

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

----- X

June 11, 2024
Start: 10:19 a.m.
Recess: 3:09 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Alexa Avilés, Chairperson of
Committee on Immigration

Oswald Feliz, Chairperson of
Committee on Small Business

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION:

Erik D. Bottcher
Gale A. Brewer
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Shahana Hanif
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS:

Erik D. Bottcher
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Shekar Krishnan
Vickie Paladino
Sandra Ung

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

2

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
(CONTINUED) :

Susan Zhuang

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Joann Ariola

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

3

A P P E A R A N C E S

Dynishal Gross, Executive Deputy Commissioner of
the New York City Department of Small Business
Services

Yurij Pawluk, Deputy Commissioner, Workforce
Development Division, of the New York City
Department of Small Business Services

Lorena Lucero, Chief Policy Advisor at the
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Tom Tortorici, Executive Director of Legal and
Support Initiatives at the Mayor's Office of
Immigrant Affairs

Masha Gindler, Executive Director, Asylum
Application Help Center at the Mayor's Office of
Asylum Seeker Operations

Grace Riddick, Executive Director of Workforce,
Diversion, and Exit Strategies at the Mayor's
Office of Asylum Seeker Operations

Magdalena Toapanta, Workers Justice Project

Maria Guzman, Workers Justice Project

Maria Luisa Serrano, Workers Justice Project

Ligia Guallpa, Workers Justice Project

Sheike Ward, Political Organizer for 1199SEIU

Yesenia Mata, Executive Director at La Colmena

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

4

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

Darly Corniel, Director of Education at the
Consortium for Worker Education

Eethio Thomopoulos, Hot Bread Kitchen

Dorian Block, Senior Editor at the Center for an
Urban Future

Jade Vasquez, Director of Policy and Research at
Women In Need

Andrew Santa Ana, Deputy Director of Research and
Policy at the Asian American Federation

Fatoumata Batouly Diallo, African Communities
Together

Dinah Foley, Social Worker in the Immigration
Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services

Elizabeth Bird, Director of Public Policy at
Educational Alliance

Dmitri Daniel Glinski, President and CEO of
Russian-speaking Community Council

Sharon Brown, Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Dinick Martinez, self

Gregory Morris, NYC Employment and Training
Coalition

Hildalyn Colon, Executive Director of NICE

1
2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Immigration, joined with
4 Small Business. Today's date is June 11, 2024,
5 located in the Chambers. Recording is done by Rocco
6 Mesiti.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
8 welcome to a New York City Council hearing on
9 immigration joint with Small Business in the Council
10 Chambers.

11 At this time, please silence all
12 electronic devices.

13 If you wish to testify, you may do so at
14 the Sergeant's desk in the back of the room.

15 No one is allowed to approach the dais at
16 any moment. If you need anything, please see one of
17 the Sergeants.

18 At this time, Chair, we are ready to
19 begin.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [GAVEL] This
21 meeting is called to order. Good morning, everyone.
22 There is interpretation available for anyone needing
23 interpretation. We have interpretation available in
24 Spanish, Wolof, and Haitian Creole, and you can get
25 support outside the Chamber at the Sergeant's desk.

1
2 Good morning. I am Council Member Alexa
3 Avilés, Chair of the Committee on Immigration. Thank
4 you for coming to today's joint hearing with the
5 Committee on Small Business. We will be examining the
6 important issue of preparing asylum seekers and
7 migrants for the workforce. Thank you to Council
8 Member Feliz, Chair of the Committee on Small
9 Business, for Co-Chairing this timely hearing. I'd
10 also like to thank the representatives from the
11 Administration, members of the public, and my
12 Committee Colleagues who have joined us here today.
13 We are joined by Council Member Brewer, Council
14 Member Zhuang, Council Member Ung, and the Public
15 Advocate.

16 The significance of immigrants in the
17 workforce cannot be understated. According to the
18 American Immigration Council in the New York State,
19 immigrants make up over 27 percent of the workforce,
20 despite only making up less than 23 percent of the
21 population. In New York City, roughly 1.8 million
22 immigrants make up 44 percent of the City's total
23 labor force and contribute 18.6 billion dollars to
24 Social Security and 5.3 billion dollars to Medicare.
25 However, accessing the workforce can be complicated

1 for immigrant workers, especially for those who are
2 undocumented. Under the Office of Asylum Seeker
3 Operations, or OASO, the Asylum Application Help
4 Center has focused efforts on work permits. According
5 to updates from City Hall, between June 2023 and
6 March 2024, the Center has completed over 15,000 work
7 authorization applications, but how many people have
8 secured jobs is less clear. The federal government's
9 arbitrary timelines for submitting work authorization
10 applications, which for asylum-seeking applicants is
11 six months after asylum application is submitted,
12 coupled with a growing backlog of work authorization
13 applications, contribute to significant delays in the
14 issuance of work permits. Additionally, the City's
15 introduction of the 30- and 60-day shelter limit
16 stays for recently arrived immigrant newcomers
17 severely complicates access to work permits. The
18 Independent Budget Office recently estimated that the
19 economic impact of missed work authorization because
20 of the 30- and 60-day shelter limit rules could be up
21 to 1 billion dollars. The lack of a stable address
22 makes it difficult to receive work permits and
23 jeopardizes employment stability and quality of life
24 for new arrivals. A sounder approach is possible, and
25

