestic Work that is going to support the in-language and culturally competent immigration legal services and

management, but I think here, we're all here like to support the four measures right now, which is the Intro. 1214, which will ensure that immigrants have voiced in safeguarding their dignity and well-being, Intro. 1272 to ensure that candidates are evaluated based on their qualification and skills rather than their immigration statuses. We also support the 1268 in creating signage describing certain constitutional and legal protections. Intro. 1412 which would bar federal immigration authorities from (TIMER CHIME) maintaining offices on land over which NYC Department of Correction Offices exercise jurisdiction. We also hope that the Council continues to protect and expand funding for legal services so that our communities can continue to be protected in the city.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

NAT MOGHE: Thank You, Chair Alexa Avilés and Member of the Committee on Immigration, for holding this hearing and for providing us with the opportunity to testify. My name is Nat Moghe. I'm the Advocacy Coordinator at the Asian American Federation where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member non-profits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. I'm honored to testify as a South

Asian queer and trans son of immigrants alongside our partners at the Rapid Immigration Support and Empowerment Network. The current presidential administration has brought drastic policy changes at the federal, state, and local levels. New York City's sanctuary laws restrict cooperation with civil immigration enforcement. Yet recent events indicate that these protections are often overlooked. In September, a New York City corrections officer provided federal immigration officers with real-time information about the release of a man from Rikers Island, violating the City's sanctuary law which resulted in his arrest by ICE. In late October of this year, ICE conducted a militarized raid on Canal Street in Chinatown, arresting nine immigrant vendors and five protesters, and on November 29th, the NYPD helped ICE agents push citizens out of the way while arresting more than a dozen protesters. In August 2025, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus highlighted cases of AAPI lawful permanent residents being detained without due process, raising concerns about violations of constitutional rights and sanctuary laws. With the threat of militarized violence in our city and lack of protection and

training from NYPD officers, immigrant New Yorkers' rights continue to be violated and individuals with the lawful immigration status continue to be detained without due process. We must prevent local and state law enforcement and agencies from diverting resources to the federal deportation agenda and sharing sensitive information with federal immigration authorities. Alongside this, our City must continue to invest in new CBO's that are on the ground protecting and providing services to those who are targeted and wrongfully detained. We thank the Committee on Immigration for its continued support and leadership and protecting immigrant New Yorkers. We make the following recommendations to the City Council to sustain and improve and support our work. We support Intro. 214, which will help ensure immigrants have a voice in safeguarding their dignity and well-being as well as Intro. 1272, Intro. 1268, and Intro. 1412, which our recommendations can be found more in our written testimony. We'd also love for you to protect and expand funding for the following initiatives, legal services for AAPI communities, legal services for day laborers and domestic workers, and immigration legal services for

survivors of violence and gender-based (TIMER CHIME) harmed. Also to expand investment in language accessible legal services which it's very funny to hear that they're talking about that downstairs yet they are not here in this room right now to hear us speaking about that. Continue to support AAF's coordination of the immigration rapid response network, prioritize supporting small and mid-sized CBO's serving emerging immigrant communities, and to prioritize addressing contracting issues that pose barriers for CBO's to promptly receive funding to deliver crucial services. Thank you so much for allowing us to testify, and we look forward to working with you to make sure our immigrant communities get the support that they deserve. If you have any questions, I could be contacted at nat.moghe@aaafederation.org.

JOYCE WANG: Good afternoon, Council Members. Thank you, Chair Avilés and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Immigration for holding this important hearing and for giving us the opportunity to testify. My name is Joyce Wang, and I'm the Program Coordinator on behalf of KCS, Korean Community Services of Metropolitan, New York. We're

at Bayside, and since 1973, KCS has been a trusted community-based organization serving immigrant New Yorkers, particularly Korean Americans as well as other Asian Americans and AAPI residents. We offer programs in health services, social services, workforce development, and legal assistance. Every day, we work with people who are trying to navigate City systems for the first time, whether it be registering for health benefits, seeking employment opportunities, assistance with legal applications, or simply just stopping by a resource center because they don't know where else to go to obtain information on the City's offerings and their rights. Many of them come to us with questions, worries, or simply confusion about how things work and especially about what their rights are when interacting with government offices. In 2022, we expanded our work by launching our Immigration and Legal Services Department, which now offers a full range of support from preparing immigration forms to providing comprehensive legal services in family matters, employment housing, bankruptcy, wills and trusts, and also criminal defense. This past year alone, we supported about 200 in-person cases and handled over

800 phone consultations and hosted more than 10 community legal education events including know-your-right sessions and immigration workshops. Across Korean, Chinese, and other AAPI communities, we continue to see how fear, misinformation, and language barriers shape people's daily interactions with public systems. Many of our clients are not sure which areas of a City building they're allowed to enter and others hesitate to visit government or school offices because they're worried about encountering unknown procedures or potential law enforcement, even when they have every right to do so. For example, we often meet Korean seniors at our center who avoid and feel intimidated visiting City agencies because signage is not available in their language. Additionally, we also hear from Chinese-speaking clients I feel hesitant about visiting a Social Security center because there's no signs in their language to direct them to the right area or to even make an appointment before visiting. These small moments may seem minor from the outside, but for many of our community members, this affects whether they feel safe accessing services that they're entitled to. These experiences highlight why accurate,

visible, and multilingual information about legal and constitutional rights is so crucial. This includes it being online, at City offices, in public schools, and any facility where immigrant New Yorkers go for help. The proposed legislations focus on developing clear signage that explains legal protections, distinguishes public from private only areas in City buildings, and is available in designated citywide and temporary language languages, aligns with what we see in our work. Plain, simple, and age-appropriate signage that is posted consistently and visibly (TIMER CHIME) has potential to reduce confusion for people walking to City buildings for services, ensuring immigrant residents know their rights, and strengthens trust in public spaces by reducing fear and misinformation. Therefore, KCS respectfully requests the City Council ensure that signage is accurate, visible, and multilingual including Korean, Chinese, and other languages spoken by AAPI communities in locations where immigrant residents already seek help, including schools, resource centers, libraries, and IDNYC enrollment sites. Promote stronger collaboration between City agencies and trusted community organizations to ensure

translations, wording, and design are culturally appropriate for groups such as Korean and Chinese speakers. Promote clear and consistent communication between agencies and community partners so that immigrant New Yorkers receive timely and reliable information about the rights and services available to them. And also reinforce that immigrant communities can safely access City services without fear, especially in public areas like schools, libraries, City agencies, and non-profit organizations. Clear signage will support this goal by providing clearance and reassurance to its residents. KCS remains fully committed to serving our immigrant New Yorkers with dignity and care. We are ready to work closely with the City to make sure our communities can access information, services, and public spaces with confidence and clarity. We thank the Committee for its continued leadership and for the opportunity to testify today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.

For this panel, as part of this panel, we had called Araceli Momolejo (phonetic), I just want to make sure before we move on and Mamado Bali from ACT.

Okay. So, thank you again for your testimony and your consistent work on these issues. We deeply appreciate it. Thank you.

Next, we have Manuel Castro who's here in his personal capacity. You have three minutes.

MANUEL CASTRO: Good afternoon, Chair and Members of the Immigration Committee of the City Council. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on my personal capacity.

As you know, it is up to City Hall on who is to testify on their behalf at this hearing. This is why I choose to testify it on my personal capacity as a longtime immigrant rights advocate, as someone who came to this country as a 5-year-old, grew up undocumented in this city, and I grew up with many of the same fears and concerns that our community members now are experiencing. Also, as someone who will continue to live and advocate here in New York City beyond my time in City government, I am here to strongly, strongly support Intro. 1268, Intro. 1272, Intro. 1412, and Intro. 214, and urge the City Council to take these bills into consideration and enact them into laws. Intro. 1268 aligns with my commitment to create plain language resources that

clearly and explicitly outline immigrants' rights, including the legal protections in Sections 4-210, 10-178, and 231202. Intro. 1272 is another piece of legislation that will support immigrant New Yorkers. This law is about the use of E-Verify system stating that an agency is not allowed to use E-Verify at all unless the job is based on federal funds or required to do so by federal law. Intro. 1412 would prohibit immigration authorities from maintaining offices or quarters for any purpose on land under the jurisdiction of Department of Corrections, and Intro. 1214 provides immigrant New Yorkers harmed by violations of detainer laws an avenue to seek justice through a private right to action. It is important for me to be on the record in support of all these bills and in support of all of you in making sure that this City Council finally passes these laws that I long championed and that I now currently support as a New Yorker and as an immigrant concerned with my community. In the coming years, federal immigration enforcement may triple or quadruple in its size, and we don't know the harms that that will bring to the City of New York and to immigrant New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: May I?

