

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

JOINT WITH

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
JOINT WITH
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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February 26, 2026

Start: 1:15 p.m.

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HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Shanel Thomas-Henry, Chairperson
of the Committee on Small Business

Oswald Feliz, Chairperson of the
Committee on Public Safety

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS:

Virginia Maloney
Yusef Salaam
Shahana Hanif
Kayla Santosuosso
Frank Morano
Tiffany Cabán

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COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY:

Joann Ariola

Elsie Encarnación

Jennifer Gutiérrez

Ty Hankerson

Sandy Nurse

Pierina Ana Sanchez

Phil Wong

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Haris Khan, Chief-of-Staff at the New York City
Department of Small Business Services

Thomas Alps, Executive Officer of the Patrol
Services Bureau for the New York City Police
Department

Kelsey Dorado Bobersky, Director of State and
Local Government Relations for the Retail Council
of New York State

Frank Garcia, Chairman of the National
Association of Latino State Chambers

Laura Morraf, Staff Attorney at Legal Aid
Society's Digital Forensics Unit

Alissa Johnson, Legal Fellow with the
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project

Gina Mitchell, Attorney-in-Charge of Law Reform
and Policy at Brooklyn Defender Services Queen's
office

Pedro Suarez, Executive Director of the Third
Avenue Business Improvement District, South Bronx

Tonisha Hurd, representing Lisa Sorin, President
of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

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3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing, testing. This is
4 a microphone check for the New York City Council
5 Committee on Public Safety joint with the Committee
6 on Small Business. Today's date is February 26, 2026.
7 We are in Hearing Room 1, 250 Broadway, and this is
8 being recorded by Sergeant Ben Levy.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and welcome
10 to today's New York City Council hearing for the
11 Committee on Small Businesses joint with the
12 Committee on Public Safety.

13 Please silence all cell phones and
14 electronic devices.

15 Moving forward, no one is to approach the
16 dais.

17 Chairs, we are ready to begin.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: [GAVEL] Good
19 afternoon, everyone. My name is Council Member Shanel
20 Thomas-Henry, and I serve as Chair of the Committee
21 on Small Business. I want to begin by thanking
Speaker Julie Menin for entrusting in me with
Chairing this Committee. I would like to also thank
former Chair and Chair of Public Safety Committee,
Chair Feliz, for Co-Chairing this hearing with me, as

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3 well as the Colleagues who have joined us here today,
4 Council Members Hanif, Salaam, Council Member Cabán,
5 Sanchez, Santosuosso, Feliz, Maloney, Moreno,
6 Encarnación, and Council Member Wong, and via Zoom,
7 we have Council Member Ariola. I would also like to
8 thank my Staff and our Committee Staff for their hard
9 work in preparing today's hearing, as well as the
10 agency representatives who are here with us and the
11 members of the public who have taken the time to
12 testify today. I'd also like to acknowledge a value
13 member who has been instrumental in shaping the small
14 business policy in the City Council, Luke Hamel
15 (phonetic). Luke has brought thoughtfulness, rigor,
16 and real commitment to this work. Your contributions
17 have made a lasting impact. You will be deeply
18 missed, and we are grateful for your service, Luke.

19 Small businesses are the backbone of our
20 local communities and a pillar of what makes New York
21 City such a special place to live. Our small
businesses provide some of the best goods and
services across the country, and in some cases, even
the world. Small business owners drive economic
activity in our neighborhoods and enrich our

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3 community in ways that can be difficult to fully
4 appreciate.

5 Nevertheless, being a small business
6 owner in New York City is a difficult and often
7 thankless task. Entrepreneurs invest significant
8 time, energy, and capital into building their
9 enterprises and strengthening their communities.
10 There is no question that the City has a role in
11 helping our businesses thrive, because when small
12 businesses thrive, so do our local communities. In
13 fact, it is the City's responsibility to protect the
14 small business owners' most valuable asset, their
15 safety and security. To ensure that businesses can
16 stay afloat during tough economic times, to improve
17 the quality of goods and services available to
18 consumers, and to ensure that the City is keeping our
19 local consumers and entrepreneurs safe, it is
20 imperative that the Administration prioritize the
21 prevention and deterrence of retail theft. I look
forward to hearing from the Administration on how
they intend to utilize the tools at their disposal to
do just that.

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3 Additionally, the bills we are hearing
4 today aim to improve safety for our small businesses.
5 Chair Feliz's bill, Intro. 553, would require the
6 City to establish a small retail business security
7 system program to provide financial assistance to
8 certain small business owners to reduce the cost of
9 purchasing and installing security system technology.
10 Introduction 623, sponsored by Council Member Louis,
11 would also create a pilot program involving the
12 installation of certain security measures, such as
13 cameras and plexiglass, in small businesses located
14 in zip codes with high rates of retail theft.

15 We were just joined by Council Member
16 Gutiérrez.

17 And now I'll turn it over to Chair Feliz
18 for his remarks.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
20 you, and good afternoon, everyone.

21 I am Council Member Oswald Feliz, Chair
of the Committee on Public Safety. I want to thank
Chair Thomas-Henry for Co-Chairing today's hearing on
retail theft, and I also want to congratulate you,
Chair, on Chairing the Small Business Committee, a

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3 Committee that I had the privilege of Chairing the
4 last legislative session, and of course want to thank
5 everyone who has joined us today, including our
6 Police Department and Small Business Services.

7 I would also like to recognize Council
8 Member Hankerson, who has also joined.

9 Small businesses are the heart of our
10 economy. You can walk through any part of our city,
11 and you will see small business owners doing it all
12 for their community, creating jobs for residents,
13 improving the local economy, and making communities
14 vibrant, turning them into places that people want to
15 visit to eat, shop, and spend time with their family.
16 Small businesses are the heart of our economy, and we
17 must protect them from the threats that hurt their
18 ability to operate, including retail theft. We must
19 ensure that our smallest businesses have access to
20 tools that will deter conduct that could harm their
21 workers and their business. These threats have real,
costly impact and can contribute to a decline in
jobs, neighborhoods, and communities. New Yorkers
should be able to shop, work, and operate businesses
without fear of theft, assault, or disruptions. And

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3 of course, we've made a lot of progress on this
4 issue. We look forward to hearing from SBS and our
5 Police Department. But unfortunately, data shows that
6 shoplifting and organized retail theft has increased
7 across the city, placing a heavy burden, a very heavy
8 burden on small businesses, which often lack the
9 resources for advanced security. And we've seen some
10 of the results that we cannot normalize, including
11 businesses having to lock up their items. This is
12 something that we cannot normalize.

13 This hearing will examine the role of our
14 Police Department in preventing and responding to
15 retail theft, including efforts such as specialized
16 retail theft task forces, real-time information
17 sharing with businesses, and targeted enforcement
18 against repeat offenders. We'll also discuss City and
19 State initiatives that support small businesses,
20 including financial assistance for security
21 technology and pilot programs aimed at preventing
theft. We want to hear from the Police Department
regarding what strategies are most effective in
reducing retail theft, protecting workers, and
coordinating with businesses. We want to have a

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3 better understanding of the challenges that the
4 Police Department faces in enforcing the law and
5 sustaining effective enforcement citywide.

6 And of course, we'll be hearing my bill,
7 the Small Business Protection Act, which will create
8 a program that would help small businesses cover
9 security-related costs, for example, bodega, helping
10 them with costs related to plexiglass, alarms, and
11 much more. I look forward to a thoughtful discussion
12 on how we could better support our small businesses,
13 protect retail workers, and enhance public safety for
14 all New Yorkers.

15 Thank you so much.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
17 Chair.

18 I would like to acknowledge that we've
19 been joined by Council Member Banks.

20 And now I will turn it over to the
21 Committee Counsel to administer the oath before we
hear from the Mayoral Administration.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear
testimony from the Administration. We are joined by

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3 NYPD Deputy Chief Thomas Alps and Department of Small
4 Business Services Chief-of-Staff Haris Khan.

5 Before we begin, I will administer the
6 affirmation. Panelists, please raise your right hand.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
8 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
9 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
10 questions?

11 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I do.

12 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You can
14 begin when ready.

15 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you so much.

16 Good afternoon, Chair Thomas-Henry, Chair Feliz,
17 Members of the City Council's Committee on Small
18 Business and Public Safety. My name is Haris Khan,
19 and I serve as Chief of Staff at the New York City
20 Department of Small Business Services. I'm pleased to
21 join today's hearing with Deputy Chief of Patrol
Services Thomas Alps from the New York City Police
Department.

At SBS, we deliver economic security for
all New Yorkers by connecting them to good jobs,

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3 supporting small businesses, and investing in our
4 neighborhoods. New York City's more than 180,000
5 small businesses are the backbone of our economy.
6 From COVID-19 to the blizzard conditions last
7 weekend, our small businesses keep the city running
8 and ensure essential goods and services reach those
9 in need. Our city thrives when small businesses
10 thrive and, as such, we take incidents of retail
11 theft very seriously. Repeat retail thefts can
12 deteriorate the stability of a mom-and-pop store, the
13 livability of our commercial corridors, and can drive
14 workers and customers away from small businesses.

15 We're encouraged and grateful for our
16 partners in law enforcement as we see retail theft
17 incidents trending downwards year over year. In
18 responding to the post-pandemic rise in retail theft,
19 local District Attorney's offices and NYPD have
20 adapted their efforts and deployed new strategies to
21 successfully reduce retail theft. These strategies
include trainings to businesses on how they can issue
trespass notices and new ways to tackle organized
retail theft. Since 2025, retail theft has declined
by 14 percent citywide. SBS has also promoted the

3 City's voluntary Small Business Security Camera
4 Integration Program to expedite investigations. This
5 program provides NYPD real-time access to cameras in
6 participating small businesses and first began as a
7 pilot in the Flushing Business Improvement District
8 in 2023 before a citywide expansion in 2024.

9 A primary way that SBS boosts
10 neighborhood resiliency and supports public safety is
11 through our close work with the New York City's
12 network of 78 Business Improvement Districts, also
13 known as BIDs. SBS oversees and partners with the
14 citywide BID network that invests more than 207
15 million in neighborhoods annually, covers more than
16 300 miles of commercial corridors, and serves 25,000
17 storefront businesses. In FY25, BIDs spent 32 million
18 dollars, roughly 15 percent of total spending, on
19 public safety measures, and roughly half of all BIDs
20 deliver enhancements such as pedestrian security
21 cameras and public safety ambassadors. At SBS, we
fund many of these efforts through our small BID
support grants, which further impact and build
capacity for smaller organizations. Over the last two
fiscal years, we've also helped small businesses

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3 secure over 120 million dollars in financing
4 assistance to cover a variety of expenses. We provide
5 one-on-one appointments with trained staff through
6 our seven Business Solution Centers who help
7 businesses review financial products, clarify
8 eligibility rules, and identify required
9 documentation. Small businesses can get connected to
10 our services and lending partners in person at our
11 centers, but also online through our NYC Funds Finder
12 platform, which is the first-of-its-kind digital
13 marketplace for small business loans and grants. We
14 also connect businesses to our Business Preparedness
15 and Resiliency Program, also known as BPREP, and as
16 part of this program, businesses can receive a free
17 on-site risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities
18 and boost overall resiliency. Eligible businesses can
19 also receive grants of up to 5,000 dollars to shore
20 up their infrastructure with items like generator,
21 fire and flood-proof storage, flood barriers,
hardware drives for critical data, and security
cameras. And lastly, SBS also promotes New York
State's 5-million-dollar commercial security tax
credit program that Governor Hochul announced in

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3 January 2024. This State incentive can cover expenses
4 such as security guards, surveillance cameras for
5 small businesses, panic and alarm systems, access
6 control systems, locks, gates, and other structural
7 reinforcement. We shared guidance with community
8 boards, partners, partner organizations, BIDs,
9 elected official offices, and our merchant
10 association partners in advance of last year's
11 October application deadline for that State
12 5-million-dollar tax credit program. And we also
13 greatly appreciate that Governor Hochul's proposed in
14 her January Executive Budget presentation, the State
15 has proposed an extension of that State tax credit
16 for another three fiscal years.

17 I'd like to now turn to the bills being
18 heard today. Intro. 553 sponsored by Chair Feliz
19 would require SBS or another agency designated by the
20 Mayor to establish a financial assistance program for
21 small businesses purchasing security system
technology. Intro. 623 sponsored by Council Member
Louis would require SBS in consultation with NYPD to
create a year-long pilot program to install security
measures for businesses in zip codes with high rates

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3 of retail theft. SBS supports any efforts that help
4 small businesses tackle retail theft, and we
5 appreciate the City Council's attention to these
6 matters. On the proposed legislative package, we
7 recommend an assessment of current City and State
8 efforts to inform the proposed new programming.

9 Between the changes in law enforcement practices, the
10 availability of the State's tax credit program, and
11 the meaningful downward trend in retail theft, we
12 believe current efforts are also leading to an
13 on-the-ground improvement. We look forward to
14 continuing our partnership with Members of the City
15 Council to advance shared prosperity for all New
16 Yorkers, and thank you again for the opportunity to
17 testify today. I look forward to your questions.

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Good afternoon, Chair
19 Thomas-Henry and Chair Feliz and Council Members. My
20 name is Thomas Alps. I'm the Executive Officer of the
21 Patrol Services Bureau for the New York City Police
Department. On behalf of the Police Commissioner,
Jessica Tisch, I thank you for the opportunity to
speak with you today about retail theft.

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3 The mission of the New York City Police
4 Department is to protect the lives of property and
5 all who live, work, and visit our city, and to
6 maintain conditions in which our city's small
7 businesses and commercial retailers can thrive.