1 we have much infrastructure in place, and indeed
2 there is already in place under U.S. municipalities,
3 such as Denver, which has a program that recognizes
4 housing stability as crucial to integrating new
5 arrivals into the local economy and provides
6 participants with housing for six months. The program
7 also provides career support, language classes, and
8 legal services during that timeframe. These holistic
9 considerations demonstrate the types of investments
10 necessary to prepare asylum seekers and migrants for
11 the workforce. Preparing new arrivals for the
12 workforce can include resources like OSHA
13 certification, English language classes, digital and
14 financial literacy, licensing, and understanding your
15 rights in the workplace. In New York City, these
16 resources have typically been spread across multiple
17 City agencies. This makes it difficult to identify
18 gaps in services, adequately prepare new arrivals for
19 the workforce, and establish concerted effort to
20 improve workforce development in the city, and it
21 complicates collaboration between workforce
22 development providers and City agencies. However,
23 non-profit providers have been leaders in New York
24 City in providing workforce training for new arrivals
25

1 for decades. We have expertise in our city. Their
2 programming makes it clear they recognize that
3 workforce development is more than just providing a
4 worker for a workplace. I'm incredibly grateful to
5 their work and dedication in supporting our new
6 arrivals and entire immigrant community. The City
7 must look to and invest in the vast expertise of our
8 non-profit providers of workforce development. We
9 must leverage tools like deferred action to combat
10 workplace exploitation and adopt other models like
11 the ones in Denver to build and help us help
12 immigrant workers. We look forward to hearing from
13 agencies today and hope that the Mayor's Office of
14 Immigrant Affairs and the Office of Asylum Seeker
15 Operations can share details about workforce
16 development resources available to immigrants and how
17 the Administration can collaborate more effectively
18 with non-profit agencies across the city as well as
19 our colleagues at the city, state, and federal
20 levels. We must and can rationalize our system when
21 we need, use our vast expertise that we currently
22 have, and lastly, invest our dollars in ensuring that
23 the pathways to opportunity are strengthened and made
24 accessible. One thing we know to be true is that when
25

1 the people in our city succeed, we as a City succeed.
2 We know that our longstanding immigrant community
3 members and new arrivals play a particularly
4 important role in boosting our economy and supporting
5 our labor force. Our great city is great because of
6 this history, which has been demonstrated over and
7 over and over again. When you welcome people and
8 ensure that they have access to the resources that
9 they need to thrive, they contribute amazing things.
10 This is a foundational American value that I am
11 deeply proud of and will continue to affirm and make
12 sure our City stands by.

14 The Committee on Immigration will also
15 hear the following legislation. Introduction 216 from
16 Council Member Hanif, which embraces, which enhances
17 the IDNYC application process would be key to
18 improving access to IDNYC for new arrivals, and
19 access to government ID is important for new arrivals
20 for a number of reasons, including improving
21 relationships between immigrant communities and City
22 agencies and accessing City services and financial
23 services.

We will be hearing Resolution 230 from Council Member Brewer, which calls for the USCIS to grant humanitarian parole to new arrivals.

We will also hear Resolution 235 from Council Member Brewer, which calls on USCIS to clear the significant backlog of employment authorization applications, and Pre-Considered Resolution from Council Member Hudson on the State to Pass Empire State Licensing Act, which would open professional licensing to all New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status.

These bills reflect the changes needed at the local, state, and federal level to begin ensuring that immigrants in New York City have access to and are adequately prepared for the workforce. I'm grateful to the sponsors of these bills and look forward to hearing more from them on how their legislation benefits our immigrant community and our city as a whole.

I would also like to thank Committee Staff for their work on this hearing, including Nicole Catá, Rebecca Barilla, Florentine Kabore, Nia Hyatt, and lastly, my Staff, Chief-of-Staff Edward Cerna, Christina Bottego, Amarachi Ngadi, and Emmett

3 Teran, and everyone who is working so hard to ensure
4 that this meeting runs smoothly today.

5 I will now turn it over to our Small
6 Business Committee Chair, Council Member Feliz, for
7 his opening statement.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you, Chair
9 Avilés. Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to be
10 here with you today.

11 I'm Council Member Oswald Feliz, the
12 Chair on the Committee on Small Business. Thank you,
13 Chair Avilés, for co-organizing today's important
14 hearing, and to all of you for joining us.

15 On the migrant crisis, many things are
16 true. Number one, we are two years into the crisis.
17 By now, we should have good systems, systems that
18 would ensure that applications, for example, work
19 permit applications, TPS asylum applications, are
20 timely submitted without delays. That's number one.

21 Number two, also true, the federal
22 government's failure to give this issue the attention
23 that it needs and deserves has frustrated our ability
24 to help these asylum seekers every way possible. For
25 example, their failure to expedite work permits,
frustrating our ability to ensure that they could

1 achieve financial stability as soon as possible.

2 Frustrated our ability to the detriment of not only

3 migrants, but also to the detriment of our city. We

4 know of the labor shortage. We know of our City

5 agencies needing workers but, even in the private

6 industry, last week, I spoke with a large private

7 employer in the food industry who said they have over

8 2,000 jobs, over 2,000 jobs that they could easily

9 and quickly fill with migrants, which includes also

10 training as well and language and so much more, but

11 they're not able to do so due to the lack of work

12 permits. The migrants are here. They want to work.

13 The jobs are there, and we told them to wait 6, 12,

14 or even more months due to the federal rules and

15 regulations related to work permits.

16 Our diverse immigrant communities make

17 New York City a richer, more vibrant place in

18 countless ways, and it is important for the City to

19 both celebrate and support these immense cultural and

20 economic contributions. Immigrant New Yorkers make

21 outsized contributions to the economic health of the

22 city. For example, the State Comptroller estimates

23 that immigrants contributed almost 383 billion

24 dollars to the City's economy in 2022, and that they

25

1
2 comprise over 60 percent of the formal workforce.
3 They also create thousands of new jobs by starting
4 their own business at more than twice the rate of
5 native-born New Yorkers. In fact, almost half of the
6 city's small businesses are immigrant-owned, a total
7 of over 100,000 local businesses. We see these
8 critical contributions across economic sectors from
9 construction, transportation, and manufacturing to
10 healthcare, human services, and the city's world-
11 famous hospitality industry.