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes, please.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

Obviously, I came downstairs to ask you to come up and testify in your personal capacity. This is incredibly, incredibly, incredibly important. We're up here doing our jobs. It is a disgusting shame that the Mayor is not doing his. And I am glad that you are at least here right now testifying in your personal capacity in support of these bills. Thank you.

MANUEL CASTRO: Thank you, Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I do also echo and recognize that you are here in your personal capacity, but I have to say you have chosen to work with an Administration who has thrown our communities under the bus over and over and over again, and it took courage for you to come up here because we've been talking about you, 100 percent, and this Mayor who we both know has allowed our communities to sit with inadequate services with inadequate funding and with an office of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs who is muzzled and is not going full tilt to protect our communities and work in collaboration

with this Council. This office has been an utter disappointment during this very difficult time and so, once again, I thank you for standing up. I don't know how you reconcile watching your boss attack your community and still do the job. I don't know how you do that. I want to thank you for being here personally, but it does not... I am still highly offended by this behavior and I think every New Yorker is going to be offended and will remember what this office was like during this time. Thank you.

Next, we're going to call the panel.

Next, we're going to have Steve Auerbach, Samantha, Samantha from Common Cause, Mohammad Razvi, Reverend Chloe Breyer, Alejandro Grajales, and Choukri Khadija from the Council of People's Organizations.

ALEJANDRO GRAJALES: Good afternoon, Alexa Avilés and Member of the City Council Committee on Immigration. My name is Alejandro Grajales, and I am a Workers Rights Organizer and Caseworker at Workers Justice Project. We represent thousands of immigrant workers across New York City, including over 80,000 app-based delivery workers who keep this city moving every day. Right now, immigrant communities are facing serious attacks. ICE is doing violence raids

in many neighborhoods, taking workers while they are simply doing their jobs, street vendors, delivery workers, nannies, construction workers, and more. These actions create fear, break trust, and put entire families and community at risk. Immigrant workers are the heart of New York City. When workers are scared to go to work because they might be targeted by ICE, the whole city suffers. An attack on immigrant workers is an attack on every New Yorker. This is why we need stronger protections. We urge the City Council to pass Intro. 214, 1268, 1272, and 1412. These bills will help make immigrant communities safer from federal raids, make sure people know their rights, and hold City agencies accountable if those rights are violated. We also ask you to pass Intro. 1332, which protects app-delivery workers from unfair deactivations. No workers should have to choose between staying safe during an ICE raid and keeping their job. New York has always been an immigrant city. Without immigrant workers, there is no New York City. Workers Justice Project thank you for your support. We strongly encourage you to pass these protections so our communities and our city can stay safe and strong. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

REVEREND CHLOE BREYER: Many thanks to you, Chair Avilés and for the whole City Council Committee here. My name is the Reverend Chloe Breyer. I'm Executive Director at the Interfaith Center of New York and Episcopal priest and just here today on behalf of the Interfaith Center and also the Episcopal Diocese of New York whom I serve as clergy at Saint Edward the Martyr in East Harlem. So since we saw a whole new wave of asylum seekers coming (TIMER CHIME) I think that's for yours not mine. Okay, good. We have joined so many other and sought to resource through 30 regrants to faith and community partners welcoming new New Yorkers. Much of that was thanks to City Council for those resources, which we greatly appreciate. The Episcopal Diocese of New York joins us in thanking the Council for helping to meet this moment. So, since President Trump came into office in January, the resources that our grassroots coalition spent on welcoming new New Yorkers in 2023 and '24 is now being spent on stopping the same families and friends from being deported. Many gains and hard-earned stability have been upended as we know. Monthly Meals put on by East

End Temple Middle Collegiate Church, for example. Families have had to shift their resources to making sure that their children get to school safely. A parish in the Episcopal Diocese works with public school teachers who are paying out of their own pockets for private transport to and from school for students who are otherwise too terrified to attend. We know that asylum support clinics like El Barrio Angels have processed so many asylum applications are now overrun with requests for habeas petitions and bond funding. Also, commissary requests that New Yorkers who are languishing in private detention centers around this country so they can communicate with their families and lawyers. As ICE agents separate our families, tearing parents from children outside of courtrooms, mocking justice in the hallways and sidewalks of buildings where this sacred activity is supposed to be happening, we are in the moment where our sanctuary status as a city is being tested as it had never has before. Clergy provide pastoral comfort and accompaniment to people too frightened to attend court because the intimidating presence of ICE agents who seemingly sees people without rhyme or reason. With almost daily assaults

on our neighborhoods across the five boroughs, New Yorkers must have the confidence that the NYPD and City agencies will continue to protect their rights and not assist those who are violating them. All of the laws presented today need to be passed and we are discussing ways to protect basic freedoms and the rights of individuals who are currently being targeted by federal authorities. So for all these reasons, I want to thank the Committee for putting these (TIMER CHIME) forward and to know that the Interfaith Center and the Episcopal Diocese of New York strongly support their passage. Thank you.

MOHAMMAD RAZVI: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Avilés and Council Member Tiffany and the Committee of on Immigration for holding this hearing. My name is Mohammad Razvi. I am the Executive Director and Founder of Council of People's Organization. It was founded after 9/11 after all the atrocities that were happening within the Muslim community where federal authorities at that moment were just grabbing everyone. At that time, it wasn't ICE. It was called INS. I have my testimony here supporting ditto everything what everyone is saying because it is so much needed. At that moment, I

remember after 9/11 many folks were afraid to contact NYPD or hospitals and working with the administration at that time, they came up with the executive order 41 with Bloomberg's Administration and other City Council Members, which was passed which was great, but this is even better because this protects everyone even more of what's happening today. Sadly, I wanted to share what's happening in our community. We actually implemented our family emergency program. What is that? That is in case a individual who drops off his child to school and goes to work and in that time, if that individual is picked up in a raid, we literally are showing folks how to give their guardianship to their friends and other family members so at least the child or the kids are not put into other places, to ACS, because last time we spoke I was telling you I was having conversation with the Chancellor and it was six, it was nine months now that I did not get a response and because there was a blue card, the blue card is the card that you have to file with the school to allow your child to be picked up. But you know, my mother said always come, you know, do what you got to do best. So now we have the QR code that we implemented and I want to make sure

that all the local community members they do this for those folks because they need this help. It's one thing to be detained, one thing is to be visited at your workplace, but it's another thing when you find out that your child, there's nobody there to pick them up. The protocol is to call the cops then goes to ACS and goes to foster care. That's the system sadly. We have been doing immigration rights and we actually developed a go-bag. This is the go-bag. The go-bag shows what information that you should have copies of your documents and we have been giving this to our food pantry line and others. We're explaining to them, this is what you put in the go-bag, this is what your rights are in case you get stopped, what are your responsibilities, what does the arrest warrant look like from judicial, what does the administrative warrant look like, copies of it because we need to inform our (TIMER CHIME) communities and protect them and we're here to work on this and work with you. Thank you