8 Retail theft poses a direct threat to this mission.

9 Retail theft is a recidivist-driven crime that spiked
10 in the early 2020s, the impact of which was felt
11 across the city by local businesses and the

12 communities they serve. Under Commissioner Tisch, the
13 Department developed and implemented a new policing
14 strategy to target and respond to increases in crime,
15 including retail theft. The NYPD utilized real-time
16 crime statistics to identify patterns driving retail
17 theft, allowing us to respond with focus and urgency.

18 The Department launched new holiday zones to deploy
19 over 200 officers to high-propensity retail corridors
20 during peak hours, and the Department shifted from
21 pass-through enforcement to sustained investigations.

The results speak for themselves. Retail theft
declined by 14 percent citywide in 2025, and nearly
half of all retail theft complaints resulted in an
arrest, which was the highest rate since 2019. In our

3 holiday zones, retail theft declined by 35.7 percent
4 during deployment hours compared to last year.
5 Year-to-date, there has been a 22.5 percent decrease
6 in reported retail theft incidents compared to the
7 same time frame last year. This continued downward
8 trend further demonstrates that data-driven strategic
9 deployment and precision policing produces measurable
10 results.

11 The Department is also proud to partner
12 directly with retailers and small business
13 associations. Through crime prevention seminars,
14 precinct community councils, and direct outreach, we
15 provide best practice guidance on surveillance
16 placement, inventory control practices, and incident
17 reporting protocols. While enforcement remains a
18 critical component to reducing crime, meaningfully
19 reducing retail theft requires continued
20 collaboration between retailers, the community, and
21 the NYPD.

22 Finally, regarding the bills being heard
23 today, Intro. 623 requires the Commissioner of Small
24 Business Services to create a small business security
25 measures pilot program in consultation with the

3 Police Commissioner. The pilot program would be
4 limited to New York City zip codes with high rates of
5 crimes associated with retail theft, which would be
6 determined by the Police Commissioner. The Department
7 supports the goals of this legislation, and we look
8 forward to working with the Council to craft a
9 version of this legislation that most effectively
10 achieves those goals.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
12 today, and I look forward to answering your
13 questions.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. Thank
15 you both for your testimony.

16 I have a couple of questions, and then
17 we'll turn it over to Chair Feliz and my other
18 Colleagues for questions.

19 First, both of you mentioned a decline in
20 retail theft. What data does SBS rely on to analyze
21 retail theft trends? And within that, do you take
into account businesses that may have closed and/or
businesses that are no longer reporting?

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you, Chair.
4 We're relying on COMPStat and the retail theft data
5 that the NYPD has, so I'll defer to Chief Thomas.

6 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Thank you, Chair. So,
7 I'll speak retail theft data overall from the Police
8 Department. So, retail theft peaked in 2022 with
9 63,754 retail theft-related crimes. That's robberies
10 that began as a shoplifting incident, grand
11 larcenies, and petit larcenies. Retail theft over the
12 past three years, 2023, declined 7.2 percent, or
13 4,572 fewer retail theft complaints; in 2024, we had
14 a slight uptick, 3.7 percent increase, or 2,197
15 additional complaints in that year; 2025, we saw a
16 drastic decrease in retail theft complaints, 14.1
17 percent decrease, or 8,645 fewer retail theft
18 complaints; 2026, we're building on those successes,
19 we're down 18.8 percent, or 1,507 less retail theft
20 complaints. A lot of our strategy is built across
21 multiple bureaus within the Police Department. We
have eight different bureaus working on our efforts
to combat retail theft, beginning first and foremost
with our Chief of Crime Control Strategies Bureau.
They're our analytical arm. They're analyzing the

3 crimes. They're analyzing those who are actually
4 committing the crimes. They're implementing plans,
5 drafting plans, and they're creating the strategy.
6 Patrol Services Bureau, which I fall under, executes
7 the strategy. We make sure that the deployment is
8 proper. The response times are at its minimal times.
9 We want to get to these incidents as quick as
10 possible. There's a lot of oversight, and there's
11 also a lot of communication with our local District
12 Attorney's office. Both the Chief of Crime Control
13 Strategies and the Patrol Services Bureau are in
14 constant collaboration with the DAs regarding what
15 we're seeing, our trends, our crimes, who we're
16 arresting, and we're talking prosecutorial strategies
17 or diversion programs.

18 Following that, we have our Crime
19 Prevention Officers who are officers in our local
20 commands or are communicating with our BIDs and also
21 partnering with the BIDs and communicating and
partnering with all the businesses within the
command. They're given best practices about timely
reporting, the importance of gathering details when
an incident occurs, how to document it internally,

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3 how to use de-escalation techniques, their role in
4 prosecution, the availability of video. We do site
5 surveys and positioning of merchandise. We give them
6 best practices, and then, in addition, we help
7 formulate a communication band where they communicate
8 with each other, and we're part of that. For
9 instance, I can speak specifically up into the Bronx
10 on Fordham Road, how we implemented something like
11 that. Then we have our Detective Bureau that follows
12 up on any complaints where we don't make a summary
13 arrest. We have our detectives on the back end
14 investigating all these crimes. These aren't crimes
15 that we shy away from. We investigate it fully. In
16 full transparency, we now have retail theft on our
17 COMPStat pages, so normally a COMPStat page would
18 show seven major crimes, the most serious crimes.
19 Retail theft is amongst them, so we're showing the
20 importance of combating retail theft, that we are
21 tracking it, and we're sharing that with the public.
Our Detective Bureau is investigating these crimes,
pulling video in hopes of resolving them
successfully, however that may look to arrest. We
have Grand Larceny Divisions within the Detective

3 Bureau that are looking at patterns and trends and
4 organized groups. We have our Intelligence Bureau
5 that's looking at our recidivists, who are these
6 people that are committing these crimes over and
7 over. We put in tracking methods, and then the last
8 bureau would be the Legal Bureau, who is also
9 coordinating with the DAs in the prosecution. We do
10 have a lot of successes to speak of that are
11 significant. I spoke earlier about the holiday zones
12 that was implemented by the Chief of Crime Control
13 Strategies to combat retail theft. It began in
14 November 24th, 2025. (TIMER CHIME)

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: But in that
16 data, though, it sounds like you guys aren't
17 currently accounting for any businesses that closed
18 down and are not reporting?

19 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't have any
20 specific data as it relates to that.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. You
had talked about repeat offenders. Is there any data
that talks about large-scale theft rings that are
stealing to resell versus those who are stealing out
of need and necessity?

3 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: When we talk about
4 organized theft, the NYPD loosely defines that as two
5 or more persons acting in concert to commit a larceny
6 and several incidents within that. Our Grand Larceny
7 Divisions and our Theft Task Force would be involved
8 in investigating them. In 2025, we had 39 grand
9 larceny patterns involving two or more persons
10 committing theft from retail stores. Currently in
11 2026, we have eight patterns involving two or more
12 persons involved in retail theft. All the ones in
13 2025 are closed except for two to arrest, and in
14 2026, four remain open of the eight. Normally, we're
15 seeing mostly it's individual theft driving this, not
16 organized groups. We do have open patterns in
17 Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island that involve
18 Lululemon, Aloe, and Target, where large groups are
19 coming in and stealing merchandise en masse. Those
20 are currently under investigation.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You
mentioned the DAs and the coordination with the DAs.
From my understanding, each of the different District
Attorney's offices have their own different programs
to combat retail theft. Do you have an opinion in

3 terms of which have worked the best or have proven
4 the best results or decreased recidivism?

5 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would say that from
6 the highest levels in the Police Department, from
7 Chief of Crime Patrol Strategies all the way down to
8 local commanders to even borough commanders, we're in
9 constant communication with the DA's office, whether
10 it's their General Crimes Bureau or their Crime
11 Strategy Unit. These are dedicated District Attorneys
12 that are focused on these type of crimes. They make
13 the assessment after reviewing the individual, what's
14 driving this crime, why did he commit this crime, and
15 they make that assessment at the DA's level. We
16 provide information on that individual that we can,
17 but our approach is bringing it to the District
18 Attorney's office. We give them the data that they
19 need to make those assessments, and also to
20 prosecute, whether it's video evidence or such, and
21 they make that decision whether it's going to go
towards a diversion program or we're going to go
through a prosecutorial criminal conviction.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I want to
4 acknowledge that we have been joined by a Council
5 Member Nurse.

6 I'm going to ask one more question and
7 turn it over to my Colleagues.

8 The United Bodega Association and
9 Economic Development Corporation were partnered to
10 administer the Silent Shields Initiative that gave
11 bodegas panic buttons. How many businesses received
12 these buttons, and did SBS provide any advice or
13 support to create this initiative or administer it?

14 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you, Chair.
15 This program was created by the Economic Development
16 Corporation, and my understanding is former First
17 Deputy Mayor Mastro to provide bodegas with panic
18 buttons. We've heard from the Economic Development
19 Corporation that 302 bodegas received panic buttons
20 during this fiscal year, and it's a one-year program
21 as far as I understand.

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: And do you
get regular updates?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: We've asked for
updates ahead of this hearing to understand what

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3 EDC's program has led to, and they've shared that it
4 has led to 302 bodegas benefiting from panic buttons.
5 And it's the United Bodega Association on the ground
6 that's installing these panic buttons.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Got it.

8 Thank you.

9 Chair Feliz.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
11 you so much, Co-Chair.

12 So, I represent District 15 in the Bronx.
13 District 15 covers many different vibrant commercial
14 corridors, including Fordham Road, the busiest
15 commercial corridor in the entire borough of the
16 Bronx. And I've obviously had a lot of conversations
17 with different stakeholders and businesses that the
18 local BIDs about, we've had a lot of conversations
19 about this topic. One thing that we all know is that
20 retail theft is a complex issue. There's a lot of
21 people that are committing it due to different needs,
also mental health challenges, also substance abuse
challenges, but then there also is a category
specifically committing it in the way of organized
retail theft. And just want to say that retail theft

3 is not a harmless act. It has real consequences on
4 consumers, but also on workers who have to fear for
5 their safety. These are cases that can and do
6 generally escalate, as we've seen. And it also has an
7 effect on businesses. It can significantly affect
8 their ability to operate and stay open. I mean, just
9 imagine a business consistently getting affected by
10 retail theft. How are they going to have items to
11 sell? How are they going to be able to earn money to
12 be able to keep the gates open and be able to pay
13 their workers and so much more? So, a complex issue
14 that requires a lot of different... that we resolve it
15 and tackle it through different angles, but this is
16 not a harmless act. It has real consequences on
17 consumers, their quality of life, the workers, their
18 safety, and, of course, the small businesses and
19 their ability to stay open.

20 So, I have a few questions. I'll start
21 with SBS, questions for SBS. So, what are initiatives
that SBS has worked on related to retail thefts?
Earlier you mentioned in your testimony that I think
it was 15 million dollars in grants on the issue, if
I got the number correctly.

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, Chair Feliz,
4 thank you so much. And it's been great. Your focus on
5 this issue has really, I think, over the years as
6 you've led the Small Business Committee in the last
7 term, we've seen the reduction in retail theft. As
8 the State then launched their tax credit, the City
9 modified their practices with the DA's offices and
10 started deploying new strategies.

11 On retail theft, the number that we
12 shared in testimony on financing, that's the general
13 broad stroke work of our small business support teams
14 that connect with small businesses across the five
15 boroughs. And over the past two years, we had that
16 150-plus-million dollars in financing. And when we
17 connect folks to financing assistance, the small
18 businesses are generally able to use them for a
19 variety of expenses. They can get it for working
20 capital. They can get it for inventory. They can
21 certainly get it to install security cameras. And
generally, the need in the small business community
that we hear is for larger amounts of financing to be
able to sustain their business, grow their business,
and open up new stores and really sustain themselves

3 amidst an affordability crisis that has also impacted
4 small business owners. So we do financing for small
5 businesses. We connect them to low-cost, affordable
6 lending partners. And through that work, they've
7 gotten over 150 just over the past two years.

8 Separate from that, when the State announced their
9 Commercial Security Tax Credit, we made sure business
10 owners were aware of this, and we promoted it at the
11 time when the application window was open at the
12 State. It seems to open during the fall, so we try to
13 target our outreach during the fall months right
14 before the deadline so that business owners can
15 quickly sign up for that tax credit.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Any grants
17 available to help small businesses on this issue?

18 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: There are no grants
19 available on security cameras itself. There is a
20 Business Preparedness and Resiliency Program that we
21 operate at SBS. The eligibility for that program is
really focused on neighborhoods in New York City and
businesses that fall under the flood plain of the
city, and if they're impacted by coastal flooding and
similar infrastructural challenges, they're eligible

3 for that program. The program first provides a free
4 assessment onsite where businesses can get a sense of
5 their vulnerabilities and ways in which we can boost
6 their resiliency. And if in that assessment we
7 realize they don't have security cameras or cameras
8 could be a useful tool for them, then the grants have
9 been used. Per our data, 35 percent of all of our
10 business preparedness and resiliency grant awardees
11 have leveraged the grant to purchase security-related
12 measures.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What is SBS'
14 position on my bill, Intro. 553, also known as the
15 Small Business Protection Act?

16 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you, Chair. On
17 both bills, we are fully aligned on the goal of
18 tackling retail theft and we are fully supportive of
19 any efforts that could bring further reduction on
20 retail theft or help resolve these issues that
21 business owners are struggling with. It's in the
program design that we'd love to work with you and
the sponsors to make sure that whatever programming
that the City embarks on to further this really
strong and significant downward trend that we've

3 started to realize over the past two years, that the
4 work and the programming that's set up complements
5 existing efforts. So. there's the existing State tax
6 credit. We want to make sure that we fully leverage
7 that State tax credit and we don't create a situation
8 where there's two competing products from two levels
9 of government and business owners that are already
10 confused about all of our acronyms have to now be
11 confused with another set of acronyms. We want to
12 make sure that doesn't happen. And so there are ways
13 in which we can work with the leadership of both
14 Committees, the Members that have sponsored the
15 legislation in development to ensure that we maximize
16 both the tax credit and build upon other resources
17 that could help the business community.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. And now
19 some questions for the NYPD, and I'll be brief. I
20 know we have a pretty big bench, so I'll ask some
21 questions and then I'll pass it on to Colleagues.