12 Immigrants accomplish all of this in
13 spite of large bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the
14 federal immigration system. In the last decade, we've
15 seen the size of the New York City's immigrant
16 workforce stagnate, in part because of the
17 restrictive federal immigration laws and policies
18 that have not been meaningfully updated in many
19 decades. Many businesses around the city are
20 struggling to find good employees and are excited to
21 connect with the newly arrived immigrants who are
22 seeking work. At the same time, as my Co-Chair
23 highlighted, many of our newest New Yorkers face an
24 uphill battle to file confusing, complex forms that
25 must wait months, sometimes years, to receive the

work authorization that many are entitled to by law.

While the City can't change federal law, we're committed to helping immigrant New Yorkers to navigate these hurdles as smoothly as possible. The Department of Small Business Services, SBS, has a critical role to play in this effort. In December 2023, SBS introduced a new program, the American Dream Works program, designed to connect businesses with work-authorized asylum seekers through SBS' Workforce One Career Centers. SBS' 18 Workforce One Career Centers offer free support to all New Yorkers in finding jobs, including through information about job fairs, financial counseling, interview prep, and resources to pay for necessary job trainings. SBS offers some translation and interpretation services as required by Local Law 30 of 2017, also known as the Language Access Law. However, we know that in the absence of a multilingual core staff, language services can be inefficient or inadequate to address real-time needs.

These programs are a good starting place. However, they address only one stage of finding work. This is especially true for New Yorkers who have only recently arrived or who are navigating the asylum

1 process and must go through numerous onerous
2 application processes before they can even start the
3 job search. For example, while many immigrants are
4 highly educated and experienced in their home
5 countries, they may need to secure new
6 certifications, licenses, or even trainings in order
7 to practice their professions in the state of New
8 York. At the same time, much of this information may
9 only be available in English, even for careers that
10 don't require advanced English language skills. For
11 example, required health and safety classes from the
12 Occupational Safety and Health Administration, aka
13 OSHA, can cost upwards of 500 dollars and are subject
14 to lengthy waitlists and are often unavailable in
15 many of the most common languages, such as French,
16 Arabic, just to name two. Nearly half of New Yorkers
17 speak a language other than the English language at
18 home, including over 550,000 French and Arabic
19 speakers. This gap between services offered and the
20 real needs of New Yorkers is unacceptable.

21
22 We call on the federal government to do
23 better. At the same time, the City must keep working
24 to make our programs maximally effective, responsive
25 to people's real needs, and accessible to all New

1
2 Yorkers. Today, we look forward to hearing from the
3 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Office of
4 Asylum Seeker Operations and, of course, the
5 Department of Small Business Services on how the City
6 is coordinating support services for asylum seekers
7 and other new migrants who are navigating the complex
8 pathways to U.S. work authorization for the first
9 time.

10 Last but not least, before we begin, I
11 want to thank, of course, my Co-Chair, Alexa Avilés.
12 I also want to thank Rebecca Barilla and Jessica
13 Boulet from Central Staff for their work in putting
14 this together. I also want to thank my staffers who
15 have joined us, including Santiago and Nicole. Thank
16 you for joining us.

17 Before we hear from the agencies, I would
18 like to first pass it on to Council Member Gale
19 Brewer who has the bill before this hearing.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
21 much. I have two Resolutions, and I really thank both
22 Chairs for hearing them. 230 calls on the U.S.
23 Citizen and Immigration Services and the Secretary of
24 Homeland Security to grant humanitarian parole of at
25 least two years to asylum seekers who entered the

1 United States prior to the date this parole is
2 announced, and 235, it's a resolution, calls on the
3 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to clear
4 the backlog of I-765 applications for employment
5 authorizations. I don't need to tell anyone in this
6 audience that thousands of migrants in New York City
7 want and need to work but very few have been approved
8 so far. No work means no money. No money means no way
9 to afford an apartment or groceries. No apartment or
10 groceries means full dependence on City human
11 services and non-profit organizations as great as
12 they are. Full dependence on human services and non-
13 profits means a heavy strain on the City budget and
14 on the migrants' dignity and mobility. Humanitarian
15 parole provides temporary lawful status in the United
16 States while cases are adjudicated and allows
17 migrants to secure work authorization within five to
18 ten months. There are 1.4 million pending I-765
19 applications in the United States and, for God's
20 sake, the most important thing we can do is give
21 people the opportunity to work. Thank you very much.

22
23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,
24 Council Member Brewer.

1
2 Also want to acknowledge Natalia from my
3 team, an intern with our office. Thank you for
4 joining us.

5 Also want to acknowledge some of our
6 Colleagues who have joined, including Council Member
7 Krishnan and Bottcher.

8 Before we hear from the Admin, I would
9 like to pass it on to the Public Advocate of the City
10 of New York, Jumaane Williams.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
12 much, Mr. Chair.

13 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane
14 Williams, Public Advocate of the City of New York.
15 Thank you, Chair Avilés, Chair Feliz, and Members of
16 the Committees on Immigration and Small Business for
17 holding this hearing and for allowing me to share my
18 statement.