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Okay. Good afternoon, Chair Avilés and Members of the Committee. My name is Samantha Sanchez, and I'm here on behalf of Common Cause New York, a non-partisan good government

organization dedicated to transparency, accountability, and protecting democratic rights. New York City sanctuary laws are not just immigration policies. They are democracy protections. They ensure that federal agencies cannot bypass local rules, exploit confusion, or instill fear in communities who rely on public institutions every day. When people do not know their rights, fear replaces trust. No democracy can function on fear. That is why Intro. 1268 is so essential. It strengthens New York City sovereignty by making rights visible, clear, and enforceable in public space. Requiring multilingual signage that explains constitutional protections, the limits of federal immigration authority, and the boundaries of non-public areas ensures that New Yorkers, especially immigrant New Yorkers, understand exactly where local control begins and federal power ends. This bill aligns New York City with national best practices. For example, Chicago strengthened its welcoming city ordinance to restrict ICE access to City facilities without a judicial warrant, established mandatory staff protocols, and ensured public visibility of rights information. New York City must adopt equally strong measures to protect

our residents and reinforce our commitment to democratic governance. Intro. 1268 also works in concert with the rest of the sanctuary package, all of which we support. Together, these four bills strengthen transparency, accountability, worker protections, and local authority, the cornerstones of a functioning democracy. Intro. 1268 is at the heart of its effort. It ensures every New Yorker walking into a school, a shelter, or any City-owned building has access to information about their rights and ensures that City staff have clarity, not confusion, when federal agents seek access to local spaces. Our written testimony contains specific recommendations for suggested amendments to make the bill even stronger, requiring signage to clearly delineate public from private spaces in City-owned buildings and requiring training by DCAS for security personnel and protecting City property from federal incursions. We urge the Council to pass Intro. 1268 and the full sanctuary package to defend New York City's democratic institutions, uphold our sanctuary commitments, and ensure that all New Yorkers can safely interact with their government. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

DR. STEVE AUERBACH: Hi. My name is Dr. Steve Auerbach. I am a retired pediatrician and career U.S. Public Health Service Officer medical epidemiologist. I am here speaking for the New York Doctors Coalition, which is in process of changing our name to Health Justice for New York. Since our founding in 2017, we've evolved to be an informal collective of all health care workers to provide health professional support behind the scenes as well as a public-facing white coat and scrubs presence for other progressive social, economic, racial, labor, worker, housing, carceral, and immigrant justice organizations and campaigns. Now before I get into the specifics of today's agenda, I want to highlight some of the truths about immigrants and refugees in America. They, or should I say we, are a vital and irreplaceable part of American history and our social and moral fabric and our economy. We all know who's building our buildings and picking our crops and delivering our food. Less recognized is that immigrants and refugees are a necessary and needed component of health workers in America. Many of our doctors, nurses, hospital aides, home care attendants are immigrants and not only are our patients, who are

also your friends and our neighbors, being made afraid to come to see the doctor when they are sick for fear of being snatched off the streets by anonymous thugs in masks, but they are health care workers that are afraid to go to work to their jobs. In addition and contrary to the lies being spewed for years, refugees and immigrants including undocumented pay far more into the economy and taxes than they use and it is a simple non-partisan fact per numerous reports including the Congressional Budget Office and other independent economists that they are net contributors to Medicare and Social Security. So, when that old MAGA guy is spewing dishonest hate against immigrants, in fact their Medicare and their Social Security are being paid for by our currently working immigrant brethren.

Now, with regard to the sanctuary package of bills, and I want to thank the Committee for bringing these forward and for allowing me to speak, we demand that ICE stay out of all health care facilities. All our patients deserve the privacy and safety with their care and, when ICE or other such agents are present in health care facilities, it interferes with the privacy and safety and care for

all of our patients and our staff. Now, this must also mean stronger written and publicized and enforcement of policies by health care facilities for ICE to stay out, particularly any non-public areas Forgive me. It includes New York City Health and Hospitals and Department of Mental Health and Hygiene And that ICE and related entities should not enter any of those public spaces nor of any of the private voluntary hospitals or clinics in the city nor should they be allowed to have access to health, medical, billing, or insurance records despite at the federal level DHS demanding that CMS share records. So, we hope that the passage of this package of bills will be a first step to also protecting health care workers, health care spaces, and all our patients from the depredations of ICE and related authorities. And we would ask that the Committee as it moves forward bring into as additional partners, but also frankly additional folks to have demands made upon Health and Hospitals, Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, and the private voluntary hospitals as represented by the Greater New York Hospital Association and the professional medical academies including my own New York State AAP which I can, off

the record as it were, say generally supports these measures but not all of our medical professional brethren nor the executives who run the hospitals are necessarily on board and there must be a bringing them to the table as well, and I thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you so much, Steve. Thank you for standing with us in the call for justice and representing the white coats as you call them, but certainly all of these bills and all of this work is, and what we have been advocating for is fundamentally a different public health approach and the impacts here are quite significant so certainly appreciate your testimony and continued advocacy and certainly call for the health institutions, in particular, to have a focus on how they too can be part of protecting immigrant New Yorkers which ultimately protects all New Yorkers because when one of us is safe, we're safe as well, so thank you.

Before this panel dismisses, we had Choukri Khadija. She's gone. Okay.

Thank you so much. Thank you for all your work and highlighting certainly the efforts that you are making in community. Thank you.

Next, we'll have Karen Adelman, Alejandra Melgar Chay from The Door, Shraddha Joshi from The Door, David Moss, Durga Sreenivasan from Livable Futures, and Hadia Ali. Again, my apologies if I mispronounce your name. Hadia Ali, Durga, David Moss, Shraddha, Alejandra, and Karen.

KAREN ADELMAN: Hi. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Avilés and honorable Council Members. I'm here to present the testimony of the Corrections and Community Re-Entry Committee of the New York City Bar Association. My name is Karen Adelman, and I am Co-Chair of the City Bar's Corrections and Community Re-Entry Committee. Our Committee has been deeply focused on the crisis at Rikers Island. We sponsored a CLE on the state of the Nuñez matter and submitted an amicus brief regarding the remediation manager. Rikers Island remains a human rights catastrophe, and closing the jail on time in accordance with the law should be a top priority of this Council and the incoming Administration over the next two years. This is why the City Bar supports Intro. 1412. Intro.

1412, of course, will not solve the problems on Rikers Island, but it will stop one specific problem from getting worse. As everyone here knows and as we have heard much testimony about since the new federal administration took power, it has vastly expanded immigration enforcement not only through so-called the warrantless street stops we have seen on the news but also by expanding the use of so-called mandatory detention in immigration facilities that are just as crowded and unsafe as the jails. A key component of the federal government's agenda is, in fact, to use local law enforcement and local jails as force multipliers of its manpower. Prohibiting ICE from maintaining an office on Rikers Island will slow the federal government's inhumane mass deportation efforts. The Department of Correction has an unfortunate history of cooperation with ICE as noted by the Chair and some other testifying, and this has already impacted your constituents as just last year the City agreed to a 92.5-million-dollar settlement for the individuals held by DOC unlawfully on ICE detainers. The City Bar also supports updating the definition of immigration officer to close any loopholes that the administration may try to use to

station officers in jails, and we appreciate that the law would supersede any mayoral executive order. And we applaud the Council's successful litigation earlier this year against Mayor Adams' unlawful order. The individuals held at Rikers are already facing serious danger. They do not need to live in further fear that on-site immigration officers will separate them from their communities once they are released. The City Bar supports the necessary protections Intro. 1412 will provide. Thank you.