So, let's start with data related to
retail theft. Can you provide a breakdown of retail
theft-related complaints that were received, broken
down by, let's say, the past four years?

3 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Say that again?

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: So, retail theft
5 complaints in the City of New York that you received,
6 data for the past four years, broken down year by
7 year.

8 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Broken down year by
9 year. So, 2023, we had 59,131 retail-related
10 complaints versus in 2022, we had 63,703. That was a
11 7.2 percent decline. 2024, we had 61,328 retail theft
12 complaints versus 59,131 in 2023. 2025... excuse me?

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Oh, sorry. Go
14 ahead.

15 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: 2025, we had 52,683
16 retail theft-related complaints versus the 61,328 in
17 2024. And currently, where we stand year-to-date,
18 we're at 6,500 versus 8,007 in 2025. So, we're seeing
19 it trend downward. You know, retail theft peaked in
20 2022 with 63,754 complaints. And you move over, and
21 we spoke about recidivism and repeat offenders. We
made 28,082 shoplifting arrests in 2025. 18,154, or
64.6 percent, have a prior shoplifting arrest. In
2021, and I use that because that was like the high
watermark, we peaked with 74.9 percent of our arrests

3 had a prior shoplifting arrest. So, recidivism from
4 2021 has dropped from 74.9 percent to 64.6 percent.
5 So, we're seeing that recidivism rate decline, which
6 is a great sign. Very optimistic about that. And it's
7 the efforts of the DAs as well as the NYPD and being
8 more strategic where we're deploying in the retail
9 areas during our most critical times, especially
10 during the holiday months, and we're putting officers
11 that are in administrative duties, newer officers on
12 foot in business districts to protect these
13 businesses, and we're doing it strategically based on
14 data that we're seeing.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Can you provide
16 data on retail theft complaints? I guess any
17 pre-COVID numbers, 2020, 2021, 2019?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't have that in
19 front of me. I would have to get back to you on that.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Would you say, so
21 you mentioned we generally, from 2022, '23, '24, '25,
generally 59,000 to 63,000 complaints per year,
generally more or less?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Yeah. We ranged from
63,000 in 2022, and we dropped to 52,000 in 2025.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Would you say those
4 numbers are much higher compared to the pre-COVID
5 numbers? I know you mentioned you don't have the
6 numbers on you, but based on what you've seen?

7 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would have to look
8 at where the high-water mark is, but I believe it was
9 2021 would have been. I don't have that in front of
10 me. I would have to get back to you on that one.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. And, of
12 course, again, retail theft is a complex issue. We
13 have many different reasons for it, including, again,
14 needs, mental health, substance abuse, but also
15 organized theft. Just curious, what percent of theft
16 is due to organized crime versus other reasons such
17 as needs, different needs?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, the large portion
19 of theft is individuals. It's not organized crime.
20 But like I mentioned previously, in 2025, we had 39
21 grand larceny patterns involving organized theft
where groups of individuals, two or more, came into a
retail establishment and committed theft. Currently,
in 2026, we're at eight grand larceny patterns. So,
we loosely define organized as two or more committing

3 retail theft on multiple occasions, and we call them
4 patterns. That's how we're defining this.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And based on the
6 conversations that you and your team have had with
7 different stakeholders, what are the top reasons that
8 we usually see that lead to retail theft?

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: There's a lot of
10 underlying issues with individuals who we're seeing
11 arrested, whether it's drug addiction, mental health.
12 There's a need sometimes. And then there's other
13 individuals who are doing it for profit. Regardless,
14 it's affecting the businesses, and we don't tolerate
15 that, and we look to monitor our arrest rates to make
16 sure we're closing this out and referring them to the
17 District Attorney's office so they can do their
18 assessment. And then we use different strategies, and
19 the DA's office use different strategies to address
20 this. And we really focus mostly on the recidivist
21 offenders. When we talk about our prosecutorial
strategies, whether that's aggregate charging, where
an individual targets the same business multiple
times under a short period of time, and that would be
the merchandise that is stolen would be added up, and

3 it would become a grand larceny felony charge. So,
4 that is a prosecutorial strategy. Another strategy is
5 the use of trespass affidavits.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Sorry to
7 interrupt. They're having a hard time hearing you
8 online. Can you speak into the mic, please?

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: The other strategy is
10 trespass affidavits. So, trespass affidavits involve
11 when an individual is arrested, he's served a notice
12 that he's not to enter the establishment again. He
13 gets caught in there, or he or she gets caught in
14 there again, they can be charged with a burglary in a
15 third degree, and that's another way of upgrading
16 enforcement or charges. And the reasoning behind that
17 is we're trying to prevent recidivism, and that's
18 really our focus, and that's the DA's focus, and
19 we're in collaboration and always speaking about
20 that. And the other way is when owners or employees
21 are assaulted or threatened, we use order of
protections to protect those employees. So, that's
another way to safeguard the employees and the
businesses. So, these are prosecutorial strategies

3 that are used to prevent this recidivism and violence
4 towards store owners and businesses.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right. Two more
6 questions, and then I'll pause.

7 So, what factors does the NYPD think led
8 to the post-2020 spike in retail theft, and also what
9 are programs that NYPD has implemented to help reduce
10 and put an end to retail theft?

11 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, I can't
12 specifically give you numbers or data as far as who
13 is doing this broken down like that, but we
14 definitely see individuals who have mental health
15 issues that have drug addiction, but we also do see
16 an element that also is driven by profit so we need
17 to address that. Either way, we need to address all
18 of it and however that looks. So, our strategy is
19 simple but very involved. I explained it out. There's
20 many bureaus involved, but it's about sharing
21 intelligence and information with the DAs across the
precincts, across the boroughs, because this is a
recidivist-driven crime. It's about analyzing it,
seeing where our hotspots are, where our corridors or
business districts that are most affected, and

3 deploying officers to prevent, deter, and then make
4 apprehensions should they have, and then it's a
5 relentless follow-up by the detectives should there
6 be no arrest at the initial response. So, that is our
7 approach. It's working. We see the numbers, and we're
8 building on it in 2026. We're doing well.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How many officers
10 have been shifted from administrative duties to the
11 preventing retail theft team?

12 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, I can speak to
13 that one initiative. Last holiday season, 2025 into
14 2026, so November 24, 2025, we implemented what we
15 call holiday zones. We analyzed the data. We saw what
16 commands and precincts and areas and business
17 districts were most affected. We deployed 211
18 officers, administrative in nature, and they were
19 deployed out on foot in these business districts to
20 protect these businesses. So, these were 211 officers
21 each day from November 24th, 2025, to January 12th,
2026. They were deployed there during the businesses
when they were open, from 1300 to 2100. They were in
Manhattan, Broadway, Union Square, 31st, 34th Street,
42nd Street, 5th Avenue, Madison, St. Nick, in the

3 Bronx, in the Hub, up on Fordham Road, Broadway. They
4 were on Flatbush and Fulton and Queens. They were on
5 Jamaica and Roosevelt. So, we saw a significant
6 decrease in retail theft in those areas.

7 Specifically, we reduced retail theft by 35.7 percent
8 in those areas that I just spoke of, or 415 less
9 retail theft crimes during that period that I spoke
10 of during those deployment hours. So, it was very
11 analytical and strategic and well thought out and
12 effective.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Earlier you
14 mentioned that retail theft happens for many reasons.
15 A good portion of it is due to substance abuse,
16 mental health, and other challenges. What are
17 programs that the NYPD has worked on together with
18 other agencies to get those individuals the help that
19 they need?

20 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, we partner with
21 the District Attorney's office. I mean, they're our
partners in addressing this issue. A lot of the
diversion programs come through them, and we make
that assessment when they get introduced to the DA's
office. And they're our partners in this, so they're

3 helping us. Like I said, the recidivism is dropping.
4 I told you the high-water mark, and now it's gone
5 down. So, that's how we address that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
7 you so much.

8 I'll pause for now. Thank you so much.
9 Back to our Co-Chair.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

11 I'd like to turn it over to Council
12 Member Cabán for questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you.

14 I have quite a few questions. I'm going
15 to ask you to be really succinct, please. I
16 appreciate it. These are about Intro. 623. It
17 requires that the installation of security measures
18 take place in zip codes of New York City with high
19 rates of crime associated with retail theft as
20 determined by the Police Commissioner. So, the first
21 question is what list of crimes are associated with
22 retail theft under that definition?

23 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Right. So, retail
24 theft consists of petite larcenies, simple larcenies
25 under 1,000 dollars from a retail establishment.

3 Grand larceny would be a theft of over 1,000 dollars.
4 And then it also could include robberies where retail
5 theft occurs, and then they use force to steal that
6 merchandise, and it becomes a robbery. So, those
7 three crimes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And burglaries.

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Burg 2s and 3s.

11 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Burg 2s and 3s,
12 correct.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And the Burg 2 can
14 be either nonviolent or violent. The Burg 3 is
15 inherently nonviolent. So, what constitutes a high
16 rate? Like how will the Commissioner determine the
17 threshold?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Well, I can't speak to
19 that right at this moment. I would have to...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I mean, I think
21 that's important information to have, especially when
we're talking about this kind of technology. Higher
crime rates correspond with zip codes that are
already over-policed and over-surveilled. Why should
we fund additional surveillance in areas instead of

3 programs to address the root causes of theft like
4 poverty?

5 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Well, I would say that
6 these businesses, specifically Fordham Road up in the
7 Bronx, a lot of them who partner with us partner
8 voluntarily. A lot of these businesses are employers
9 of the community, and they're struggling, and they
10 need assistance, and we can address this in a...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: I like that you
12 mentioned that they're struggling because I did a
13 survey of 200 small businesses in my community on
14 public safety and small business. We're really rich
15 with small businesses in Astoria. I know you know
16 that. And actually what they said was while retail
17 theft is a concern and it does happen, their highest
18 priority is their inability to afford rent. That, and
19 then second to that was tariffs and cost of doing
20 business, and then retail theft, and that they end up
21 calling the police because it's really the only area
out of those things that give them any sort of
relief, but that the fact is that they cannot survive
our commercial rent market. So, would you guys be in
support of commercial rent stabilization laws?

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3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you, Council
4 Member. I think that's something the Law Department
5 would have to weigh on to see if it's constitutional
6 for the City to establish commercial rent
7 stabilization. But on your point of what you've heard
8 on the ground from community members, 100 percent
9 it's true that what we've heard also is commercial
10 rent continues to be one of the highest costs for
11 businesses, and it's a cost that there's very, very
12 little ability for folks to get relief. We're proud
13 that at the City and at SBS, we've launched a
14 Commercial Lease Assistance Program. It provides
15 pre-litigation support to commercial tenants.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: And I know. I just
17 want to... I appreciate that answer. I just want to
18 move on, but I am glad that what we found in our
19 District is affirmed by the Administration.

20 So, Intro. 623 requires that surveillance
21 footage be capable of... to be viewed through mobile
phones, computers, or CCTV. Will anyone who doesn't
work for the small business be given access to those
feeds?

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3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Council Member,
4 you're referring to the proposed legislation?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: 623, yeah. It
6 requires that the surveillance footage be capable of
7 being viewed through mobile phones, computers, or
8 CCTV. So, I want to know if anybody that doesn't work
9 for the small business can be given access to those
10 feeds.

11 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I think that's an
12 example on SBS' perspective on the bill. I think
13 that's an area where we would want to have
14 conversations with the Council to make sure that any
15 program that is set up is voluntary, any program that
16 is set up has very strong guardrails.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Can you guarantee
18 that law enforcement won't be given direct access to
19 these feeds?

20 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: We're not certain
21 how the final legislation will land in terms of the
22 program design. I wouldn't be able to... kind of as a
23 product of this joint process.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Because
25 contemporaneous access would be a huge problem.

3 I know that I'm running out of time, so I
4 did want to address some of the testimony that was
5 made. I was a public defender for many years, and I
6 represented well over 1,000 clients, many for
7 different larceny-related offenses. I just want to
8 say that it was stated on the record that the DAs,
9 once an arrest is made and it's passed to them, that
10 their job is that they determine what's driving the
11 theft. That's actually not their mandate or their
12 job. What they are doing is enforcing the law,
13 deciding which things to prioritize, and then some of
14 their metrics include guilty (TIMER CHIME) verdicts,
15 sentences, and those sorts of things. And so, this
16 program of the trespass notice, I just want to lay
17 out for the record what that is legally. Again,
18 business owners are opting into it because they're
19 not getting any other relief, but just know that this
20 is what it means. It means that somebody... because I
21 represented this person a million times. I have
somebody who I've been on this Council for over four
years is still serving an upstate prison sentence for
stealing cell phones from a store because he
struggled with drug use because of a prior trauma.

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3 So, what the trespass notice does is take somebody
4 who commits a petty larceny, oftentimes because of
5 poverty, and yeah, you sell it for profit because you
6 need that profit to pay for survival, mental health,
7 or unaddressed substance uses. So, if they go into a
8 store and steal a sandwich, a T-shirt, and they sign
9 that trespass notice, and they go into that store
10 again and steal out of necessity or are accused of
11 it, now instead of facing a misdemeanor, which they
12 can get a non-incarceratory sentence, they are now
13 serving or being exposed to a burg in the third
14 degree, which mandates upstate prison time from a
15 range of one and a half to three years or two to four
16 years. And during that time, it does not address...
17 they're kicked back out on the street afterwards, no
18 better for the wear, and that is where you get high
19 recidivism rates. It's just kicking the can down the
20 road, and oftentimes that burg bump up is used simply
21 to force convictions on the misdemeanor. I just felt
like I needed to say that, especially when you gave
the testimony that there are a certain level of
quote-unquote recidivists that keep coming back that
you're focusing on. That means that this approach is

3 not working. So, I just, again, I want to go back to
4 SBS and be like, there are lots of things that small
5 businesses can really benefit from to make sure that
6 they are safe and solvent, and there are lots of
7 things that we can do to address the actual
8 underlying causes of retail theft, and that all of
9 those things and interests can be pursued and
10 accomplished.