19 We have heard time and time again that
20 all our newest neighbors wish to do is find work,
21 become self-sufficient, and support their families.
22 For many immigrant families, this story is very
23 familiar, the story of arriving in a new country,
24 seeking better opportunities. With over 200,000
25 migrants and asylum seekers that have come through

1 the City's care since spring of 2002, New York City
2 is in the position to set up our newcomers as well as
3 our existing immigrant communities with the best
4 chances of success in finding dignified work and
5 opportunities. What we are seeing now is the latest
6 example of a long history of immigration into our
7 city, into our country, and a pattern of global
8 migratory patterns based on violence, war, and
9 climate change.
10

11 We also know that New York City can't do
12 this by itself, unfortunately, based on the lack of
13 the required resources of funding from the federal
14 government, from the state government, and even a
15 good decompression strategy in the federal system and
16 the state system. We get a different message, but I
17 think we can do more to step up to the plate.

18 One of the first steps begins with
19 identification. Since its launch in 2015, IDNYC has
20 become the largest municipal ID program in the United
21 States and is open to all New Yorkers regardless of
22 immigration status. The ID enables access to City
23 services and programs, serves as proof of
24 identification at the City level, may be used for
25 healthcare access and banking at certain institutions

1 among an array of benefits. As a result, many
2 migrants have come to see IDNYC as a necessary
3 document to obtain, especially those lacking
4 government-issued identification. That being said,
5 the City has struggled to keep up with the growing
6 demand for IDNYC applications. Since 2020, many
7 enrollment centers across the city have closed down,
8 leaving just 10 sites remaining, with one in the
9 Bronx and Staten Island each. Intro 216, of which I
10 am a co-sponsor, aims to address the difficulties in
11 obtaining a City ID. One of the components of the
12 bill addresses the expansion of in-person application
13 appointments to match demand. At its peak, the city
14 had 29 IDNYC enrollment sites across libraries, non-
15 profits, and hospitals, vital locations where
16 individuals seek services and frequent. We should
17 seek to have that level of access once again.

18
19 In addition, one of the ongoing hurdles
20 for migrants is work authorization, which is in the
21 federal government. Although the City is not issuing
22 authority for work permits, it can at least develop
23 and expand workforce development programs and prepare
24 the upcoming members of the labor force. I just want
25 to make a note that these jobs are not taking away

1 from long-term New Yorkers or long-term Americans.
2 They are jobs that are available and have been
3 available that employers simply cannot fill. It is
4 important to say that. Worker centers have for years
5 trained immigrant communities to obtain their
6 workplace safety certifications, like OSHA and SST,
7 and many report that demand exceeds capacity. The
8 City should be embracing these programs and providing
9 resources, including funding to sustain them. The
10 same applies to adult literacy programs across the
11 city, which include those with limited English
12 proficiency. Possessing English proficiency leads to
13 greater outcomes in the type of work opportunities
14 made available or in one's earning potential. The
15 City would be remiss if it did not fortify the
16 continuity of these programs as well.

18 We understand that New York City is a
19 city of immigrants. It is synonymous. We continue to
20 rely on its immigrant-heavy workforce across a
21 variety of sectors. Also, to be clear, that is
22 undocumented or documented workforce. Our city's
23 economy would simply collapse if we lost any one of
24 them, particularly undocumented, which is ripe for
25

1 abuse because of the need of their labor and
2 inability to provide the protections that are needed.

3
4 Studies also show that immigrants drive
5 workforce growth and benefit the economy. It would be
6 a major disservice to New Yorkers, both newly arrived
7 and those who have been here, to miss out on an
8 opportunity to develop, train, and prepare the newest
9 members of our workforce. Thank you.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much,
11 Public Advocate.

12 Now we'll turn it over to the Committee
13 Counsel to administer the oath.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
15 Avilés.

16 We will now hear testimony from the
17 Administration. We'll hear from Yurij Pawluk,
18 Dynishal Gross, Lorena Lucero, Tom Tortorici, Grace
19 Riddick, and Masha Gindler.

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

22 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
23 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
24 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
25 questions?

ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
begin when ready.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Good
morning. Good morning, Chair Avilés, Chair Feliz, and
Members of the Committees on Immigration and Small
Business, and to our Public Advocate as well. My name
is Dynishal Gross, and I'm the Executive Deputy
Commissioner of the Department of Small Business
Services. I am joined by Lorena Lucero from the
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and Masha
Gindler and Grace Riddick from the Mayor's Office of
Asylum Seeker Operations. I'm also joined by SBS
Deputy Commissioner Yuriy Pawluk. We are pleased to
be here today to discuss how asylum seekers access
and benefit from our Workforce One Career Center
system.

SBS's mission is to create economic
security for all New Yorkers by connecting them to
good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building
thriving neighborhoods. We are proud to have played a
critical role in New York City's historic economic
recovery, from reforming over 100 City regulations
impacting small businesses to facilitating over 265

million dollars in grants and loans to businesses.

Just two weeks ago, we capped off New York City's Small Business Month by announcing that New York City has reached the record-breaking number of 183,000 small businesses, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. As a result of New York City's successful economic resurgence, we've recovered the nearly 1 million jobs lost during the pandemic and reached a record-breaking 4.7 million total jobs across the five boroughs.