ALEJANDRA MELGAR CHAY: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Alejandra Melgar Chay, and I'm a paralegal at The Door's Legal Services Center working with our detained minors project. The Door is a comprehensive youth development organization in New York City that provides services such as health care, supportive housing, food, and career development. At the legal services center, we work with many young people who entered the United States as unaccompanied children are placed in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, or ORR for short. We support both detained and released youth in their immigration, civil, and criminal proceedings. Over the past several months, we have witnessed a

troubling rise in young people we work with being targeted because of their immigration status or lack thereof. ICE has increasingly relied on so-called wellness checks to interrogate released unaccompanied children and their sponsors, resulting in arrests, invasive home inspections, and a sharp increase in re-detentions. We have also observed a rise in courthouse arrests and arrests occurring immediately after clients attend their scheduled ICE check-ins. Several Door clients have been detained by ICE while fully complying with court requirements or ICE appointments with some subsequently released while others remain detained in facilities across the country. Furthermore, ORR's new 2025 policies now mandate DNA testing and identity documentation that many undocumented individuals are unable to provide, significantly increasing their risk of interaction with ICE. These policy shifts have made it far more difficult for such sponsors to come forward, driving the average detention period from 35 days to 171 days. I'm currently working with a detained minor whose father lives here in New York State yet the child has remained in custody for 160 days. As fear of detention grows, children who would have been

released to parents or close relatives are increasingly left without eligible sponsors and reclassified into distant relative or no sponsor categories contributing to the rapidly escalating length of stay in ORR custody. For clients applying for special immigrant juvenile status, SIJ, an adult who might otherwise serve as legal guardians for youth have increasingly become afraid to participate in the required family court process. Although a guardian's immigration status does not affect their eligibility, proposed guardians must attend court, testify, undergo background checks, and be fingerprinted, steps that many fear could expose them to ICE enforcement. Recent months have seen more potential guardians withdraw from the process due to fear of being detained at court or having their fingerprints shared with immigration authorities, making it significantly harder for young people to pursue relief. A young person's family members and friends should not be put at risk because the young person is pursuing legal immigration relief. Similarly, a young person's opportunity to pursue immigration relief should not be jeopardized by the requirements of the very proceedings that would

result in relief. We call on the City government to take an immediate and urgent action to protect immigrant communities (TIMER CHIME) in New York and to take specific steps to attend to the needs of immigrant youth who are often the most vulnerable and least resourced. Thank you.

SHRADDHA JOSHI: Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Shraddha Joshi, and I'm also a paralegal at The Door working with the detained minors project

We at The Door have seen firsthand the impact of

ICE's violent extrajudicial activity on immigrant

communities and particularly youth who are amongst

the most vulnerable people facing the U.S.

Immigration System. As of November, ICE has sent over

600 children to youth detention centers this year,

reaching an unprecedented number. Some of these

children are migrant youth who were separated from

their families upon entry to the U.S, while others

are children who were previously detained in ORR

years ago have been living in their communities for

years and were recently arrested and completely

served their time after their arrest and yet have

still been picked up by ICE and sent to ORR

detention. The detained youth that we serve in New

York face isolation and unique challenges posed by escalated ICE presence. A former client of The Door who was aging out of the ORR system upon turning 18 reported significant difficulties and distress in detention as staff members did not speak his language and his legal support team at The Door were the only people who could provide him with necessary resources about navigating potential ICE interactions despite rapidly changing information. During a recent know your rights presentation for another detained ORR client who was picked up by ICE in one of New York City's boroughs, we explained to him the importance of not opening the door to ICE agents. He asked us what happens if ICE breaks down your door. That's what happened to us. That's what the young child told us. Immigrant children in particular are being subject to violence and separation from their loved ones due to the presence of ICE in their communities compounded by the already grueling challenges of building a stable life and pursuing relief in the city. For members of The Door who have been released from the detention, this fear does not subside. Last month, a member of The Door pursuing asylum relief mentioned that a therapist in a group home run by the

City told him that he's on a removal list and that he should avoid going out for fear of ICE. While we were able to clarify this misinformation, the constant threat of detention and surveillance has been debilitating for the youth that we serve, impacting their willingness to attend school or to access necessary resources. As legal service providers, we strive to do our duty in supporting vulnerable youth. However, the escalated presence of ICE and the devastation, fear, and anxiety that it has created in our neighborhoods has painful impacts on the communities that we serve. We urge the City Council to play its crucial role in protecting New Yorkers from ICE's extrajudicial overreach, holding the NYPD accountable for its role in aiding and abetting ICE's actions, and empowering organizations that provide crucial resources to immigrants and their communities. New York has long championed the status of a sanctuary city, and we call on the City Council to uphold and honor this legacy. Thank you so much.

DAVID MOSS: Good afternoon. My name is David Moss appearing on behalf of the Legal Defense Fund. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. LDF is the nation's first and foremost civil rights law

organization. We've done significant work to challenge discriminatory law enforcement conduct in New York and around the country, and we fought for the rights of Black immigrants, for example, by challenging the Trump Administration's rescission of TPS for Haitian nationals in 2018. Our work on policing and immigration leads us to conclude that Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act, is a critical tool for upholding the rights of immigrant New Yorkers, and we urge the Council to pass this important bill. This year, ICE agents have been tearing families apart in the hallways of courthouses, they've marched down Canal Street with rifles and an armored vehicle to arrest Black and Brown street vendors, they're pulling people out of cars in Washington Heights in addition to many of the other abuses that people have been testifying about today. It is imperative that the Council take every measure available to protect New Yorkers from these abuses. While the City does provide some protection through local laws meant to limit collaboration between local and federal authorities, City officials haven't always complied with these rules. There are examples of violations, again as we've been hearing

about all day and, right now, there's no recourse for people who are harmed. That means there's no real accountability, there's no real justice, and the City has less incentive to actually follow the law. The NYC Trust Act is necessary to enforce these rights and to protect New Yorkers who are most at risk from the abuses, particularly now under this Administration. While we're on this issue of harmful collaboration between local and federal authorities, I will also repeat our call for the City Council to eliminate the NYPD Gang Database. I know this bill is not on the docket today, but the connections to this issue are clear. The database is a glaring civil rights injustice with thousands of Black and Latino New Yorkers baselessly tagged for aggressive policing because of where they live and the color of their skin. Most people in the database have no prior felonies and nothing to do with gun violence, but still ICE uses unreliable racially charged local gang databases to carry out its arrest and deportations. In Chicago, ICE took hundreds of names from the local gang database there to try to arrest people at airports and border crossings. In D.C. and Boston, ICE has used local gang databases to arrest children.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia was shipped to a notorious prison in El Salvador in part because of an unreliable entry in a local gang database. There are many reasons to abolish the NYPD Gang Database, and the role that it can play in facilitating inhumane deportations and arrests is an important one and it speaks directly to the possible harms of local collaboration with federal immigration authorities. Thank you.

DURGA SREENIVASAN: Good afternoon, Committee Members, and thank you for this opportunity today and for your continued leadership in the realm of immigration and immigrants like my parents. We all look up to you as leaders. My name is Durga Sreenivasan. I'm born and raised in New York City. I'm here with the Livable Future Package and Equal Planet. So, learning what a sanctuary city meant when I was five years old was the moment I fell in love with this city. We would do more for the world than the rest of this country entirely. Then again and again I fell in love with this city from SoCon Roosevelt Avenue to the Buddhist temples around us here in Chinatown. But yet as a child of immigrants, I have seen people around me getting snatched,

getting taken away, and nobody's doing anything about it. The guy downstairs, Mayor Adams, he's doing nothing. In fact, he's empowering them to take our people and, as a child of immigrants, I have to use my privilege, and so many of us have to, to stand up for people like my parents, immigrants who are vulnerable at this moment. And, since last year's presidential election, we have endured fear, exclusion, relentless attacks on our safety and our dignity, and the bills before us today, Intro. 214, The Trust Act, Intro. 1412, the Safer Sanctuary Act, these are critical steps to secure accountability and rebuild trust with immigrant families like mine, and these acts will give us something that we currently lack, which is a real remedy to what these City agencies, such as NYPD, DOC, or DOP, have done to violate our sanctuary city laws. Too often, we're experiencing as unlawful sharing of information or just cooperation with ICE by our own city that's supposed to serve us. So, Intro. 1412 introduced by Council Member Tiffany Cabán, it's equally necessary with the Trust Act because after Mayor Adams' Executive Order 50 last year, which is an attempt to open the door for ICE's return to Rikers, we saw just

how fragile our sanctuary framework can be and is. So now for decades, we have led the nation on forward-thinking sanctuary policies but leadership means vigilance, updating, and enforcing these protections as threats evolved, and protecting immigrants, again like my family. I urge our Council to swiftly pass Intro. 214, Intro. 1412, and the slew the docket of legislation that we have that can protect immigrants against ICE and their rampant harm to our city. Thank you.