11 Thank you for the leeway, Chair.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No worries.
13 Thank you, Council Member Cabán.

14 Council Member Hanif?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Thank
16 you for being here.

17 So, before we put in public dollars in
18 security technology, what evidence is out there that
19 these tools reduce harm for small businesses?

20 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: You're speaking of
21 specifically access to or cameras, camera systems? Is
that what you're speaking about?

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: The camera is going
to be installed because you're looking for a thief or
somebody who broke in. But my question is, how has,

3 or if there are tools that you have seen that show
4 that actually installing a security camera is what
5 reduces theft and break-ins?

6 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Well, like many of the
7 crimes that we investigate, a lot of it goes back to
8 video evidence. So, cameras do assist us in
9 investigations.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: But you are unable
11 to provide data as to, like, which small businesses
12 with cameras have been able to reduce or feel safer
13 as a result because they no longer experience theft
14 and burglary.

15 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Well, I'd say the vast
16 majority of our investigations and successful
17 conclusions, it's video evidence. That's what really
18 ties this all together. We can find out who's a
19 recidivist. We can identify trends and patterns. And
20 we can prosecute those who are recidivists. So, video
21 surveillance is extremely important.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: It's certainly one
part of it...

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Is what you're
4 saying.

5 What programs are available to the
6 employees who victim survivors of incidents?

7 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, the Police
8 Department does do a lot of outreach with our Crime
9 Prevention Officers. We interact with businesses in
10 business districts all across the city.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I would appreciate
12 if you looked at me and spoke. Yeah.

13 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: We interact with all
14 these businesses, and we give them best practices on
15 de-escalation, how to call quickly, and how to just
16 internally document the issues, and we work in
17 partnership, and then we teach them how to
18 communicate across stores because we know
19 individuals, what they do is when they do shoplift at
20 one store, oftentimes it can progress and go down
21 Fordham Road. I use Fordham Road as an example
because I'm very familiar with it. They can go to the
next store and the next store and the next store. So,
we have the business districts communicating along
the storefronts.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: I mean, that sounds
4 like a great... that's community safety.

5 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Right.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: You're saying each
7 of the employers, small business owners, already have
8 a method that are intending to keep them safe.

9 But I'm going to move on because you're
10 not quite answering my question. For Haris, SBS, you
11 mentioned that SBS operates a program like the one
12 that's being proposed. You mentioned that there's, I
13 think, the resilience that could end with an
14 installation of a security camera.

15 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, do you find
17 what's being proposed as redundant, that SBS is
18 already providing measures that would allow a small
19 business to indeed install a security camera?

20 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, we run this
21 business preparedness and resiliency grant program.
It's really contained to areas of the city that are
in the floodplain, and so it's limited in
eligibility. It does not scale up to the whole city.
I don't think a lot of parts of your District would

3 be eligible other than the areas maybe closer than
4 Gowanus and Red Hook.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

6 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: And so there is a
7 program that could potentially be scaled.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Right. So that's a
9 specific program. I mean, I would be interested in
10 knowing if this security pilot would also be for a
11 specific set of small businesses.

12 But because I'm running out of time, I
13 want to understand what types of technology are
14 eligible under the bill. Like, is it cameras only,
15 license plate readers? Because, you know, we have
16 seen in (TIMER CHIME) stores like Rite Aid where
17 they've used facial recognition technology and have
18 not found the perpetrator. They actually have hurt
19 individuals who were charged but innocent, and we
20 know that now Rite Aid has a five-year ban on facial
21 recognition technology. Same with Wegmans, you know,
collecting our data as we're walking in, in the
aisles. So, I'm just curious, like, you know, would
this security camera installation go beyond just

3 what's in front of the store, what's inside of the
4 store, and not collect people's data?

5 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I think from our
6 perspective at SBS, we'd want to make sure that any
7 program that gets deployed is a program that is
8 voluntary. It's a program where there's strong
9 guardrails on data sharing and is also informed by
10 what the businesses need in that point of time, not
11 just gathering of information for the sake of
12 gathering for information. We know it's early in the
13 process, and that's why I think our position is not
14 we support the bill as written. Our position is we
15 support the goals of the bill. We want to work with
16 Members of the Council, the sponsors, and the
17 Co-Chairs to ensure that the final product builds on
18 existing efforts, as you pointed out, that already
19 support small businesses with retail theft.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Oh, and just final
21 question. Who would be, like, managing this camera
22 database? Like, is it DCWP who's, like, who has the
23 list of all of the small businesses that have
24 security cameras? That's one question. And the
25 second, I mean, I just want you to think about it.

3 And then the second is what are you evaluating after
4 you, you know, have installed? And also, is there a
5 maximum price that you all would allow for there to
6 be a threshold on, like, the cameras cost 50 dollars
7 and nothing beyond 50 dollars? So, on cost and then
8 on which agency is, like, collecting sort of, like,
9 knows who's out there with the security camera?

10 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, on cost, we at
11 SBS have heard from businesses that it really varies
12 tremendously based on quality of the product, the
13 number of cameras, but it could be in the thousands.
14 But a basic camera could be a couple hundred dollars.
15 For a full store, it could go up to 5,000 dollars.
16 And then on camera systems and the agencies, we do...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Wait, let me. So,
18 yes, that is absolutely right. The thing that I want
19 to know is if there is a maximum amount that the City
20 will say, okay, we are only giving you up to 50
21 dollars because this is a pilot program for security
cameras, right? That the City will provide 50 dollars
each or 350 dollars or whatever. So, that's the
question I have, if there's a maximum threshold.

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I don't think
4 the bill as drafted suggests the maximum threshold.
5 And I think it would be a product of the legislative
6 process and the budget cycle to determine the scale
7 of any program.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
9 Council Member.

10 I'll now turn it over to Council Member
11 Santosuosso.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Thank you
13 both for being here.

14 Mr. Kahn, my questions are mostly for
15 you. As a former small business owner who actually
16 experienced retail theft and perpetrators were
17 actually caught without the use of security cameras,
18 I'm interested both in making sure our small
19 businesses actually survive, but that we are actually
20 taking the intervention measures that are actually
21 going to solve problems that, you know, would prevent
businesses from closing in the first place. So, in
your experience in SBS, what are the most common
reasons that you hear of, of businesses that close
and that ultimately fold?

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: It's really a wide
4 gamut. And actually, I know Chair Thomas-Henry also
5 brought up the question earlier in this hearing of,
6 is it connected, are the vacancy rates connected to
7 retail theft? And really, there hasn't been anything
8 to suggest there's a one-to-one match where it's
9 retail thefts leading to closures. It's also the
10 general affordability crisis that are impacting small
11 businesses. It's the rising cost of commercial rent
12 that has gotten really difficult for small
13 businesses. It's the rising cost of private
14 insurance, which for small businesses has kept
15 skyrocketing at a pace that they're having a really
16 hard time keeping up with. And it's also the federal
17 supply chain disruptions that we're experiencing and
18 the uncertainty in the tariff policy at the federal
19 government that is leading to inventory challenges
20 for small businesses. So, there's a whole variety of
21 reasons where a business owner at some point decides
maybe it's better for me not to be in business. One
of them is also not related to these macroeconomic
conditions or pain points, but related to family. If
a person has a family-owned business and they're

3 planning on retiring and they have nobody in their
4 family willing to succeed and take over the business,
5 then sometimes they'll decide to close shop and call
6 it a day. And there's a whole variety of reasons. We
7 know that many of the reasons are issues that the
8 City could be invested in and work together to solve,
9 and there's some reasons that are just beyond the
10 City's actions and it's just a business owner's
11 decision to close.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Understood.

13 So, you mentioned, I believe, three
14 different programs, some of which are a function of
15 the City, some are a function of the State, which are
16 currently attacking retail theft. One you mentioned
17 was the voluntary small business security program in
18 Flushing, I believe.

19 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yeah. So, Fusus is a
20 program that the City launched, and it provides
21 businesses with the ability to voluntarily connect
their cameras and share feeds to the NYPD. So, that's
one program that the City has launched. On the State
side, there's that commercial security tax credit

3 that exists. And then we know the DA's offices have
4 also changed and adapted their practices.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: The State tax
6 credit program, I believe you said that was a
7 5-million-dollar program.

8 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Do you know
10 if that has been spent down entirely?

11 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: No. We've never been
12 in a situation where we've referred a business owner
13 and they've told us there's no more money here so
14 that's precisely why we've been promoting it, and we
15 think any programs that the City set up should build
16 on top of it, should complement it, should not be a
17 program that competes with the State tax credit.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: And suggests
19 perhaps that the uptake hasn't necessarily been as
20 much as we might anticipate.

21 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yeah. The State
hasn't shared application data on the program, but we
think there could be room for maximizing the use of
the tax credit and then building on top of it with
the City program.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: And do you
4 know if that State tax credit requires that the
5 cameras that are installed, it covers security
6 cameras, right? So, do you know if that requires that
7 the cameras that are installed record a certain
8 radius from the building?

9 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: My understanding is
10 it's a lot more flexible, there's a lot more types of
11 uses. Security cameras are only one use. You could
12 have lock gates, you could invest in a variety of
13 measures, and my sense is it doesn't. We'll follow up
14 with you if there's any specific requirements in the
15 program that restrict or determine a radius that's
16 required.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Yeah. I ask
18 because Intro. 623 actually requires that there be a
19 15-foot radius that's recorded by any camera that is
20 installed as a result of the program, and I think
21 it's interesting that that requires a level of
surveillance that a current existing program that
appears to be working does not require so I would
love to know that, but it sounds like the existing

3 program is actually more flexible for the business
4 owner.

5 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay. And
7 then you mentioned that there is also a
8 150-million-dollar financing program that the SBS has
9 for small businesses for a wide range of business
10 needs.

11 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, that program is
12 just the general course of our financing assistance
13 work. We connect business owners to a variety of
14 lending partners, and it leads to 120 plus over the
15 past two fiscal years.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: And did you
17 give us a percentage of what percentage of that
18 program is actually spent on security technology or
19 security systems?

20 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I gave a (TIMER
21 CHIME) percentage on the business preparedness and
resiliency grant.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Got it.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: The grant that
Council Member Hanif spotlighted.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Yep.

4 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: In that grant, 35
5 percent of grant awardees have used it for some sort
6 of a security measure, including cameras.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: But that was
8 for floodplain specific.

9 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Okay. Do you
11 happen to know how much of the financing actually
12 goes to security system technology?

13 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Of the larger
14 financing amount?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Yeah.

16 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: No. Because it
17 really is connections to lending partners. We help
18 folks apply for those loan packages. We make sure
19 they secure them. We identify requirements with them,
20 and they can usually use it for working capital,
21 which is incredibly big, and they could use it for so
many different things.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANTOSUOSSO: Understood.
Okay. All right. Thank you.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
4 Council Member.

5 Council Member Gutiérrez.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,
7 Chair.

8 A few of my questions have been asked
9 already, but I wanted to ask, for bill Intro. 623,
10 can you highlight or discuss any other kinds of
11 security technology besides security cameras that
12 would be included in this pilot?

13 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I think, Council
14 Member, this is the bill as drafted. I don't think it
15 provides that flexibility as we read it, but it's
16 something that we'd want the bill drafting process
17 and the legislative process to hopefully allow
18 clarity on.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So, there's no
20 suggestions, not even from PD? What other kinds of
21 technology that could be utilized besides cameras?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, again, we didn't
propose the bill.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I'm sorry. You
oppose it?

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3 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: No. We didn't propose
4 the bill.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Propose it.

6 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, we don't have any
7 input on that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: You don't have
9 any input... I mean, you will have input on it, but
10 there's no current... there's no sense of what other
11 technologies that could be included.

12 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't want to get
13 ahead of the Department. We'll have that in
14 discussions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. How will
16 you work with businesses to ensure that in the case
17 where we're exclusively using security cameras that
18 they're notifying their shoppers and people within 15
19 minutes to the left, right in front of the store that
20 they are, in fact, being surveilled? Maybe this is
21 for Small Business Services.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I'm not sure
what the requirements are in the bill around
notification for members of the public.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: There's none.

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: That's an example
4 of... I think, Council Member, I want to make sure it's
5 clear we are not in support of the bill as written in
6 this current form.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: No, no. I'm
8 clear. I think there should be direction from both
9 agencies, from both leadership. You've obviously
10 worked with businesses before. Council Member Hanif
11 highlighted Wegmans that does have notifications up.
12 So, these are small businesses. The bill is to help
13 protect small businesses, and so these are not these
14 big chain stores and don't necessarily have apps that
15 can notify every single person that walks in. So, in
16 these instances where it is, they are specifically
17 security cameras. They're walking in on their own
18 voluntarily into a business. I think that there is
19 some semblance of we may be being recorded. But
20 especially for folks on the outside that could just
21 be walking their dog or waiting for somebody outside,
maybe they don't know they're being surveilled. What
steps can the agency take to work with those small
businesses to ensure that they're informing New
Yorkers?

3 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I think it will
4 really be a process in the bill as the bill moves
5 through the legislative process. We want to make sure
6 and I'm sure the Council will make sure that a
7 variety of small business stakeholders are at the
8 table informing the details of the program, the
9 eligibility for the program and the requirements that
10 a program would place upon the business owner if they
11 agree to participate. And what you're suggesting
12 could easily be part of a requirement. If you
13 participate in X program, you should then be required
14 to do Y.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah. I'm
16 concerned, especially with this federal climate of
17 the way that we are surveilling New Yorkers in the
18 way that we are capturing their biometric
19 information. I know the bill does not outline that.
20 I'm very clear. But I know that PD technology in past
21 hearings does demonstrate that they are using
biometric technology to capture anyone. So, I do
have, and I think a lot of my Colleagues share in
that concern for the way that we're capturing
people's information. And then, of course, the

3 holding on to that information. Is there any sense of
4 what security cameras? I don't know if you even have
5 an idea of like what vendors the City would be
6 working with for these businesses, but what is the
7 City's policy specific to security cameras that are
8 surveilling outside on data collection of people's
9 biometric information?