More jobs mean more opportunities for New Yorkers of all backgrounds, including asylum seekers and other new arrivals. SBS teams work hard every day to ensure these jobs are accessible to all jobseekers. As part of that effort, SBS provides free hiring help to businesses through our Workforce One Career Center System, a network of 18 centers located across the five boroughs. We work to understand business recruitment needs across diverse industries and identify New Yorkers with the skills and experience to fill those roles. Workforce One is part of the American Job Center System, a federally funded national network, and operates in close partnership with the New York State Department of Labor, which

1 runs 95 career centers statewide, four of which are
2 co-located with SBS Workforce One centers. In Fiscal
3 Year 2023, Workforce One served over 87,000 people
4 and referred 54,000 to employers. More than 16,000 of
5 the jobseekers we served in that year are foreign-
6 born, and close to two-thirds of those served self-
7 identify as Black or Hispanic.
8

9 Workforce One job seeker services include
10 workshops and one-on-one career coaching, help with
11 resumes and preparing for interviews, identification
12 of jobs that match jobseeker experiences and
13 interests, and referral to employers and partners who
14 provide occupational training. Through our business
15 engagement, we connect New Yorkers to job
16 opportunities in high-growth sectors, including work
17 in hospitality, building services, healthcare,
18 construction, and manufacturing. Our physical
19 centers, with many locations near transit hubs,
20 include computer labs and classrooms. In addition to
21 attracting more than 230,000 walk-ins annually, we
22 bring workforce resources deep into neighborhoods
23 across the city through delivering virtual programs
24 and by using Mobie, our mobile outreach unit.
25

We also work with a network of some 300 community partners who can provide a range of supportive and wraparound services. Together with the efforts of a dozen agencies that comprise the City's workforce system, New York City has a robust workforce development network that creates a critical pipeline of talent and keeps the city's economy resilient and thriving.

New York City is a city of immigrants. Our five boroughs are home to the most diverse immigrant population of any major city in the world. SBS has and will continue to serve jobseekers with roots from countries around the world. In 2016, we launched a specialized workforce center in Washington Heights focused on helping immigrants succeed in the local workforce.

In addition to our immigrant-focused Workforce One Center, we provide tailored services to veterans, people with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, and out-of-school, out-of-work youth aged 18 to 24.

We are proud that across the entire Workforce One system, we are able to directly provide services in 19 languages. One-third of specialists in

1 Workforce One Centers speak a language other than
2 English, and we support an additional 200-plus
3 languages through interpretation services.
4

5 Over the last year, New York City has
6 seen an influx of new arrivals, many of whom have not
7 been able to legally work due to restrictive federal
8 government policies. While my colleagues at the
9 Mayor's Office are able to share more context on
10 those trends, at SBS, we expect the percentage of
11 foreign-born Workforce One clients to increase to 25
12 percent in Fiscal Year '24 from 20 percent in the
13 prior Fiscal Year. In response to the rising number
14 of migrants seeking the right to work, city, state,
15 and federal government agencies are coordinating to
16 ensure access to workforce programming for new
17 arrivals as they become legally eligible to work in
18 alignment with restrictions that accompany our
19 system's federal funding. For example, OASO shares a
20 database of asylum seekers applying for work permits
21 through the Asylum Application Help Centers with the
22 New York State Department of Labor. NYS DOL phone
23 banks to these individuals and then provides
24 Workforce One with a list of potential jobseekers in
25 anticipation of their work authorization.

1
2 Collaboration between NYS DOL and Workforce One is
3 fundamentally important to our system. NYS DOL and
4 Workforce One centers are not only often co-located
5 but also co-host events.

6 Similarly, OASO coordinates with shelter
7 agencies to promote city and state employment
8 supports in addition to other services and is
9 building a pipeline of cross-agency referrals by
10 shelter-based case managers. In March, the Federal
11 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service started to
12 send text alerts to new arrivals receiving work
13 authorization, alerting them of centers like those
14 operated by NYS DOL and Workforce One.

15 As a result of these efforts as well as
16 referrals from immigrant-focused community partners,
17 in the last eight months, SBS has reached out to
18 8,848 new New Yorkers. As this Council knows, SBS
19 believes outreach is crucial. This has been a
20 personal focus of our Commissioner. It's why you've
21 seen our SBS mobile unit in your Districts and why
22 our Commissioner has personally visited shelters to
23 meet with new New Yorkers and guide them toward
24 Workforce One services.

1
2 While there are challenges with serving
3 this population, we can share early signs of promise.
4 Since October, Workforce One has served 5,500 new New
5 Yorkers, including over 3,700 who self-report having
6 received work authorization. We have referred more
7 than 2,000 individual new New Yorkers to employers.
8 On the whole, we have provided 33,000 total workforce
9 services to new New Yorkers.

10 These numbers are a result of all the
11 efforts I've outlined in my testimony as well as a
12 series of borough-based job fairs, our dedicated
13 American Dream Works intake form, email blasts to
14 120,000 business contacts, and engagement with groups
15 like the Educational Alliance, Public Library
16 Systems, and the Hospitality Alliance.

17 We know that other migrants are receiving
18 support through our partners in government, like NYS
19 DOL, and the vast network of non-profits operating in
20 New York City. Just last month, I personally visited
21 a migrant resource fair organized by Council Member
22 Hudson, where SBS and NYS DOL tabled and offered
23 workforce development services. We reached over 200
24 migrants at that event alone. In recent days, some of
25 the new New Yorkers we have supported have reached

1 out to share their success stories. Our downtown
2 Brooklyn Workforce One Center supported a Venezuelan
3 New Yorker who arrived in New York City in June of
4 2023. When we first made contact, he was living at a
5 City shelter as he awaited work authorization.
6 Following our connection, he was able to enroll in
7 on-the-job training with an airline food service
8 employer. Having now received work authorization,
9 he's making \$28.50 per hour and has moved out of the
10 shelter system. Our Bronx Workforce One Center
11 connected a new New Yorker from Guinea to a job with
12 a parking company after working with him to create a
13 resume and prepare to ace the interview. Our
14 Workforce One Center in Jamaica, Queens helped a
15 Haitian new New Yorker enroll in a training program
16 called Careers through the Culinary Arts Program.
17 They were able to complete the training, which
18 includes rigorous essential kitchen skills and safety
19 protocols in March, and has applied to work in New
20 York City public schools.