HADIA ALI: Good afternoon, Chair Avilés and Council Members. My name is Hadia Ali, and I'm a Youth Organizer with the AYA Network. I live and go to school in District 45, a district filled with South Asian, Caribbean, and Hispanic communities who live in the shadow of ICE every day. Less than a year into the Trump Administration, the violence we're witnessing has only escalated. ICE is terrorizing our neighborhoods and, instead of doing their jobs and protecting the people of this city, too many agencies have chosen to stand behind them. ICE has tased, maced, shot at, and kidnapped New Yorkers off the streets. They've stormed our neighborhoods, stalked subway stations, and waited outside schools,

shelters, hospitals, and even Federal Plaza, places that should be protected in any city that calls itself a sanctuary. And instead of stopping them or at the very least protecting New Yorkers, the NYPD has chosen to stand with them. Last weekend, we watched officers protect ICE agents and attack New Yorkers who were forming human barricades to defend their neighbors. It is absurd that the NYPD fails to protect the very people it is sworn to serve and in doing so actively puts hundreds of New Yorkers in harm's way. At the same time, the Department of Corrections has been quietly feeding ICE information, funneling people from Rikers into ICE custody in clear violation of our sanctuary city laws. ACS has also been reported sharing private information with ICE, putting young people of color and their families directly at risk. And all of this has happened under a mayoral administration that has been weak, complicit, and uninterested in defending the very sanctuary protections that this City claims to value. Mayor Adams even attempted to bring ICE back onto Rikers Island a decade after community organizing forced them out, exploiting loopholes and twisting our laws to justify federal overreach. New York City

prides itself on honoring its long history of diversity, celebrating the languages, foods, and cultures that make this city unlike anywhere else, but that pride means nothing when we fail to protect the same immigrant communities, especially when the laws meant to protect them already exist, but are not enforced. That is why it is essential for Intro. 214, the NYC Trust Act, to be passed in this budget cycle. This bill would create a private right of action, giving New Yorkers the legal power to hold NYPD, the Department of Corrections, ACS, and every City agency accountable when they violate sanctuary law. In my community in District 45, ICE has scared people off the streets, scared them to go to work, scared to pick up their children from school, scared to even attend their immigration hearings. For my own family, it's meant having to reevaluate our future included in my future in college. God forbid a loved one gets detained. No young person should never have to think about their future through the lens of whether their family will be safe, and yet for many of us, that's a reality we're forced to confront every day as we see our community members disappear. Passing the NYC Trust Act is essential to (TIMER CHIME) reducing that

fear and protecting and immigrant New Yorkers across the city. We deserve a city that protects the people who keep who keep it running, a city that stands with the communities it claims to honor and doesn't have bend. So, I urge the Council to pass the NYC Trust Act, take this burden off our communities, and finally enforce the protections New Yorkers are owed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much to this panel for raising a couple of additional but highly connected issues, particularly the gang database and how this database is not only used here to criminalize citizens and non-citizens alike but also across the country and it is definitely overdue time that we abolish that database.

Also, I guess I just wanted to do ask a point of clarification to Shraddha. In your testimony, you mentioned, was it a Department of Health employee that had told someone that they should just not go out in response to whatever erroneous information they had?

SHRADDHA JOSHI: So it was a therapist in a group home that is run by the City, and the young person we were working with was formerly at ORR and

now is in a URM facility, which is for basically young people who have experienced a level of trauma. And in that group home setting there was a visiting therapist and we don't have contact with her so I'm not exactly sure what her qualifications were, but I think that just illustrates the fact that this is such a general fear and obviously while it is misinformation, at the same time, we never really give those young people the assurance that they are safe when they go out because that fear is still something that they have in the back of their heads and it is very well-founded as well.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, no. You know, the mental health implications of certainly all this trauma that is that of people are getting retraumatized over and just the fear in general is really quite significant, and I think, while I don't know this individual and I hope they are not a New York City employee, it certainly does underscore the importance of an informed and compassionate group of professionals that are engaging with people because that is not helpful. Do not go out is ridiculous. So, if they are watching, they need to correct themselves and get some training.

But thank you for the work that you're doing and your testimony today. Really appreciate it. Thank you.

We're going to call the next panel. Amadou Ly, Michael Loeb, Kader Guerrab, and Enrique, Enrique, I cannot read your last name.

AMADOU LY: Good afternoon, Council Members and everyone who gather here today. Thank you so much for this opportunity. My name is Amadou Ly, I'm the Founder of the Amadou Ly Foundation, an organization that serves New York's largest West African immigrant population, reaching thousands of families across New York City and over 15 states. Throughout our digital platform, our videos regularly reach 150,000 to 250,000 people, making us one of the most influential immigrant-led network in the city and beyond. I'm here today in strong support of Intro. 214, the New York City Trust Act. My story begins with a moment that changed my life forever. Before I led an organization, before my life story made the front page of the New York Times as an undocumented immigrant facing deportation, before I play the role of Henry in a blog was a film Twilight Breaking Dawn, before I became a mentor and advocate,

I was a simple, young, undocumented Black immigrant trying to survive. In 2014, I was involved in a car accident in Pittsburgh. What happened next changed my life. The police officer who responded to the scene saw clearly what had happened. He knew that the White truck driver was at fault. He knew that if the report were written truthfully, it would reflect that. But instead of documenting the truth, instead of ensuring safety and accountability, he made a decision that haunts me to this day. He called ICE, not because I was a threat, not because I committed a crime. He called ICE because in his mind, handing me over was the easiest way to resolve the situation and protect the other driver. I will never forget what it felt like to be handcuffed after a car accident, to be treated as disposable, to be handed over to immigration officers because of someone else's wrongdoing. That experience taught me something I have never forgotten. When the wrong person makes the wrong decision, an immigrant's life can be shattered in an instant, and that must never happen in New York City. My voice reaches hundreds of thousands, and I used it to tell immigrants that come to New York, New York was safe. Before the 2024 election as anti-

immigrant rhetoric swept the country, I made video after video urging immigrant families if you're scared, come to New York, this city will protect you. Those videos went viral, reaching more than 200,000 views. People trusted us. They trusted me. They trusted this city. But in recent months when family sees NYPD or City agency share information with ICE, sealed records shared illegally, deportations after charges were dismissed, my community comes to me and asks Amadou, is New York still safe. Were we lied to? Did the City betray us? And I don't have the answers. The Canal Street raid made the truth impossible to ignore. What we witnessed last week on Canal Street was undeniable. In a matter of seconds, NYPD officers were on the scene protecting ICE, supporting ICE, and enabling ICE. (TIMER CHIME) If you ask me was that a joint operation, I'll say yes. There's something else I would like to point out on record. On September 22nd during this second ICE raid, NYPD were present from the early morning until 11 a.m. Immediately after they left, ICE arrived and arrested a street vendor named Abdou Tall. I spoke with Mr. Tall every single day since his arrest. My organization file a habeas petition for him and help him secure an

attorney, but something about that morning was disturbing. They knew exactly where Mr. Tall was. Before ICE arrived, there was an undercover car positioned behind him, not ICE. ICE showed up only afterward to take him away. Later when the New York Post reported on the case, ICE claimed that NYPD had arrested him on October 11th. This is not an isolated incident. This is a pattern that mirrors what happened to me years ago. Plus, I believe we need to find a solution for Canal Street vendors. While it is important to push back against raids and ICE Collaboration, we also need to help these vendors find sustainable alternatives. I recently heard Tom Holman on Fox News stating that ICE will be back in Canal Street but guess what? The vendors are already back because they need work to survive. If resistance continue without offering a real alternative, we will risk having further ICE deployment in New York City, or even worse, the National Guard. We must create a pathway of vulnerability and ensure that these New Yorkers have options that protect their safety and livelihood. The Amadou Ly Foundation has proposed a plan to train Canal Street vendors as barbers, a trade that does not require formal education, but

offers a legitimate safe path to economic stability. It has been extremely difficult, almost impossible, for African asylum seekers to access funding or support for education. Our proposal addressed this gap by providing scholarships for these vendors to attend barber schools. We give them real opportunity to gain a trade, support themselves, and build a stable life here in New York. We're asking the City Council to support this proposal, work with the Amadou Ly Foundation to create a concrete solution for Canal Street that protects our community and reduce the likelihood of ICE enforcement in our city.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

AMADOU LY: Thank you so much.