10 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, at SBS, we have
11 we do not maintain data of any kind of video format
12 through any of these programs, but we know that
13 there's sister agencies that have their own
14 technology so I'll pass to the Deputy Chief if he has
15 something on.

16 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would have to get
17 back to you on that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

19 And then, thank you, Chair. This is going
20 to be my last question with my last seconds is I
21 guess what is the is there a thought? I know, again,
the bill is... we're hearing it for the first time. but
for businesses that are kind of in need or are asking
for support from the City, what are some of the ways
that the agencies are doing outreach to talk about

3 this program potentially, or is this something that
4 businesses on their own have to kind of seek and opt
5 into?

6 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I think that's
7 exactly the role that we imagine SBS would play.
8 Since we are not a law enforcement agency, we don't
9 design public safety programs from start to finish.
10 We would defer to the NYPD on the general scope of
11 the program. And then on the business outreach,
12 ensuring business voices are heard and informing the
13 program design, making sure outreach is done so that
14 they can benefit from any program that gets rolled
15 out by the City and that the outreach is ensuring
16 that communities that have been left out of City
17 programs are heard and are included in such programs
18 is the kind of outreach role we would take upon
19 ourselves if this program were to pass and were to be
20 implemented.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I have no
more questions.

I just want to reemphasize the importance
of protecting New Yorkers' privacy, allowing them to
consent if they're being surveilled involuntarily,

3 and the realities of the federal climate about how
4 people are being surveilled, how information is being
5 captured and being used against them. So, I would
6 love for this Council to make sure that we are
7 including all New Yorkers, immigrant New Yorkers,
8 especially when we're talking about safety. Thank
9 you, Chairs.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
11 Council Member.

12 Next up, Council Member Hankerson.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Thank you,
14 Chair.

15 I just have a couple of questions. I know
16 you mentioned that you don't have an exhaustive list
17 of precautionary measures that businesses can take.
18 Is that correct?

19 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Council Member,
20 thank you so much for the question. So, I think
21 you're asking if we have a list of measures
businesses take before retail theft incidents happen
to protect themselves?

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Correct. Well,
just going back to Intro. 623, I see it listed

3 digital video surveillance cameras, plexiglass, and
4 other precautionary measures. So, I just wanted to
5 know if you have a list of what other precautionary
6 measures could be.

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I'll pass to
8 Deputy Chief in case there's.

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, our Crime
10 Prevention Officers frequently educate our businesses
11 in the business districts, and we partner up and we
12 speak about best practices as far as de-escalation,
13 site surveys, positioning of cameras, things of that
14 nature, and then also positioning of merchandise
15 within the establishment. So, that's the kind of
16 stuff we educate the businesses on how to do it to
17 prevent. Also, key indicators of someone who is
18 shoplifting. So, we do these partnerships. Sometimes
19 the BIDs have ambassadors that we work alongside
20 with. So, these are the measures we take place to
21 safeguard the businesses.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: I appreciate
that.

Since plexiglass is listed, what
circumstances would plexiglass be deemed appropriate?

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3 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I can't speak to that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: From your
5 experience just as a police officer.

6 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I guess if that's a
7 safeguard that the business wants to put in place to
8 safeguard their employees or the owners, and this is
9 something they want to put in place, I wouldn't.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: What exactly
11 would plexiglass protect from?

12 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: It could be violence.
13 It could be a sharp object or someone striking the
14 employee. Maybe that's what they want to prevent.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: And in your
16 experience, have you seen it to be a successful
17 deterrent?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: In some cases, it
19 does. It definitely safeguards the employees. I mean,
20 it's logical, and I think it makes the employees feel
21 safe. That would be a decision they would have to
make.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Is there, by
chance, any data on the effectiveness of plexiglass?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Not that I know of.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: No? Okay.

4 Can you share some of the crime
5 prevention methods the NYPD has used in regard to
6 retail theft?

7 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, there's many
8 methods that we do use, just so I don't miss
9 anything. First and foremost, the timeliness of
10 reporting. We want these businesses, when the act is
11 happening, to call us immediately. We educate them on
12 how to gather details of the crime and how to report
13 it, how to internally document the incident so to
14 identify trends, recidivist offenders. We also teach
15 them how to de-escalate these incidents. We don't
16 want them acting like the police. We want to get
17 there quickly and prevent it from escalating into a
18 robbery or someone being harmed. We talk about the
19 anti-theft equipment that they use, whether it's RFID
20 chips or trackers, things like that, so we understand
21 what they're using, which could, in turn, help us.
And then we talk about their role in prosecution, as
well as we talk site surveys, positioning of
merchandise, positioning of cameras, and then have a
system to communicate across the businesses

3 themselves. So, if you're in a business district,
4 hey, we just got hit by a group of individuals, look
5 out, this just happened, and they're sharing in real
6 time, whether that be by text message, email, and
7 they're communicating. The businesses are protecting
8 each other, and in turn, we're involved in that
9 communication in some cases. So, there's a lot of
10 best practices going on, and it's definitely
11 assisting us in the complaints.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKERSON: Do you have
13 data that would identify what some of these high
14 crime areas (TIMER CHIME) or neighborhoods would be,
15 by chance?

16 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, currently in 2026,
17 we're looking at a couple of commands that just have
18 raw number, large numbers of retail theft across the
19 city, Midtown South. We're talking around 34th
20 Street. That has probably the highest in the city as
21 far as raw number and retail theft, followed by the
13th precinct. We're talking around Union Square
area. That's a high number as well in the first
precinct down by Houston, Canal Street, Church,
Broadway. 52 precinct is particularly high on Fordham

3 Road. 84 by the Barclays is high for Brooklyn. And
4 then when we talk about Queens, we're looking at
5 Queens Boulevard, Queen Center Mall, Roosevelt
6 Avenue, and the Staten Island Mall. If you want to
7 talk across all the boroughs, those are our high
8 number drivers. So, strategically, that's where we
9 deploy our officers. We have retail theft teams. The
10 commands are able to create conditions teams to deal
11 with this retail theft and/or we have officers on
12 foot, our newer officers in these areas to prevent
13 that theft.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
15 Council Member.

16 Next, we have Council Member Banks.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you, Chairs.

18 First of all, I want to back up when the
19 question was asked about the panic buttons. There was
20 a number that was thrown out citywide, the amount of
21 panic buttons that have been installed. Can you give
me that number again?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Sure, Council
Member. So, the Economic Development Corporation led

3 this program and worked with the United Bodega
4 Association. They've installed 302 panic buttons.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: 302. Is there a
6 breakdown per Council District of how many of these
panic buttons have been installed?

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: The Economic
8 Development Corporation would have that. We don't
9 have that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: So, you don't have
that. Okay.

11 And as far as resources for the local
12 businesses, what resources are currently in place to
13 support local businesses when it comes to theft
prevention?

14 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I know that we're
15 really grateful for local precincts and crime
16 prevention officers on the ground at local precincts
17 who are able to go to small businesses and they're
18 able to do security assessments of the business owner
19 and recommend best practices to business owners.
20 That's one resource that exists currently on retail
21 theft in particular.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Let me take a
4 deeper dive into some of the data. Actually,
5 hopefully you can provide me with some of these
6 numbers. What percentage of the retail theft
7 incidents involve young folks or youth?

8 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I'd have to get back
9 to you on that one. I don't have that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: You don't have
11 that?

12 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: No. I don't have that.
13 Sorry.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Are you aware of
15 any diversion programs that may exist that are
16 implemented to assist young folks in preventing these
17 crimes or repeat offenders?

18 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: We have a lot of
19 officers that are engaged with the youth. Our Youth
20 Coordination Officers as well as our Explorer
21 program. We have a lot of engagement with the youth
that we help guide them away from retail theft.

COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay. And how is
the Administration including SBS supporting
merchants' associations or Business Improvement

3 Districts citywide to coordinate anti-theft
4 strategies and potentially invest in shared security
5 tools? What's currently? Because you spoke, but I
6 want to know is there anything else?

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, I think one
8 important thing for us to highlight would be it's
9 been really, really powerful to see Mayor Mamdani on
10 day 14 within two weeks announce Executive Order 11,
11 which directed a range of regulatory agencies to
12 start reviewing, inventorying, and start identifying
13 fines and fees the City government can initiate
14 reductions on to help small businesses thrive and
15 help reduce the burden of small businesses.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: When is that going
17 to be completed?

18 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: So, there's a range
19 of milestones in that executive order. My
20 understanding is in July, Members of the Council and
21 Members of the State Legislature will receive a
package from the Administration, which will include
all the reforms that require City Council or State
Legislature action. Separate from that requirement,
anything that the City could do on its own through

3 administrative rulemaking or departmental policy, the
4 City Administration will undertake.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: I know recently
6 there's been a rash of what they call these
7 takeovers, where you have some young folks who have
8 been going into certain malls, and they've been doing
9 this, they're having this sporadic type of where
10 they're snatching equipment and raiding the stores.
11 In those particular situations, what has been the
12 partnership between local community-based
13 organizations to help prevent some of these
14 occurrences from taking place?

15 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, a lot of precincts
16 have a strong communication chain with the business
17 districts and the businesses themselves. Like I said
18 before, we have a lot of strong presence in the
19 business districts, and we have direct lines of
20 communication. So, for instance, when we had one of
21 those incidents that you referred to up in Bay Plaza,
we were present, and we immediately had officers
mobilized and came to aid of those businesses at the
Bay Plaza up in the Bronx. So, that disorder or theft
is not tolerated, and we'll get the resources over

3 there. And if the business owners or employees are
4 seeing an issue, they have direct lines of
5 communication with us, and we'll respond as (TIMER
6 CHIME) quickly as possible.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: And if the Chair
8 may indulge me, one last question.

9 As far as notification, was there any
10 prior notification given to any of the businesses
11 when the incident had taken place up in the Bronx?
12 And I know Kings Plaza was also threatened, and also
13 in my District, Gateway Mall was also threatened.

14 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would have to get
15 back to you on those specific incidents on how that
16 communication happened and timeline of it.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: All right. Thank
18 you.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I have a
20 couple of follow-up questions. I know we are saying
21 retail theft is down, but when we talk about chain
stores, theft is up. Am I correct in that?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't have it, but
you're talking about specific business types. That I

3 don't have in front of me right now, and I'd have to
4 get back to you on that.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. And
6 then are certain retail sectors, such as pharmacies,
7 cosmetics, apparel, food, disproportionately
8 targeted?

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Some of the businesses
10 that we see mostly affected is Target, CVS,
11 Marshalls, those establishments. Those businesses
12 have seen large numbers of retail theft, without
13 question.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I'm going to
15 go back to the original question, and that goes to
16 this decline in terms of if it's because of
17 underreporting. Like I know firsthand, Walgreens, the
18 locks are getting more plentiful so the quality of
19 life and the consumer experience is declining. And a
20 particular one in my District just doesn't even
21 report anymore. So, I'm very curious and would ask
that you start to collect data and look, maybe go
back to some of those retailer stores when they were
at the height of when the numbers were high. Are they
still reporting? Are they even still open for

3 business to really get a truer understanding of if
4 it's actually down or if it's because of
5 underreporting?

6 My question is, which precincts? I know
7 you mentioned certain corridors currently experience
8 the highest retail theft rates.

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: So, by volume, we're
10 talking about Midtown South, 34th Street, 13th
11 Precinct, Union Square, Fifth Avenue, First Precinct,
12 Houston, Canal, Church and Broadway, 52 Precinct,
13 Fordham Road, 84 Precinct by the Barclays. We're
14 talking about Atlantic, Flatbush and Fulton Street.
15 112, we're talking about Queens Boulevard. 110, we're
16 talking about Queens Boulevard and the Queens Center
17 Mall. The 109, we're talking about Roosevelt Avenue.
18 And the 121, we're talking about Staten Island Mall.
19 In some of these areas, we have officers directly on
20 foot and we're deploying them and we have strong
21 coordination. I can specifically speak to in the
22 Staten Island Mall. We have a detail that's placed
23 there and we've made significant strides. Staten
24 Island, matter of fact, has the largest decrease in
25 retail theft for a year. They're down 46.2 percent

3 for the year. So that's strong leadership out in
4 Staten Island and the good work of the police
5 officers on Staten Island.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: My final
7 question, are there any disparities in enforcement
8 outcomes across the boroughs?

9 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: As far as what?

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Like, is
11 police activity and how enforcement is interacted in,
12 say, Staten Island versus the Bronx any different?

13 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would have to get
14 back to you on the raw numbers of the arrests and
15 where they're occurring, but the raw numbers would be
16 where the complaints are occurring. So, I would say
17 Midtown South has the largest number of retail theft
18 complaints. They're going to have the largest number
19 of arrests. But I would have to get back to you on
20 that data. Historically, Manhattan's affected the
21 most, specifically Manhattan South.

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

Chair Feliz, do you have any additional
questions?

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yes. Some
4 additional questions.