22 Mayor Adams has been clear. Asylum
23 seekers want to be on a path to independence and want
24 the right to work. Expediting work authorization for
25 asylum seekers would enable the City's workforce

1 development system to support more migrants in
2 securing family-sustaining jobs. We know that our
3 services can help many take a step closer to their
4 American dream, and we hope to work with your
5 committees to help more people understand that
6 Workforce One is a system they can rely on to achieve
7 their career goals. Many of your offices are working
8 on the front lines to engage and support new New
9 Yorkers in your Districts. We ask each of you to
10 encourage asylum seekers to contact SBS's Workforce
11 One Network to access services and find employment.
12 If you know employers in any industry that are
13 interested in hiring asylum seekers, please direct
14 them to nyc.gov/americanDream Works. Thank you. We
15 look forward to your questions.

17 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Buenos días.
18 Good morning.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Just before you
20 go, thank you. I just want to recognize we've been
21 joined by Council Member Paladino.

22 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Good
23 morning. Thank you, Chairs Avilés and Feliz and
24 Committee on Immigration and on Small Business for
25 holding this hearing on this important topic. I also

want to thank Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who has been advocating on this issue for quite some time, so thank you for being here.

From the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, I'm also joined by Tom Tortorici, Executive Director of Legal and Support Initiatives.

The primary mission of MOIA is to promote the well-being of immigrants, communities, fostering an inclusive environment that supports their safety, stability, and enhances their quality of life, regardless of their immigration status. Ensuring that asylum seekers and migrants have access to the workforce is a crucial part of upholding that mission. New arrivals need and want to work. Our community has been facing a labor shortage ever since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and gaps remain in several major economic sectors. These gaps include ones in the food industry, construction, and home healthcare agencies. Many of you know, before joining MOIA, Commissioner Castro was the Executive Director of a community-based workforce development organization called New Immigrant Community Empowerment, or NICE. He also understands what it takes to prepare our newest New Yorkers for the

1 workforce, and both our office and the city as a
2 whole benefit immensely from his leadership. While
3 MOIA does not directly work in workforce development,
4 we do collaborate closely with our sister agencies
5 and community-based organizations who are directly
6 involved in this space. I will lay out some of MOIA's
7 policies and program initiatives in this field in the
8 following areas: federal advocacy, community-based
9 programming, and worker rights.
10

11 On the federal advocacy front, one of the
12 most powerful tools to expand access to work
13 authorization is temporary protected status, or TPS.
14 With the stroke of a pen, President Biden can expand
15 this protection to cover additional countries in
16 need. We all saw the impact of the redesignation of
17 Venezuelan TPS in 2023 and, through our coalition of
18 over 200 cities called Cities for Action, our office
19 is pushing for the designation and re-designation of
20 countries such as Ecuador, Mauritania, and Mali.
21 These countries and many others that we are elevating
22 are facing political turmoil and violence, and
23 families seeking safety and security often end up in
24 our city. By ensuring that individuals with TPS
25 status have access to work opportunities in the

1 formal economy, we can go a long way in promoting the
2 integration into our larger society. Starting in
3 February 2023, Mayor Adams, in partnership with
4 Cities for Action Co-Chair Mayor Brandon Johnson, led
5 a bipartisan group of mayors and county executives
6 participating in the Here to Work campaign, which
7 calls on President Biden to take executive action to
8 increase access to employment authorization for
9 immigrants already in the United States, including
10 spouses of U.S. citizens, dreamers who missed the
11 DACA cutoff criteria, and longstanding immigrants.
12 There are also some other federal victories that
13 might have gone under the radar. For example, through
14 our advocacy along Mayor Adams and 42 other mayors
15 and county executives, we pushed USCIS to ensure a
16 temporary final rule to automatically extend expiring
17 employment authorization for 540 days. This rule will
18 ensure our new arrivals don't lose the jobs that
19 they've worked so hard for due to processing delays
20 at the federal level.

21
22 Now turning to community-based
23 programming. In addition to our federal advocacy,
24 MOIA also funds more than 50 organizations throughout
25 the five boroughs that provide a multitude of

1 services to our local immigrant community. Our
2 longstanding legal service program, such as the newly
3 branded MOIA Legal Support Centers and the Asylum
4 Legal Assistance Network, are helping to expand the
5 capacity of legal service providers to meet the needs
6 of all immigrant New Yorkers. These City-funded
7 providers work to increase access to new federal
8 pathways to status, such as Deferred Action for Labor
9 Exploitation, or DALE, as some of us refer to it as,
10 which provides work authorization and protection from
11 deportation to immigrants who have been exploited by
12 their employers. These providers also operationalize
13 referral systems and collaboration across partners to
14 ensure that immigrants receive support for whatever
15 form of relief which they are eligible. The Ask MOIA
16 and the MOIA Legal Support Hotline both provide
17 immigrants with worker rights and workforce
18 development opportunities. Since the beginning of the
19 asylum seeker humanitarian crisis, MOIA has provided
20 almost 1 million dollars to organizations that
21 provide OSHA and SST training, both of which are
22 needed to work on construction sites in New York
23 City. These opportunities available to our newest New
24 Yorkers have provided access to the high-demand
25