MICHAEL LOEB: Hello. My name is Michael Loeb. I'm here from Brooklyn from (INAUDIBLE) for Facial and Economic Justice and as someone who regularly does accompaniments to asylum hearings and tries to provide support for folks in detention. Also here as an educator and a father. It's cool to see only women and feds and folks with some connection to immigration, but it's actually not cool. And as we've said, it's disappointing that the rest of the Administration is not here. I ask us to back up and

take a breather for a second and recall that the whole premise of immigration enforcement is malarkey. Ezra Klein is wrong about many things but not the idea of abundance. I think with some redistribution, there's enough housing, food, health care, and safety for all. Borders are a scarcity fiction and no human is illegal. Second, what you're offering is a stopgap harm reduction. When we abolish ICE and we welcome all folks, there'll be no more need for sanctuary laws or prevention against collusion. But also what I want to really share is a story of what happens when we don't welcome the stranger. It's a story I've told of many times and I'll tell it as many times as I need to. My father fled Nazi Germany in 1939. He was a 9-year-old Jewish child. His town was really destroyed for the Jewish people in it, and the boat he was on was the SS St. Louis. They all had visas. There were 920 folks on board. They had visas for Cuba, but ultimately were not allowed in. The captain and advocates appealed to all the governments in the hemisphere and said please take them and no one accepted them. That includes my father wrote that he sailed so close to Miami they could see the lights and the Coast Guard actually came out to make sure

they didn't dock. This really satisfied Nazi propagandists. The ship returned to Europe, a quarter to England, a quarter to France, a quarter to Netherlands, and a quarter to Belgium, which is where my father went. Eventually his father made it to Elmira, New York and was able to send for him, his mom, and younger sister but his grandparents were murdered at Auschwitz because Belgium was overrun, so 250 out of the 920 people on that ship were eventually murdered. Back to today, just as never again means never again for anyone in Palestine, never again should we reject those seeking refuge. (TIMER CHIME) Whatever we can do to ensure proper functioning of the asylum system, we must do. I go to Federal Plaza, 290 Broadway, and 201 Barrack, I've been doing it for seven years, and I've seen the rights of people of all genders and ages trampled by cowards and bigots. On a personal and spiritual level, I know that everyone participating in this will answer to God and to time for your crimes, but in the meantime legally we need to protect our neighbors and pass these bills.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

KADER GUERRAB: Yes. All right. Hi. My name is Kader. I'm a proud Brooklyn boy and CUNY student. First, I want to start things off. I want to thank Alexa Avilés for educating immigrants on their rights, and I think New Yorkers should be thankful for the service she has done to protect people from ICE. First, I want to start things off with saying, you know, in the beginning ICE was saying, you know, we're doing this for safety and we're going to do this mass deportation, but almost three-quarters of the people they are detaining are innocent and have no criminal conviction, maybe a traffic violation, a parking ticket, you know, just little things like that. No convictions whatsoever. And I think everybody knows what they're doing is cruel and inhumane, but also what they're doing is illegal, detaining people without due process, without a warrant, arresting people without identifying themselves because by law, just in case somebody doesn't know, when you get arrested, the police have to do fill out a report, and they have to give you documents with their name on it and their badge number, and so basically that's the problem. We need to hold ICE accountable for issues, especially the

issue I hear about at Federal Plaza where they detain people who are trying to do the right thing, you know, and we should not have the NYPD collaborating with ICE. The NYPD is an agency that will be here. They're going to be here now. They're going to be here a hundred years from now, and we should I think use the NYPD to arrest ICE agents. I have heard of a story in Queens where these people were being detained by ICE in their homes and somebody called 9-1-1 and then the police came to see what was going on. And then they said oh, we're ICE and then they let them go. That is unacceptable by the NYPD, and the NYPD should intervene to arrest ICE. We should not have a double standard for a regular criminal versus ICE agents. And so I think the good news is we have a mayor who's a corrupt mayor who's on his way out of office so I think this will be easier to slow things down. I don't think we're going to get rid of ICE for at least the next several years but, you know, we have a mayor that care, Zohran Mamdani who I proudly canvassed for and so, yes and somebody who cares for New York City residents.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you all for your test testimony.

Yeah, I guess I just wanted to say one thing really quickly. Michael, thank you for lifting up what never again means, and I think it is so important for never again for anyone, never again denying people seeking refuge, be lifted up particularly in this city and in this country, and so thank you for sharing your story and your advocacy and living into what never again means for all people and dignity so I just wanted to personally.

And Amadou, thank you for the work that you are doing as well, and I think the vulnerabilities, particularly of our African siblings, and how we have failed Black people in this country continues but your work gives me great hope, and thank you for your testimony and thank you for the continued work to make sure that people can receive dignity and the work to survive and live and thrive in this city and it looks many different ways. And so I just want to personally thank you for doing that as well. Thank you for your testimony.

And we had one more, Enrique. Enrique, were you going to testify?

Oh, I'm so sorry. Council Member Cabán to say something.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I won't keep you long. I just want to extend the same gratitude to you both for sharing your stories, and I think we both had, the Chair and I had similar reactions and how resonant, Michael, the words that you shared when you talk about refugee stories. I mean we are entering Christmas season and the way that the most famous refugees were treated during that time and then it also reminds me of that poem by Warsan Shire when he said that no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. And just keeping that in mind when we encounter folks who make the heart-wrenching dangerous decision to leave everything to come here and the welcome that they deserve rather than the violence that they are being confronted with so thank you again for grounding us in in those stories and those values

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. So, we have one more in-person panel before we turn it over to the Zoom panelists.

Next, we have Raul Rivera.

RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon. My name is Raul Rivera. I'm a New York native. I was born in the Bronx, a few blocks from Yankee Stadium. I'm here

today to oppose these bills, and I'll give you my reason, all of them and any bills that you pass previously. In January 16 at the beginning of this year, I came to this Committee and I believe that you're not a Council Member that could be trusted. I said that. We don't have anything personal against you even though you may think that, but I just believe that you're a Council Member that can't be trusted. We don't support these bills, we don't support these bills, and everybody's talking about illegals and migration and criminals and not criminals, but if you cross the border, if you cross the border and it's not through the port of entry, that is a crime. I hope you know that's a crime. So, that's a crime when you cross the border illegally, not through the port of entry. I think you know that. We told you back in January, and this time we'll say it again that you need to be investigated. Your bills that you pass through here must be investigated. I know you think that's funny, but honestly, it's not. You say you advocate for the poor people and people of color but you just made the New York Post. You're worth 1.8 million dollars. You're buying homes in Florida. You're a Democrat. you're a Democrat, right?

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2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I suggest you keep it
3 focused on the topic at hand or else your testimony
4 will end and you will be out of order so focus on the
5 topic at hand, which is immigration or you are out of
6 order and your testimony will be ended.

7 RAUL RIVERA: You're the Chair to the
8 Committee on Immigration.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Focus. You have one
10 minute left. Focus on the topic at hand or you will
11 be out of order and your testimony will be over.

12 RAUL RIVERA: What did I say? What did I
13 say was out of order?

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: You have 57 seconds
15 to make your case.

16 RAUL RIVERA: You keep interrupting me
17 though.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: You have 52 seconds
19 to make your case.

20 RAUL RIVERA: Well, I think people should
21 know that you're worth 1.8 million dollars.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: 47 seconds.

23 RAUL RIVERA: Important. I think that's
24 important. I think...

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I'm worth a lot more
3 by the way for the record.