5 So, earlier you mentioned this is a
6 conversation that I've had with many different
7 stakeholders. Earlier you mentioned that you work
8 with the DA on different diversion programs. As we
9 know, people commit retail theft due to many reasons.
10 Again, mental health challenges, substance abuse, and
11 then we have those that are doing that basically to
12 make a profit, take goods and then resell them. And
13 again, you mentioned that you work with the DA on
14 diversion programs. I think one thing that we could
15 all agree on is that those that are committing retail
16 theft due to mental health challenges or substance
17 abuse, we have to make sure that we get them the help
18 that they need so that we could hopefully put an end
19 to the retail theft. I'm just curious, any other way
20 that we've been able to get individuals some type of
21 help without going through the DAs? Any other
agencies involved that don't specifically have to
route the case towards the DA?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: We work with many City
agencies, whether it's Department of Homeless

3 Services. There's a lot of different City agencies
4 that we engage our communities with. So, if we can
5 help connect them to resources, we certainly do that.
6 We work with the business districts and their
7 ambassadors. Their ambassadors are a big help. So,
8 there's many different City agencies that we work
9 with to combat this retail theft.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What are some of
11 the steps that you've seen where other agencies get
12 involved and help resolve the challenge? Any cases
13 that stand out?

14 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would say in the
15 Bronx, we have a lot of the harm reduction
16 non-profits come out. I saw a lot of their assistance
17 in this matter with those who were drug addicted,
18 substance abuse, that were driving some of our crime
19 along Fordham Road. So, there's non-profits we're
20 working with. We're also working with other City
21 agencies.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What percent of
retail theft would you say is due to organized retail
theft versus other reasons? I know you said most of
them aren't due to organized, but do you have an

3 estimate of how much of it is due to organized retail
4 theft?

5 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: (INAUDIBLE) 20
7 percent? Any rough guess?

8 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I don't have that. I
9 don't have that number.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay.

11 So, on retail theft, as we know, it was a
12 major problem during the coronavirus pandemic. We've
13 made some progress. Would you say retail theft
14 affected all commercial corridors equally, or were
15 there some that were more affected than others? And
16 if yes, did we notice any trends?

17 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: You're asking me what
18 corridors did I see that are most affected?

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Or did we see, are
20 there any factors that we saw stand out in terms of
21 which commercial corridors were being affected more
than others?

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: I would say that...

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: I'm sure, for
4 example, the busier commercial corridors, more
5 businesses, so.

6 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: And like I said,
7 there's certain businesses that are definitely
8 suffering more. Target, CVS, Marshalls, those
9 businesses, the pharmacies. So, types of businesses
10 are being affected, and certain corridors like
11 Fordham Road, Roosevelt Avenue, I spoke of. So those
12 are our hot spots.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What percent of
14 retail theft would you guess, and I say guess because
15 there's no way of getting data on this, but would you
16 guess goes unreported? Would you say one-third of
17 retail theft? Based on the conversations you've had,
18 I'm sure you and your team have worked with different
19 BIDs, different businesses, you've heard directly
20 from them. So, just wondering if there's anything
21 that you consistently get where they say basically,
hey, we don't report 80 percent of our cases.

DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: No. I can't speak to
that. I wouldn't have that number. But that's one of
our best practices, and when we go out and we engage

3 the businesses, we want them to call us for
4 assistance so we can address this issue.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay.

6 And also briefly moving on to a topic
7 that we haven't talked much about today, but this is
8 a conversation that all of us have had for years now.
9 We've talked about panic buttons, especially
10 specifically in our bodegas. What is the NYPD's
11 position on panic buttons? I know based on what I've
12 heard from different Members, it's a good idea, but
13 there's been some challenges with getting it
14 implemented for many different reasons. So, just
15 wondering if you could talk to us about panic buttons
16 in general and the NYPD's position.

17 DEPUTY CHIEF ALPS: Yeah, I don't want to
18 get ahead of the Department. I don't want to speak on
19 that position.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Cool. All
21 right, well, all right. I don't have any more
questions, and of course, I want to make sure that we
hear from those that have joined to testify.

I just want to thank both of you for all
the work that you do on this issue, and of course,

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3 retail theft is extremely complex. We have retail
4 theft challenges due to organized crime, people
5 specifically doing that to make a profit. but then we
6 have others that are using it or engaging in that due
7 to mental health issues, other needs. We need to make
8 sure we get those individuals the help they need so
9 that we can put an end to it. But two things could be
10 true at the same time. We could make sure that we
11 have programs to make sure that we resolve those
12 challenges that they have so that they don't commit
13 retail theft again. But at the same time, we could
14 make sure that we don't ignore the issue because this
15 is a problem that has real life consequences. I
16 remember when I first took office, which was in the
17 middle of the pandemic, speaking with workers from a
18 chain store. There was this young college student who
19 basically said, my first job, my first day on the
20 job, basically somebody took out a knife on her
21 because she basically started speaking with somebody
who was committing retail theft. So, this has real
life consequences. This isn't just somebody taking an
item and going away. This has real life consequences.
And, of course, workers deserve to feel safe in their

3 workplace. And, of course, generally the areas that
4 are affected are areas that are suffering from
5 challenges related to poverty. But this is basically
6 a double-edged sword. These businesses are also
7 creating jobs to help put food on the table for these
8 families that are suffering from poverty. So, it's
9 all about drawing a proper balance to make sure that
10 those that have challenges, we get them the help they
11 need. But at the same time, not create conditions and
12 ignore problems that are making poor people worse
13 off. So, I just want to thank you all for the for all
14 the work you do.

15 And I don't have any more questions. I'll
16 pass it back to the Co-Chair.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

18 SBS, I just have two quick things for
19 you. Has SBS done a cost assessment on the
20 implementation on the two bills?

21 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: A cost assessment?

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Yes.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: I think it's 11
million for the first bill, Intro. 553. It's 13.5
million for 623.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. Thank
4 you.

5 And then real quick, how many BIDs have
6 public safety programs, and how does SBS and NYPD
engage with them?

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: We engage very
8 closely with the BID network. We help oversee the
9 BIDs. We have a seat on the board of directors of
10 each of these Business Improvement Districts. I know
11 the NYPD has their own relationships, local precincts
12 up to the borough command and 1PP with business
13 improvement districts. Of the Business Improvement
14 Districts that exist, there's roughly 78. We know 37,
15 so almost half of the network, have their own public
16 safety programs. And that includes things like
17 ambassadors, public safety ambassadors that they have
either on their staff or contracted and/or things
like pedestrian plaza security cameras that they've
deployed to help keep their neighborhoods safe.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Got it.
19 Thank you.

20 Thank you both for your testimony.

21 CHIEF-OF-STAFF KHAN: Thank you so much.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: I now open
4 the hearing for public testimony.

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

9 The witness table is reserved for people
10 who wish to testify. No video recording or
11 photography is allowed from the witness table.
12 Further, members of the public may not present audio
13 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
14 transcripts of such recordings to the
15 Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

16 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
17 please fill out an appearance card with the
18 Sergeant-at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When
19 recognized, you will have three minutes to speak on
20 today's oversight hearing topic, Retail Theft, or on
21 the bills on our agenda. Intro. 553 or Intro. 623.

22 Additionally, the bills we are hearing
today aim to improve safety...

Oh, I will now turn it over to Chair
Feliz. My apologies.

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

10 For in-person panelists, please come up
11 to the table once your name has been called.

12 Now I will call our first in-person
13 panel. Matthew Barr, Kelsey Bobersky, and Frank
14 Garcia.

15 Is Matthew here? Matthew Barr.

16 Kelsey, you may begin.

17 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Thank you. Good
18 afternoon, Chairs Feliz and Thomas-Henry and
19 honorable Committee Members. My name is Kelsey Dorado
20 Bobersky, and I am the Director of State and Local
21 Government Relations for the Retail Council of New
York State. Our organization is the state's leading
trade group for the retail industry, representing
member stores in New York City and across the state,
ranging from the smallest independent merchants to

3 national and international brands. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to speak today on retail theft prevention
5 and Introductions 553 and 623.

6 Store and community safety is our
7 organization's top priority, and it has been for
8 years. Our work in this space is focused on organized
9 retail crime syndicates and those engaging in
10 habitual retail theft. This criminal activity goes
11 well beyond the obvious financial loss for retailers.
12 It is a serious issue that compromises the safety of
13 store employees and customers. At the State level, we
14 joined the Governor, the Attorney General, and
15 lawmakers in 2024 to support and advance new laws and
16 related funding to address the rise in retail theft.
17 These efforts have proven to be effective, as
18 Governor Hochul in August announced that retail theft
19 has declined across New York. In New York City, the
20 Retail Council has partnered with elected officials,
21 District Attorneys, the NYPD, businesses, and
community groups through the New York City Retail
Theft Task Force. The effective and consistent
collaboration among dozens of participants at each
meeting cannot be understated. Since the first

3 meeting at Gracie Mansion in December 2023, retail
4 theft has been added to the COMPStat report, giving
5 local businesses and communities the data necessary
6 to respond in a meaningful way. According to the most
7 recent COMPStat report on February 22nd, retail theft
8 has declined 24.2 percent since 2024. We strongly
9 encourage Mayor Mamdani to continue the work of this
10 task force with the support of the City Council. The
11 progress that has been made to date is important to
12 promote a safe and enjoyable shopping experience for
13 residents and tourists alike.

14 As it relates to the bills being heard
15 today, the Retail Council supports each bill as they
16 would offer valuable assistance to small stores
17 throughout New York City. We are more than willing to
18 partner with the City Council and designated agencies
19 to promote the programs should the bills be approved.
20 Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I
21 look forward to answering any questions you may have.

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
Kelsey. I do have a couple of questions.

KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Sure.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You
4 mentioned the Retail Task Force. Where does the
5 Retail Theft Task Force currently operate from, and
6 how can we support its continuation?

7 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: The task force
8 sat under the Department of Public Safety under the
9 former administration. We have not met thus far, so
10 its placement is in a little bit of limbo at the
11 moment. And any support in terms of, you know,
12 advocating for the task force to continue would be
13 greatly appreciated.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: And what are
15 the current trends in retail theft? Have you seen
16 them change over time, or what should a business look
17 out for?

18 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Sure. That's a
19 great question. We saw a spike, as was previously
20 mentioned, kind of post-COVID with smash and grabs
21 and organized groups going into stores. That aspect
has declined slightly. We're seeing a larger uptick
as it relates to gift card fraud, which is
essentially groups of people going in and stealing
gift cards that are unpurchased from stores, bringing

3 them to a third location, tampering with those gift
4 cards, and then bringing them back to locations. So,
5 when a consumer purchases the gift card, the funds on
6 it are immediately drained. We worked very closely
7 with Senator Krueger's office in the State Senate on
8 a bill that would address this issue. The Senate
9 approved it last year. It didn't make it in the
10 Assembly, but that's a focus for us this year.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: And what can
12 we do to further decrease the rate of retail theft?

13 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Continue the task
14 force. I really can't emphasize enough how wonderful
15 the collaboration between all the stakeholders has
16 been. All five District Attorneys participate in the
17 task force. Our organization, individual businesses,
18 Business Improvement Districts, a variety of City
19 agencies. It really is a wonderful avenue, especially
20 for small businesses, to get the resources that they
21 need and up-to-date information. Like I said, retail
theft has declined almost 25 percent since 2024. The
task force was started in December of 2023. It's
really been a phenomenal resource, and we really need
it to continue.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: And my final
4 question is can you describe the impact retail theft
5 has had on both consumers and businesses?

6 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Sure. I think
7 there's a little bit of overlap there, especially
8 when it comes to things. I know they were previously
9 mentioned, like items being locked up at stores. That
10 is not something that stores want to do.

11 Unfortunately, if there are some items that are not
12 locked up, they simply will not be there for
13 consumers to purchase. So that is a direct impact on
14 both businesses and consumers. Of course, when we
15 talk about the business impact, we cannot forget the
16 worker impact. It can be incredibly traumatic to
17 witness a retail theft event, especially if there is
18 violence associated with it. Retail is many people's
19 first jobs, so they come in at 16, 17, 18 years old
20 and experience this, and it's incredibly
21 traumatizing.

22 Additionally, from the consumer
23 perspective, I would be remiss if I didn't
24 acknowledge the consumer protection aspect of this.
25 If items are being stolen and then resold, there is a

3 concern if the packaging of those items is damaged,
4 if those items are expired or tampered with. And this
5 is especially concerning when it comes to
6 over-the-counter medications, food, personal care
7 products, and things like electronic devices. If
8 you're going to steal and sell a drill, somebody
9 could get it and the cord could be frayed. There
10 could be an issue with it that makes the product
11 unsafe. So, if consumers are going online and
12 unknowingly purchasing stolen equipment and stolen
13 products, it can be incredibly dangerous.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: One final
15 question. I know you guys have a lot of members, and
16 we've seen a lot of store closures. How much of that
17 have any of your members, if any, attributed to
18 retail theft?

19 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: It's certainly a
20 factor. I would not say that it's the sole factor in
21 store closures, but we have seen some across the
country. This is not a New York or a New York
City-specific problem, but theft is certainly a
factor when it comes to store closures.

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

3 Chair Feliz?

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah. Just one
5 brief question.

6 Thank you so much for everything that you
7 do for our small businesses and our city and state.
8 Just curious, what steps have you seen businesses
9 take to reduce these problems?

10 KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Many. I think it
11 very much depends on the individual business and what
12 is best for their store. There's no one who knows a
13 store better than the store owner and the people who
14 work in it. So, whenever we talk about preventative
15 measures or what stores should be doing, it's
16 important that we always include the flexibility for
17 stores to make those decisions for themselves and
18 what would benefit them best. That can include
19 everything from plexiglass, items being behind a
20 locked container, cameras. It really runs the gamut
21 of what is going to work best for individual stores.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right. Thank
you.

KELSEY DORADO BOBERSKY: Thank you.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Any other
4 questions?