1 economic sectors to thousands of new immigrants,
2 including an increased number of women, as detailed
3 in recent reports by the City. It's important to know
4 that OSHA and SST training are only available in
5 English and Spanish, both among non-profit providers
6 and in the private market in New York City. A very
7 limited number of trainers nationwide offer services
8 beyond these two languages. That said, workforce
9 training systems and offerings are catching up with
10 demographic changes, and MOIA and OASA are exploring
11 how to build capacity in additional languages. With
12 philanthropic funding, MOIA has established the
13 Innovative Immigrant Navigator Network. In this
14 network, nine immigrant-serving community-based
15 organizations identified and chose 500 recently-
16 arrived participants to receive assistance from long-
17 time immigrant mentors. We're currently reviewing the
18 data to evaluate the program, but initial trends show
19 that beyond fulfilling basic needs, providing
20 referrals, and connecting asylum seekers to job
21 opportunities, this program has also helped foster
22 warm, welcoming, inclusive, and safe spaces where
23 newest arrivals can thrive. MOIA also allocated over
24 1 million of City funding to non-profit orgs and
25

1 public library branches to launch 85 English learning
2 and support centers for immigrant New Yorkers across
3 the city. MOIA English learning and support centers
4 are located across the city to support long-time and
5 recent-arrived immigrant New Yorkers learning English
6 and also to connect them to City resources. This
7 program helps non-native English speakers gain the
8 tools they need to thrive in the workspace, at
9 school, and elsewhere around the city. The centers
10 use We Speak NYC, an award-winning curriculum
11 developed by the City of New York, as a tool to teach
12 English and educate New Yorkers on city resources and
13 services. The centers support immigrant New Yorkers
14 by providing more information on resources introduced
15 in the class, making referrals to social and legal
16 services, and acting as a hub for English language
17 learning in their community.

18
19 Now turning to worker rights. Most asylum
20 seekers that have entered the city are not
21 immediately eligible for work authorization and try
22 to find opportunities in the informal economy
23 instead. That's why we're building awareness of
24 protections that are available to all workers,
25 regardless of their immigration status. We applaud

1 both the Council and Council Member Hanif for putting
2 together the Immigrant Worker Bill of Rights Bill
3 that we are now working to implement alongside the
4 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. In
5 collaboration with the City Council, MOIA, and DCWP,
6 updated existing Worker Bill of Rights to highlight
7 protections and resources available to immigrant
8 workers. The updated Bill of Rights is being
9 disseminated through LinkNYC kiosks and social media
10 platforms for both agencies. It also has been
11 distributed to newly arrived immigrants in HERRC
12 systems in the top 10 languages per Local Law 30 as
13 well as into the temporary languages as designated by
14 Local Law 13. Finally, last month on May Day 2024,
15 MOIA and DCWP hosted an ethnic and community media
16 roundtable where we discussed the newly expanded
17 Worker Bill of Rights. This roundtable was part of
18 MOIA's monthly meetings to share information on the
19 City's available resources and services.

21 Mayor Adams and Commissioner Castro
22 recognized that much remains to be done. That's why
23 we're looking forward to working closely with City
24 Council to find solutions that prepare our newest New
25 Yorkers for the workforce. New York City will benefit

1 from the resilience, adaptability, and experience
2 that asylum seekers and migrants bring, just like the
3 generations of immigrants before them that built the
4 place we call home. Thank you.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.
7 I'd like to recognize we've been joined by Council
8 Member De La Rosa.

9 I think we'll start just jumping into
10 some questions. We might mix it up since we have
11 representatives from three distinct entities and also
12 give our Colleagues a moment to ask questions and
13 then circle back to you all. Thank you for that.

14 I guess we'll start with MOIA. Could you
15 describe what resources specifically, I guess first
16 in terms of total funding that has been dedicated to
17 workforce development and then you did note one or
18 two programs here. Anything else you'd like to add to
19 that?

20 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I'm happy to
21 Chair and feel free to cut me off if I talk way too
22 much. As you know, MOIA has historically not led on
23 workforce development programs. However, many of the
24 programs that we do have have elements of workforce
25 development. I'll talk about three, which are the

1 navigation centers, our English learning centers,
2 which I discussed, and our immigrant navigator
3 program.
4

5 As you know, the asylum seeker resource
6 navigation centers are really open to provide
7 services to folks with basic survival skills across
8 the five boroughs. I'll talk about the two that were
9 specifically funded to provide SST and OSHA training.
10 Those are La Colmena and NICE. Funding that was
11 provided to them in Fiscal Year '24 for NICE, 350,000
12 was allocated and La Colmena, 125,000. Both La
13 Colmena and NICE have a variety of deliverables, but
14 both include SST and OSHA. For La Colmena, the OSHA
15 trainings that they're required to provide per month
16 are at least 20 to 30, SST 20 to 30 as well. For
17 NICE, it's a bit bigger, but I think it's actually
18 the same. It's 35 to 40 OSHA trainings and 35 to 40
19 SST trainings. That's just for workforce specific
20 under the umbrella of our navigation centers.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of, I
22 guess, just fundamentally, how does MOIA describe its
23 workforce development efforts?

24 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I think it's
25 the same way that we describe our efforts when we

1 collaborate with other sister agencies, which is our
2 primary goal and support that we provide our sister
3 agencies of that of consulting, providing any legal
4 analysis that we can or policy analysis on
5 immigration trends and issues that are coming.

6 Because Commissioner Castro comes from the informal
7 work sector, working for NICE for a couple of years,
8 we've pivoted a bit and have been a bit more, to an
9 extent, involved in conversations with our sister
10 agencies. Here, during this tenure, what we have
11 done, which hasn't existed previously, is that we
12 have developed, again, one, the navigation center
13 would be a programming example, and the other
14 programming example would be the immigrant navigator
15 program that was created to address this need, but it
16 really comes from the experiences that our
17 Commissioner brings to the table.