4 RAUL RIVERA: Well.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Continue with your
6 testimony or you will I will end your testimony.

7 RAUL RIVERA: You keep cutting me off.
8 It's hard to speak when you cut...

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: 32 seconds and
10 counting.

11 RAUL RIVERA: Dr. King stood with Israel
12 and you stand with an anti-Semite. God bless Donald
13 Trump.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Again, sir.

15 RAUL RIVERA: Zohran Mamdani is an anti-
16 Semite...

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Out of order. You are
18 not on the record.

19 RAUL RIVERA: Fuck Palestine. That's what
20 we say. Fuck Palestine.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Testimony is over.
22 You're grotesque. You are grotesque.

23 All right. So next we have our Zoom.
24 We'll open it up to the zoom panelists. So after and
25

a final... whoops, here we go. So all folks on Zoom, we will call your name and feel free to unmute yourself.

Order in the Chamber. If you cannot be quiet, you will be removed. Order in the Chamber. I suggest you get removed.

I'm sorry for those on Zoom.

Okay. For those of us in the Chamber, unfortunately, I apologize to everyone who had to listen to the despicable words of a despicable human.

Moving on to those who have patiently waited on Zoom. First, we're going to call Andrew Walsh followed by Rex Chen.

Andrew, feel free to unmute yourself.

ANDREW WALSH: Hi. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today before the Committee on Immigration. My name is Andrew Walsh. I am the Managing Attorney for the Detained Program at Kids in Need of Defense in the New York office. I would like to thank the Council Members for putting forth these critical proposals and to all the witnesses and community members for the really impactful and powerful testimony that was given today. I think a lot of what I wanted to say has been said very eloquently by numerous other testifiers

already so I'll just provide a brief statement of support particularly for Introduction 1268 as well as for the proposals to demand accountability on all City agencies who would collude with and/or share information with ICE. My team works with undocumented children specifically and their families and in particular with unaccompanied minors throughout the five boroughs and, in the past year, we have observed a notable trend of families who are afraid to go out in public and specifically when it comes to entering government buildings, whether that be federal, state, or local. To that end, I think publicly posted placards throughout the city indicating which areas are private or public and informing individuals of their specific rights could provide some degree of comfort to those individuals who must enter City property and locations. This is especially critical for the populations we serve who are routinely required to enter municipal courts as part of their immigration cases so signage reinforcing the rights of those who enter these spaces is a crucial step in ensuring that the populations we serve have meaningful access to those rights. Our team also conducts numerous Know Your Rights trainings for

children and their families, and one of the most common concerns we hear from the communities we serve is that they fear they won't be able to recall the information when under high pressure circumstances, and so having conveniently placed placards containing this information to reinforce this information is of vital importance. Currently, we are also working on hiring community outreach specialists to broaden the audience for our Know Your Rights presentations, and so Proposal 1268 would be mutually reinforcing with those efforts and the efforts of numerous other advocacy organizations working to provide critical information to the community. In regards to City agency collusion with ICE, we are particularly concerned about reports of ACS collusion and information sharing as ACS is frequently involved in cases of unaccompanied minors who may not have other viable sponsors in the United States, and it is of the utmost importance that there not be any collusion or information sharing between ACS and ICE. And so we view that as a very serious problem and appreciate the Council's proposals in this regard.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time has expired.

ANDREW WALSH: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you.

Next, we'll have Rex Chen, please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

REX CHEN: Good afternoon. My name is Rex Chen, he/him pronouns. I'm the Supervising Counsel for Immigrant Rights at LatinoJustice PRLDEF. We're a civil rights non-profit headquartered in New York City. We pursue law reform litigation and advocacy to defend Latinx immigrants' civil and constitutional rights. In November, we won a 112-million-dollar federal court jury verdict against Suffolk County Sheriff's for illegally holding people in local jail custody based solely on ICE detainer requests. The civil rights legal action held Suffolk County accountable for violating people's constitutional rights at the behest of federal immigration officials. It addressed the harm they caused by detaining people illegally. It sent a strong message to other counties considering cooperating with ICE, and it helped bring a small measure of justice and compensation to 674 people who were illegally detained in jail for hours or for days. LatinoJustice strongly supports the New York City Trust Act, which

will create a legal mechanism for people harmed by illegal local police cooperation with ICE to bring legal action. Our lawsuit against Suffolk County shows how important it is to create a way to address the harm of illegal cooperation with ICE. The New York City Trust Act will build trust. It will therefore strengthen our city's health, economy and public safety. It is a smart and wise action by the City Council to make New York City even stronger. We also support Intro. 1412, and that follows through on the City Council successful legal action to keep ICE out of Rikers. LatinoJustice joined with the Legal Aid Society and other groups in an amicus brief to support the City Council's lawsuit. This would clear up any uncertainty about whether ICE can set up in Rikers. At LatinoJustice, we see how these laws are critical to help Latinx folks stay healthy, contribute to our economy and keep everyone safe. We're strongest when we work together and we look out for each other. When one of us is armed, the rest of us try to help out. These laws would protect New Yorkers and help defend our city from illegal immigration raids and from the racial profiling that ICE engages in across the country. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much for your testimony and your work.

Next, we have Rachana Shah and followed by Jodi Ziesmer.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

RACHANA SHAH: Hi. Good morning, Honorable Council. Thank you for hearing our testimonies today. My name is Rachana Shah. I'm a resident of Forest Hills, Queens, and a mother of two children, ages 11 and 9. I'm a zero waste educator and an advocate for justice for all beings under the American principles that all people are created equal and that in this country, you are innocent until proven guilty. Importantly, I am the daughter of immigrants. I'm also on the Parent Teacher Association for my children's school in Astoria, Queens. My children attend school just 10 blocks from where a 6-year-old went to school who is not in school today because his father was forcibly separated from him at his regularly scheduled immigration check-in and now the boy is missing. My 9-year-old still tears up if she can't find us for less than a minute. Where is this child? Is he sleeping on a cold concrete floor? Is he scared? Is he terrified that his father will be taken

from him? It may be the new American way to persecute Brown people like this, but it is not the New York way. The parents in my community are in a panic. How dare ICE and DHS and whichever other agencies are involved terrorize children like this? Children! How dare they terrorize families? How dare they terrorize our neighbors and our community? Here in New York, we value law and order. We have laws in this state that protect innocent people and protect privacy. Here are two quotes. States must determine by vote or legislation or perhaps both and whatever they decide will be the law of the land in this case, the law of the state. Second quote, instead of filtering resources through layers of federal red tape, we will empower states to take charge and advocate for and implement what is best for students, families, and educators in their communities. These two quotes were said by President Trump in the past, and there must be consistencies with statements like these. Therefore, here in New York, we value our sanctuary laws. We value and cherish our immigrant communities. I choose to live and raise my children in Queens because of how enriched our lives have been from sharing cultures with our community. They do not

deserve terror by our own federal agencies that in many cases have committed illegal acts and they continue to commit them. We are entitled that if they want to take space in our state that they follow our State laws. Therefore, I strongly support all the bills discussed today, Intros Number 1412, 0214, 1268, and 1272. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much for your testimony. We share in the horror of the child who was abducted by ICE.

Next, we'll have Jodi Ziesemer.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

JODI ZIESEMER: Thank you. I'm Jodi Ziesemer. I'm the Policy Director for Immigration Emergency Response at the New York Legal Assistance Group, or NYLAG. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. NYLAG applauds Council Members Hanif, Cabán, and Avilés for their leadership and vocal support of our immigrant communities and for protecting our communities in these brutal and violent times. NYLAG supports all four of the proposed City bills on the agenda for today and recognizes that they address critical gaps in our City's sanctuary protections, and we urge the passage

of all four. I wanted just to speak briefly today about the Introduction 1268 regarding signage. NYLAG has heard from City health clinics in the South Bronx, hospitals in Manhattan and Queens, various community centers, and private businesses who are interested in posting information to message to their immigrant patients, clients, and constituents, but lack the knowledge and resources to develop and translate such information. The signage bill would provide necessary support for the creation of unified, legally sound information in various languages for those institutions and will help signal New York City's knowledge and support of the local and federal laws, limiting ICE's authority and reach. In the past, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs has played a critical role in creating, translating, and distributing helpful community-facing resources on everything from knowing your rights to what to do when a loved one is detained by ICE. They've collaborated with legal services to create and broadcast these resources, but that has been less prominent in recent years. As this Council has noted, MOIA has been absent in broadcasting information, creating new flyers to address this current moment.