5 Okay. Thank you.

6 Mr. Garcia.

7 FRANK GARCIA: Madam Chair, thank you for
8 having me speak. My name is Frank Garcia. I'm
9 Chairman of the National Association of Latino State
10 Chambers. I'm also the outgoing Chairman of the New
11 York State Chamber of Commerce and just became this
12 week the first President of the Multicultural
13 Business Coalition representing 80 percent of the
14 minority chambers, the Korean, the Asian. The
15 national supermarket is part of us, the Latino
16 restaurant, Francisco from the Bodega Association. I
17 know Mr. Chair Feliz knows us very well with the
18 issue of Jose Alba. He was there and helped us with
19 the issue when we dealt with the issue of one of our
20 bodegas almost losing his life and going to jail for
21 defending himself. So, this is an issue that's really
affecting our members. It hurts me to hear some of
the comments from the NYPD about the panic buttons.
You can't call the NYPD when someone's robbing you.
And so to have a panic button, and I thank our Chair

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3 who's Latino who understands the bodegas and
4 understands our community to bring that out in a
5 panic button because I know the supermarkets have
6 been very clear with him. Anthony Pena, the new
7 President, Francisco, and also the Association of
8 Bodega has been very clear they need a panic button.
9 And when all these organizations are coming together,
10 both bodegas, saying the same thing, we need to
11 listen. And so, Madam Chair, I haven't had the
12 opportunity to meet you, but it's important to give
13 us a voice. We don't have a voice right now. What's
14 going on with the federal government, normally our
15 members when they buy a bodega or restaurant or
16 supermarket, they would get funding through the SBA.
17 Now if you're a green card holder and 50 percent of
18 immigrant businesses are green card holders will not
19 be able to get loans, that means we will not be able
20 to afford cameras or anything or panic buttons.
21 Before we would have that, Jose Alba's, and you're
talking about the Arab counterparts too, that will
not be able to also afford it because they're green
card holders too. So, this is bigger than just one
minute, three minutes for me to tell you. We are

3 having a meeting with the Speaker with all 75
4 presidents, but we picked 25 to meet with the Speaker
5 at 3 o'clock where we could let you know
6 individually. A lot of Chambers didn't want to come
7 today because when you speak against SBS, you get
8 blackballed like I did. I was there supporting small
9 minority business with certification with the
10 pandemic. I've been on that board since Bill de
11 Blasio. To this day, I haven't been invited to the
12 board no more. Why? Because I've been speaking up in
13 issues like this, issue of payments for MBEs, issues
14 with certifications taking us a year and a half. For
15 SBS to be in charge of giving the cameras, I feel
16 they will only give it to those that are (TIMER
17 CHIME) influential and not those small businesses,
18 bodegas, that are risking their life and every day
19 have to deal with these issues. Thank you.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No. Thank
21 you for your testimony, and I will say you do have an
ally in me. So please, if you have any
recommendations, please continue on.

FRANK GARCIA: We have our press
conference next Friday at 10:30 with the Speaker, and

3 we'd love for you with all 70 presidents for the
4 first time coming together to deal with these issues
5 and other issues that we're facing like the loans.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. And
7 you mentioned the panic buttons. I know that SBS has
8 mentioned that over 300 have been given out.

9 FRANK GARCIA: Not our bodegas, not our
10 members.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. Okay.

12 FRANK GARCIA: I know that for a fact.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. How
14 many members do you have? We have 100,000 members
15 now, including the 35 Latino chambers that each have
16 their own group. The Bodega Association, the Bronx
17 Hispanic Chamber, the LGB Chamber, you know, we have
18 a lot of chambers that are part of us. It's 26 in
19 total, but when you get the other ethnic chambers,
20 we're another 55, including the Koreans, the Indians,
21 the Arabs. The New York Chamber, Mark Jaffe is
hosting us right now and putting us all together for
the first time.

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Out of all
these organizations that you represent, do you all

3 capture any data in terms of how many of your members
4 have gone out of business because of retail theft?

5 FRANK GARCIA: Yes. The local chambers,
6 like the supermarkets who have lobbyists and have
7 money to be able to do that, Francisco from the
8 Bodega Association has got grants to do that. They do
9 have that, and Radames has that, too. And the other
10 organizations, like the Bronx Hispanic Chamber,
11 Bishop Kirkland, who has the worldwide churches, also
12 has done her own survey. So, we do have that
13 information, Madam Chair, and we could give that to
14 you, and we could also discuss it on Tuesday if you
15 could make it at 3 o'clock, our call with the
16 Speaker.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: For clarity,
18 I have two different times. I have a 3 o'clock and a
19 10:30.

20 FRANK GARCIA: 3 o'clock is the meeting
21 with the Speaker, and the press conference is next
Friday, 10:30 in the morning. We have a private
meeting with the Speaker, and Magdalena mentioned
that she was going to invite you and Chairman Feliz
also to be part of that, and the other Latino Council

3 people to be part of that because we're going to talk
4 about issues that here we can't talk.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Okay. So, I
6 look forward to those meetings.

7 Chair Feliz.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah. Quick
9 question.

10 Just wanted to get your take on it. So,
11 we've been having the conversation about panic
12 buttons for years.

13 FRANK GARCIA: I know.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And I know people
15 have different ideas about what it means. For some
16 people it means notifying the local precinct about a
17 certain situation happening at a specific bodega, and
18 I know there was a recent program where it would
19 basically notify the local or the nearby store
20 owners. So, what's your position on the panic
21 buttons? How do you think it could be properly
implemented, and what would be a good system that
would work and would help resolve some of the safety
issues?

3 FRANK GARCIA: The panic buttons has to be
4 in different languages, the information, and whoever
5 they hired has to be sensitive. Our Korean
6 counterparts and Chinese are getting equipment they
7 don't know how to install because of language. And
8 so, we need to be sensitive to that, especially with
9 the panic buttons and working with all the ethnic
10 chambers that deal with these communities. I think
11 it's important to have an advisory board for the City
12 Council like Robert Jackson had when he was head of
13 the Committee. That way we could not depend on SBS'
14 advisory board and be able to explain these issues
15 and give you those things directly us. And there's no
16 middleman. There's no lobbyist. We could tell you
17 every two months. I know that Congresswoman Yvette, I
18 was in her thing. We've spoken many a times when we
19 had, we only speak when there's issues like Jose
20 Alba. I think we need to speak more to be able to
21 have a voice because I know with the Speaker as a
business owner and some of the Council here are
former business owners, you know the pain. Did I
answer your question?

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yes. Thank you.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you
4 both.

5 Next up, Laura Morraf, the Legal Aid
6 Society. Gina Mitchell. Alissa, my apologies, from
7 the Surveillance Technology Oversight.

8 Alissa, how do you pronounce your last
9 name?

10 ALISSA JOHNSON: Johnson.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Johnson.

12 ALISSA JOHNSON: Apologies for my
13 handwriting.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: No worries.
15 Thank you.

16 You may begin.

17 LAURA MORRAF: Thank you. I'm Laura
18 Morraf, the Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid Society's
19 Digital Forensics Unit, and I want to thank the
20 Committee Chairs and Members for the opportunity to
21 testify today in opposition to Intro. 623.

This bill will lead to increased
surveillance of New Yorkers going about their daily
lives. And while I understand the importance of
addressing retail theft, this bill is not tailored to

3 that purpose. The bill will incentivize more and more
4 businesses to set up cameras that constantly monitor
5 everything not only going on in their stores but also
6 outside on the sidewalk, on the street, anything
7 within 15 feet outside their entrance as the bill is
8 drafted. As you all know, this is a dense city.
9 Surveilling everything that's happening within 15
10 feet outside a small business is going to capture
11 everyday commutes, interactions on the sidewalk, a
12 hug, a kiss. It's also going to encompass people
13 going to a medical office, going to an Alcoholics
14 Anonymous meeting, a protest on the street. That's
15 incredibly intrusive and extending that far outside a
16 business is really not necessary to addressing retail
17 theft. The more we allow this kind of pervasive
18 surveillance in our city, the easier it is for anyone
19 with that data, whether it's a corporation or the
20 federal government that gets its hands on it, to
21 learn everything about us. We don't want to create a
trove of data that can be searched to find people who
walked into a particular clinic, who went to a
mosque, who were wearing a pride pin on the street,
who an ICE agent might think looks like an immigrant.

3 We as New Yorkers shouldn't be contributing to that
4 trove by incentivizing more and more businesses to
5 collect and retain surveillance footage of everyday
6 activities.

7 I also just want to mention I was
8 troubled by the NYPD's inability to describe how the
9 Commissioner will determine which areas are
10 considered to have high crime rates. We heard that
11 list of areas, but not the factors or the threshold
12 that would go into making that decision. The
13 reference to high rates of crime is often used as a
14 justification or pretext for discriminatory
15 surveillance that's actually based on race or
16 socioeconomic status or immigrant status. Just as one
17 example, in the Stop and Frisk program, high crime
18 rates was one of the most often cited reasons for
19 illegal stops, and that was true in areas with lower
20 crime rates.

21 I also want to highlight the concern that
while Intro. 623 doesn't expressly mention facial
recognition technology, it will inevitably lead to
increased biometric surveillance unless the Council
acts. There's another hearing on Monday on those

3 issues where I'm also planning to testify, but we
4 would just urge the Council at the Legal Aid Society
5 to pass Intro. 213, banning biometric surveillance in
6 places of public accommodation, as well as Intro.
7 428, banning biometric surveillance in residential
8 buildings, and to introduce a bill to ban the use of
9 these biometric recognition technologies by law
(TIMER CHIME) enforcement.

10 Just to briefly close on Intro. 623, we
11 need to not be defaulting to surveillance just
12 because it's possible and really listen to the needs
13 of these businesses, but because it concerns about
14 affordability and other ways of addressing retail
theft, that's not going to impose these kinds of
privacy intrusions on New Yorkers. Thank you.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

16 Next.

17 ALISSA JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chairs
and Committee Members. My name is... oh, sorry.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Sorry. Hold
19 one minute.

20 You can begin.
21

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3 ALISSA JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chairs
4 and Committee Members. My name is Alissa Johnson, and
5 I'm a Legal Fellow with the Surveillance Technology
6 Oversight Project, or STOP. STOP is a New York-based
7 civil rights and anti-surveillance group that
8 advocates and litigates against discriminatory
9 surveillance. I'd like to take this time to highlight
10 the risks posed by use of biometric surveillance
11 technologies like facial recognition, gait
12 recognition, and voice printing in retail theft
13 prevention, and urge that the introductions discussed
14 in this hearing be, at minimum, amended to explicitly
15 not fund such biometric surveillance. STOP also
16 shares the concerns expressed previously in this
17 hearing about live sharing of camera feeds with law
18 enforcement and the need for strict guardrails around
19 data collection, retention, and sharing. Biometric
20 surveillance in public spaces, including grocery
21 stores and other retail outlets, puts our privacy and
civil liberties at risk without making stores
meaningfully safer. The recent public outcry around
deployment of facial recognition technology at
Wegmans stores shows that New Yorkers strongly object

3 to being surveilled as they buy their groceries and
4 go about their day, and for good reason.

5 First, our biometrics are immutable. Once
6 a retail chain, like Wegmans, collects our face scan,
7 that data poses a persistent risk to our privacy. If
8 a person's credit information is stolen, they can
9 contact their bank and mitigate that risk by getting
10 reissued a new card, for example. But if our
11 biometric data is sold to a third party, or shared
12 with law enforcement, or stolen by a malicious cyber
13 actor, that data is compromised forever.

14 Second, biometric surveillance reinforces
15 racial and socioeconomic inequities. As the FTC found
16 in its 2023 ruling banning Rite Aid's use of facial
17 recognition technology, these tools are less accurate
18 in identifying women and people of color. Uneven
19 deployment of biometric surveillance in quote-unquote
20 high-risk, high shoplifting risk areas also
21 disproportionately targets New Yorkers at or near the
poverty line, people who may only have access to a
single grocery store and are less likely to be able
to access alternatives such as online shopping, as

3 they may not be banked or have access to a permanent
4 address.

5 And third, getting flagged by a biometric
6 surveillance system can have devastating
7 consequences. Ranging from embarrassment and
8 harassment to outright denial of service. Even if
9 such technologies were completely accurate, they
10 impose disproportionate penalties for minor property
11 crimes and extend the long arm of the criminal
12 justice system. All of us deserve to buy food without
13 being tracked every moment by New York's sprawling
14 surveillance dragnet. And shoplifting once, as an
15 18-year-old, shouldn't prevent someone from buying
16 food, or going to a concert, or entering their own
17 apartment building.

18 For these reasons, STOP urges the City
19 Council to amend these introductions to explicitly
20 exclude funding for security systems implementing
21 biometric surveillance tools, included but not
limited to face, gait, and voice recognition.

Additionally, in order to protect New
Yorkers' privacy at this critical time, when ICE
agents are kidnapping immigrant families outside of

3 schools and grocery stores, and our federal
4 government has demonstrated the desire and capacity
5 to retaliate against protesters for constitutionally
6 protected speech, we also ask the City Council to
7 urge State Legislators to pass several bills aimed at
8 prohibiting the use of biometric surveillance
9 throughout the public sphere. S-5609, to ban the use
10 of biometric surveillance by (TIMER CHIME) law
11 enforcement; S-2478, to prohibit face surveillance by
12 landlords on any residential premises; S-7135, to ban
13 biometric surveillance in places of public
14 accommodation; and S-3827, to prohibit biometric
15 surveillance in schools.

16 Thank you for your time and the
17 opportunity to testify today.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

19 Next.

20 GINA MITCHELL: Good afternoon. Thank you
21 to the Committees on Public Safety and Small
Business, and Chairs Feliz and Thomas-Henry for the
opportunity to testify today. My name is Gina
Mitchell. I'm the Attorney-in-Charge of Law Reform
and Policy at Brooklyn Defender Services in the

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3 Queen's office. As public defenders, we routinely see
4 the people we represent being arrested for taking
5 food items, deodorant, toothbrushes, diapers, other
6 basic necessities. While the media has
7 sensationalized this issue, the vast majority of
8 people arrested for retail theft are living in
9 poverty and navigating complex issues, including
10 serious mental illnesses, substance abuse problems
11 and chronic housing instability. These problems
12 demand nuanced and holistic solutions. In Queens and
13 Brooklyn, we routinely see the issuing of trespass
14 notices to people because they've been arrested for
15 shoplifting or petty larceny. This means, as we've
16 heard today, that if a person just enters a location
17 where they were previously arrested for retail theft,
18 even if it's because they can't afford food, they may
19 face felony charges. For example, we represent one
20 person who is chronically unhoused, navigating a
21 complex physical illness and serious mental health
concerns. She was arrested for taking hygiene items
from a store and given one of these trespass notices.
A few months later, she was arrested again for taking
basic necessities. While she urgently needs

3 supportive housing and access to healthcare, she is
4 now facing a prison sentence and the collateral
5 consequences of criminal legal system involvement.