And they've been notably absent on social media and other platforms to really update immigrant communities and City agencies about how to respond to this moment. And so there's really necessary to reinvigorate this collaboration and this bill will help support that. We're also out of step with other cities, such as Chicago, which have mayor-led initiatives to protect their residents and provide consolidated resources on immigration, constitutional rights, housing, protests, and more. Anti-immigrant rhetoric has been a prominent feature of the Trump Administration, and we hope to find increased opportunities to partner with New York City to present a countervailing narrative, to welcome our immigrant neighbors, fight this divisive, violent, and xenophobic rhetoric, and reassure them that New York is a safe space. So, we strongly support the implementation of this bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Jodi.

Sorry for mispronouncing your last name.

Next, we'll have Heather Maria followed by Jenna Jaffe.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

HEATHER MARIA: Hi, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity. I'm testifying to support Initiatives 214 and 1412. After hearing the testimonies today, the other initiatives as well, I've learned so much today. It's been very powerful. Thank you for this hearing. I'm an individual of mixed descent, Mexican, Hungarian, Scots-Irish, all immigrants, and an educator in New York City public schools for 20 years. Thank you also for pronouncing my name correctly. I participate in Court Watch for immigration cases at places like Federal Plaza, and the fear and terror I've witnessed as community members follow the law to show up for court, only to be terrorized with the possibilities and realities of being abducted is reprehensible. Families with little children, it is gut-wrenching. Knowing that ICE is showing up at New York City Public Schools, it's disgusting and devastating, of course, anywhere else in New York City or the rest of the country. The story I heard today of ACS colluding, sharing information via request for therapy services is absolutely horrendous. Thank you. Mil gracias to Council Members Cabán and Hanif and Avilés. I'll stop

there. I sent in a written testimony as well. Thank you, everyone, for your work.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you for your testimony.

Next, we will have Jenna followed by Christopher Leon Johnson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

JENNA JAFFE: Hi. My name is Jenna Jaffe. I'm a resident of Brooklyn, New York and, for the past 10 years, I've been an immigration caseworker for a Member of Congress, but I'm here today in my personal capacity to testify in support of the New York City Trust Act. That's why I came today, but I'm in support of all of the bills that are being discussed today. And rather than repeat some of the information that's already been shared, I'm really here today to share what I know from my experience about what the U.S. government does to people it considers unlawfully present. I've spent many, many hours, many days waiting outside of 26 Federal Plaza, hoping and praying that I don't have to call someone's spouse or children and give them the worst news of their life with no explanation, no records that will ever see the light of day, and no warrants.

I know multiple immigration attorneys who have been threatened with arrest just for asking to see warrants when their clients are being detained by ICE. Under the first Trump Administration, Homeland Security Investigations, which is a sub office of ICE, that is theoretically responsible for thwarting complex organized criminal activity. It also relies almost entirely on information passed through state and local law enforcement. HSI had undercover agents patronizing migrant sex workers that ICE itself had identified as victims of a trafficking ring. This happened multiple times with leadership's knowledge and ultimately collapsed an entire three-year investigation. ICE dropped every single charge they had filed rather than allow those agents to testify about their own conduct in court. That's our tax dollars at work. I've seen ICE deny medical treatment to a man who was transferred into their custody by the local Department of Corrections until that man fell into a coma, then handcuffed his unconscious body to a gurney and humanitarian released him to a public hospital so that ICE did not have to count his death as a death in custody and so that his widow would be responsible for the medical bills instead of

the government. This man was 27 years old at the time. I have repeatedly listened to ICE agents perjure themselves in court consistently with impunity because there have been zero consequences. It can't continue and we can't keep waiting for the federal government to step in, obviously. Immigration Enforcement pepper sprayed a sitting member of Congress last week and I doubt there will even be an investigation. If anyone must take lead, if anywhere must be the first to impose material consequences for municipal officials who collaborate with ICE, it should be in New York City. And it should be mentioned that if we don't give people legal options to defend ourselves when an extrajudicial secret police force is assaulting and abusing our loved ones and our family members, what do we think is going to happen? Will the public simply roll over and watch? No. Violence begets more violence and that violence is the fuel that ICE needs to survive. So I am calling today on the City Council to pass the New York City Trust Act and trust me when I say that we will be back here every opportunity, every hearing, every session until something changes. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you for your testimony. And yes, New York City must be the place that holds the standard. Thank you.

Next, we'll have Christopher Leon Johnson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm here, I'm somewhere in Queens, testifying virtually, but I want to make this clear to this panel, this Committee that what I saw today at the hearing with the Commissioner speaking right after standing next to Eric Adams was like a slap in the face to this Committee. As Chair Alexa Avilés, I don't know what will happen next year that you or Tiffany Cabán might not be this Committee because of Julie Menin, but I think you guys need to make this tough decision, make this right and tough decision for everybody to say that this Commissioner, Manny Castro, should not be reappointed Commissioner in the Mamdani Administration and make it to where that Murad Awawdeh of the New York Immigration Coalition be the Commissioner of the Immigration Department and the New York City Mayor Office or Hailey Choi (phonetic)

or probably Brad Lander, appoint one of those three, you know what I mean, or Yesenia Mata, you know what I mean, or Ligia Galapa or Muhammad Atiyah from Street Vendor Project. But the way that Mr. Manny Castro has presented himself today, he looked the shell, he looked out of it, he looked like he didn't want to be there, he looked like he was dragged there. This is the reason why that he should not be the Commissioner in the next administration. He should be disqualified being a Commissioner in the next administration. I think Zohran Mamdani should not reappoint him as the Commissioner and I think that you should say the same thing. I know it's kind of tough, he came up there, but you need to make that tough decision, say that he should not be Commissioner in the administration. But I want to make this clear that I support all the bills on this ticker including Intro. 1272, which is introduced by Shahana Hanif and I'm going to explain why they got two minutes of my thing because the reason is because of deliveristas. And I know that very soon, probably in the next few years, that the deliveristas will be made employees. Now, majorities of deliveristas are undocumented migrants. Now, what E-Verify, what it

does is that it makes sure that you legally supposed to work here. Now, when you have the apps like Uber, DoorDash, Lyft, and Grubhub and Relay and Capsule add this provision into or start using the apps, this is going to really eliminate majority of the workforce, and I think that you should make it where that the app should not be able to use this either themselves because they can easily, oh, they're independent contractors, but I think that the City Council needs to start stepping up and make sure that these apps like Uber, DoorDash, Lyft, and Grubhub does not implement this stuff when very soon, when it happens on the Worker Justice Project and 32BJ. Where is 32BJ on this? Because I know very soon they're going to implement this provision where that you want to start using the apps as a Dasher or Grubhubber or Uber, Eats, anything like that, you have to prove that you can work in this country and that's going to hurt majority's workforce. So I support this bill and that's why I spoke on behalf of supporting this bill. But back to what I said before, like look, Manny Castro is not fit to be the Commissioner in the next administration. He dropped the ball.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time has expired.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Oh, thank you so much. Enjoy your day.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

We have now heard from everyone who signed up to testify.

If we have inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify in person, please visit the Sergeant's table and complete a witness slip now.

If we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to testify virtually, please use the raised hand function in Zoom and a Member of our Staff will call on you in the order of hands raised.

All right. Seeing no one else, I would like to note again that written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by the Committee Staff, may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the end of this hearing by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

And with that, we adjourn this hearing.

[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 December 31, 2025