6 We respectfully oppose Intro. 553 and
7 Intro. 623, which would increase community
8 surveillance and collaboration with the NYPD. These
9 systems do not address the social issues and the
10 affordability crisis in the city that leads to the
11 vast majority of these cases. Instead, NYPD cameras
12 means communities that are already heavily policed
13 will have more data entered into NYPD's surveillance
14 matrix, and I share the concerns of my colleagues on
15 this panel. We recognize the need to support small
16 businesses, and we urge the City to invest in
17 services that meet the needs of people in our
18 communities, rather than expanding reliance on
19 policing, surveillance, and criminalization to solve
20 these issues. We are urging you to look to real
21 solutions, such as streamlining access to benefits so
people can get the support to meet their basic needs,
increasing job training programs and employment
opportunities, particularly for young people, and
pass a resolution in support of the New York State

3 Treatment Court Expansion Act, which will enable
4 people to get access to critical mental health and
5 substance use treatment.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to testify,
7 and I welcome any questions.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Can you
9 repeat that last recommendation, the New York State?

10 GINA MITCHELL: To pass a resolution in
11 support of the New York State Treatment Court
12 Expansion Act, which is a bill that will enable
13 people to get access to critical mental health and
14 substance use treatment.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

16 You brought up a great point, and you
17 gave some recommendations. That was going to be my
18 question, in terms of how to alleviate increased
19 retail theft for those who are in need, most
20 specifically. Of everyone who has just testified, are
21 there any other recommendations that we can do as a
Council to help those individuals specifically?

GINA MITCHELL: Your Honor, we'll
certainly address that in more detail in our written
testimony. We need programs that address the nuanced

3 needs of our clients. There is a paucity and a lack
4 of availability of suitable programs that are truly
5 clinical, therapeutic, and community-based. Often,
6 prosecutors are gatekeepers, and this can result in
7 increased criminalization, increased trends towards
8 enforcement, penalization, and higher jail sentences.
9 We definitely need more access to programs that are
10 truly tailored to helping our clients.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: In your
12 opinion, in the meantime, how do we also protect the
13 business owners who are victims of the retail theft
14 crimes?

15 GINA MITCHELL: In my opinion, the
16 majority of clients that I work with are experiencing
17 a complex range of needs. I truly think that we need
18 to treat them as people. We've heard a lot of
19 discussion today about numbers, and we really need to
20 bring this back to the people who are involved. We
21 are not going to police our way out of this. We're
not going to surveil our way out of this. We need to
actually address the problems that people and New
Yorkers are facing in their lives.

3 LAURA MORRAF: I do fully agree with that.
4 I will just add that in the particular context of
5 retail theft, I think it's telling that while this
6 bill, the Intro. 623, does mention plexiglass briefly
7 and also sort of vaguely refers to other methods, a
8 lot of the focus is on surveillance cameras because
9 that's what's in the bill, and that's what's easy to
10 put up and implement, especially for the NYPD who's
11 not actually doing it but then can later use that
12 footage to arrest our clients. I think thinking about
13 the actual problem of retail theft, all of the other
14 ways that the problem could be addressed in ways that
15 would also actually help the small businesses with
16 the affordability crisis, funding to hire more
17 employees who can help in all ways with the store,
18 including monitoring what's going on to some extent,
19 things that don't involve a camera that someone is
20 then either going to be monitoring in real time or
21 afterwards laying over the spatial recognition
technology on top of it. I think there are many more
ways to think about layouts of the stores, all
different ways of arranging things that don't involve
this type of surveillance.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: And do you
4 guys keep stats on clients who are arrested for
5 retail theft based on needs versus just kids being
6 kids or large racket retail theft operations?

7 GINA MITCHELL: Our office does not.
8 However, anecdotally, the professional experience of
9 attorneys in my office is that the vast majority of
10 cases do not fall into the category of these complex
11 organized criminal enterprises, and the majority of
12 anecdotal cases that were reported to me from
13 attorneys who in particular have had clients issue
14 the trespass notices related to people with the sorts
15 of complex needs that we've been discussing.

16 LAURA MORRAF: I also do not have that
17 information. I'll just mention that one of the other
18 issues with Intro. 623 is that it has that language
19 of crimes associated with retail theft without really
20 explaining what that means. We heard a list of crimes
21 that are sort of most often linked to that, but I
think it's another way that the discretion to
implement this program is really broad in the bill
and concerning just given all the ways that it could

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3 be weaponized and placed into communities of color,
4 low-income communities, immigrant communities.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

6 Chair Feliz. Anything?

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: No questions.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you,
9 panel.

10 We will now turn to virtual panelists.

11 For virtual panelists, once your name is called, a
12 Member of our Staff will unmute you, and the
13 Sergeant-at-Arms will set the timer and give you the
14 go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to
15 announce that you may begin before delivering your
16 testimony.

17 Now, I will call our first virtual
18 panelist. We have Pedro Suarez and Tonisha Hurd in
19 that order.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Pedro, you
may begin.

PEDRO SUAREZ: Thank you. My name is Pedro
Suarez, the Executive Director of the Third Avenue
Business Improvement District in the South Bronx

3 neighborhoods of Melrose and Mott Haven. We are one
4 of the city's oldest and most heavily trafficked
5 commercial districts.

6 Regarding retail theft, I have observed
7 too many incidents in the South Bronx go unreported
8 because business owners, employees, and the general
9 public seriously doubt whether individuals will be
10 held accountable. We work closely with the 40th
11 precinct to facilitate stronger relationships between
12 local businesses and law enforcement. Last year, we
13 worked closely with retailers like the Children's
14 Place to ensure that security camera footage and
15 details were shared with NYPD, which provided
16 sufficient evidence to hold the offender accountable.
17 Much of the retail theft that occurs on Third Avenue
18 connects with substance abuse and mental health
19 issues. Some individuals struggling with severe
20 issues sometimes resort to retail theft to fund their
21 addiction, repay informal debts, or as a cry for
help. It is an unfortunate reality. The BID is
installing additional security cameras to increase
safety in the district because it is a known
effective strategy for catching offenders around

3 various crimes. Last year, for example, video footage
4 obtained from a local business helped apprehend a
5 suspect who sexually assaulted another individual. We
6 must be able to view these issues through multiple
7 lens. While security cameras are not the only
8 strategy, we cannot ignore that businesses in many
9 low-income neighborhoods do not leverage security
10 camera footage consistently. These are tools that are
11 underutilized by businesses in the South Bronx, and
12 we must be able to navigate a delicate balance
13 between security and privacy. Small businesses in
14 high-crime areas are reaching their breaking point.
15 They are frustrated that retail theft is not taking
16 as seriously as it should be, forcing business owners
17 to eat the losses. Communities like the South Bronx
18 lose shoppers when they witness shoplifting or when
19 merchandise is inconveniently locked away. We can do
20 better. City officials seeking additional data should
21 engage with industry associations like the National
Retail Federation, which released a report last year
on retail theft.

In closing, while I agree that retail
theft often stems from larger issues, that shouldn't

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3 prevent us from taking reasonable precautions. We
4 live in an increasingly digital world, which demands
5 that we work to improve digital security rather than
6 avoid it altogether. Thank you for your time on this
7 critical issue.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you.

9 Next up, we'll have Tonisha Hurd.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You may
12 begin.

13 TONISHA HURD: Good afternoon, and thank
14 you so much to Chair Feliz and Chair Thomas-Henry and
15 to the Members of the Committee on Public Safety and
16 Small Business. My name is Tonisha Hurd, and I am
17 representing Lisa Sorin, President of the Bronx
18 Chamber of Commerce. We serve as the primary advocate
19 for thousands of entrepreneurs who keep the Bronx
20 moving, many of whom are first-generation owners
21 operating on the front lines of our local economy.

Today, our small businesses are facing a
perfect storm, where they are battling tight margins
while simultaneously acting as the primary targets of
organized retail theft. For a small mom-and-pop shop

3 in the Bronx, the cost of a single major theft or
4 high price of a modern security system isn't just a
5 line item. It's a threat to their survival. And the
6 Bronx Chamber of Commerce fully supports Intro. 553
7 and Intro. 623 because they offer practical and
8 immediate relief.

9 Intro. 553 bridges the affordability gap.
10 It provides the financial assistance necessary for
11 owners to install high-quality cameras and protective
12 barriers and security measures that should be
13 standard and not a luxury.

14 Intro. 623 is equally vital because it
15 creates a targeted pilot program in high-theft areas.
16 The City is ensuring that resources reach the most
17 vulnerable corridors first. We particularly value
18 that data reporting requirement, which will prove
19 exactly how these investments stabilize our
20 neighborhoods. When we protect a storefront in the
21 Bronx, we are not just protecting inventory. We are
protecting jobs, families, and the safety of the
residents who shop there. These bills move us from
reactive policing to proactive prevention.

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3 So, on behalf of the Bronx Chamber of
4 Commerce, I urge the Council to pass both Intro. 553
5 and 623, and thank you all for your leadership on
6 this issue and for the opportunity to testify.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Thank you
8 for your testimony.

9 Last, we have Christopher Leon Johnson.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: You may
12 begin.

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello. My name
14 is Christopher Leon Johnson. I support both bills.
15 But City Council, this is the problem with retail
16 theft, is that the majority of the people that commit
17 these retail thefts are African-American, and we got
18 the Working Families Party and many other
19 organizations like CCA in Brooklyn, New York, and a
20 lot of these non-profits that will be opposed to
21 these bills because they need these people out there
to commit these crimes because that's how they
justify doing these little crappy rallies and press
conferences and saying that, oh, we need to increase
bail reform and increase to where people can commit

3 crimes as much as possible and go with straight
4 impunity. I believe that the City Council, I think
5 that the problem is like preventing the State is that
6 the State Assembly is really captive to the Working
7 Families Party that supports this stuff, that
8 supports the crime. I appreciate Louis and Banks for
9 introducing the 623 because they know who's really
10 committing these crimes in the city when it comes to
11 retail theft. Like I said, there's many, many Black
12 people. I'm Black. I can say that. And what happens
13 is that these small business owners, they get hurt.
14 They get hurt daily. If they lose one thing, that
15 could really shut down their business. I know that
16 the City Council, like you, Ms. Henry, and Mr. Feliz,
17 cares about this stuff, but you guys are in the
18 minority when it comes to the mass majority, when it
19 comes to a progressive caucus. The progressive caucus
20 will be the main adversaries of making sure that
21 these bills don't go through.

18 I'll make this clear that when it comes
19 to panic buttons, it's really needed. We need those
20 panic buttons in these stores. When it comes to
21 cameras, we need these cameras, and especially these

3 small stores. I think that the cameras should be
4 prioritized to every small independent mom-and-pop
5 grocery store and mom-and-pop retail business.

6 But the problem, like I said, of course,
7 the Legal Aid Society, the Brooklyn Defenders, and
8 all these, STOP, they'll be against it because if you
9 get arrested for shoplifting, if there's no cameras,
10 and everybody knows about discovery, if there's no
11 cameras with discovery, the case gets dropped. So, of
12 course, they're going to be opposed to cameras
13 because if they get a client, they know that the way
14 that a case can get dropped is by having no cameras
15 because they know that these days when it comes to
16 eyewitnesses, they could be discredited. They on
17 psychosis pills or they take a certain medication or
18 they got a language barrier, they could easily be
19 discredited. But like I said, I heard the testimony
20 from the Bodega's people, and I hope on Tuesday and
21 Friday they call out the real reason this stuff is
happening because of a certain demographic that is
doing these retail crimes and the Working Families
Party and the progressives and the socialists, their
supporters. And I'm going to say this right now, that

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3 our Mayor, Zohran Mamdani, once infamously said that
4 crime is a social construct. So, of course, he's
5 going to be, if this bill ever gets to the floor, to
6 the Mayor's desk, he's going to veto it. He wants
7 this to keep on happening because it justifies the
8 budgets of the NYPD. He's in hot water with Jessica
9 Tisch, and he had to justify it. He would (TIMER
10 CHIME) say, oh, this is not, we can't afford it...

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

12 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Well, if they
13 could afford giving 50 million dollars to the
14 deliveristas...

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Mr. Johnson,
16 thank you.

17 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: He can give 50
18 million dollars to the...

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Your time
20 has expired.

21 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: To the... to
these corrupt...

CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Mr. Johnson.
Mr. Johnson.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah.

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3 CO-CHAIRPERSON THOMAS-HENRY: Your time
4 has expired, but thank you for your testimony.

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

7 If we inadvertently missed anyone who
8 would like to testify in person, please visit the
9 Sergeant's table and complete a witness slip now. If
10 we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to
11 testify virtually, please use the raised hand
12 function in Zoom, and a Member of our Staff will call
13 you in the order your hand is raised.

14 I will now read the names of those who
15 registered to testify, but have not yet filled out a
16 witness slip or appeared on Zoom. Kenesha Washington,
17 are you with us? Jessica Walker?

18 Okay. Seeing no one else, I would like to
19 note again that written testimony, which will be
20 reviewed in full by our Committee Staff, may be
21 submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the
close of this hearing by emailing it to
testimony@council.nyc.gov. This hearing is hereby
adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 31, 2026