18
19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So just for
20 clarity, the immigrant... I'm sorry, I'm going to call
21 it the wrong thing. Hold on a second. Everything is
22 called a navigation center these days, so I lose
23 myself. In terms of the navigation network, was that
24 specifically set up for workforce or was it an
25

3 overall more holistic approach to integration and
4 support?

5 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Overall, a
6 holistic approach to support. I think at the very
7 beginning of recent arrivals coming to the City of
8 New York, what was important was to provide basic
9 survival skills for individuals, and that's why the
10 organizations that participate, but also the services
11 that they provide, provide a more holistic approach.
12 If I may give you an example, for example, Mixteca in
13 your District, it's one of those locations that you
14 walk in and you get an array of services from food to
15 other things so the idea was really to provide folks
16 a pathway into whatever district and/or borough they
17 were in, but also we knew that some of these
18 organizations would provide more than others given
19 their ties to the local community.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of, you
21 noted the 1-million-dollar City investment in the
22 program that is launched through the libraries, and
23 you noted 85 English learning and support centers,
24 which is fantastic, but when you do the math, that
25 amounts to, if we were equitable and everyone got the
same, it's an 11,000-per-site investment. Can you

3 talk to me a little bit about what 11,000 dollars
4 buys you at a site?

5 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I don't know
6 if it's 11,000 per, but I can get that for you.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I just did the
8 dirty math. Assuming everyone, we're just equitable.
9 It's a great effort, and obviously what I'm getting
10 at here is that 1 million dollars for 85 sites is
11 woefully inadequate so tell me what, this is
12 obviously, you've launched this, and we want more, to
13 be clear. Tell me what we've got for that.

14 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Well, I can
15 say that previously the English language learning
16 centers, which we're referring to them as, the
17 curriculum We Speak was primarily all volunteer, so
18 the 11,000 or whatever it might be is actually pretty
19 significant in what people were getting before
20 because previously it was a full volunteer program
21 where CBOs would sign up, take our training. We would
22 provide them our materials, but they weren't provided
23 with any sort of funding. Commissioner Castro thought
24 it was very important to, at the very least, provide
25 something to either align staff for the support, the
space support, basic stuff like even toilet paper. It

1 raises the cost, so I would argue back and say that
2 initially it was fully volunteer. Now it's more. And
3 if I may add on the library piece, the vision here
4 has always been how and where do we go to provide a
5 full network and support for people. Libraries for
6 many people in districts across the city, it's a
7 lifeline for not only just the services that you go
8 to, but the communities that we build. The vision was
9 really that, to bring these services into the
10 libraries around the five boroughs to provide recent
11 arrivals, immigrants, with services even outside of
12 the scope of the curriculum that we were providing.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So what I heard is
15 we're doing better and supporting what was once fully
16 volunteer-led. God bless every volunteer who has
17 worked in our communities and will continue to do
18 work. From your estimation, I would guess, do you
19 agree we could use additional investment in this
20 program?

21 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: You know
22 what I'm going to say, Chair.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes, so for the
24 record, yes. We all agree we could use additional
25 investment. If we were to build the capacity to

1 really expand this program to meet the need, right,
2 because we know all the libraries, all the non-profit
3 providers are well under-resourced, right? There's
4 just a lot more need than there is capacity at this
5 point. Tell me, what would you recommend our City
6 provide to be able to, I wish fully meet the need,
7 but at least adequately fully?
8

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Well, if I
10 may add to some of the data that you requested, it's
11 10 organizations getting 10,000. The library
12 branches, which are the Queens, Brooklyn, and
13 Manhattan, they're getting 250,000 per library
14 branch.

15 I would say that it's early to tell,
16 Chair, because this is the first year that we're
17 launching this, and I think potentially after this
18 year we will have more to say, but you know.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I hear you. Thank
20 you.

21 We'd like to recognize we've been joined
22 by Council Member Brooks-Powers on Zoom, so thank you
23 for being here, Council Member.

24 How does MOIA's description of workforce
25 development compare to the needs and requests of

1 immigrant workers and what non-profit workforce
2 development has been telling you? What I'm asking is,
3 do you, I assume you're receiving feedback from our
4 non-profit workforce development providers. Have you
5 been meeting with them?
6

7 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, I'll
8 begin, and then if I may ask my colleagues from SBS,
9 because I think you're referring to a very specific,
10 or if you're not, please correct me, subset of
11 organizations. We have been meeting with primarily
12 the day labor organization, most recently a couple of
13 months ago with OASO, and I think SBS as well, to
14 really just hear from them and the coalition of five
15 organizations around the city. I'll also note, for
16 the record, we have been meeting with the National
17 Day Laborer Organization Network, NDLO, which is a
18 national organization providing support to the five
19 centers that I mentioned, but also have been working
20 nationally. The work that we've done with NDLO in
21 specific has been to really learn lessons learned in
22 addressing large numbers of folks increasing in the
23 informal work sector. The feedback from, again, I
24 don't know if SBS, if you want to share anything on
25

1 the day labor organizations, because I think that's
2 what you might be...

3
4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, I'm sorry. I
5 think I need more coffee this morning. You mentioned
6 the day labor organizations. You mentioned NDLOM. Can
7 you maybe list for me what other workforce
8 development organizations you're meeting with, the
9 frequency with which you're meeting, and then
10 finally, what you're hearing from those organizations
11 and how it relates to kind of the work that you're
12 planning or the work that needs to be built out?

13 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, and
14 again, I think, and I'm not trying to not answer your
15 question, but I think that the framework here is that
16 MOIA, again, our charge and role has never really
17 been to directly work or create workforce
18 development. We have been in consultation with the
19 two offices that are here. The extent to which we've
20 met with these organizations have been the two that I
21 mentioned, and with NDLOM specifically, we were also
22 discussing federal advocacy, things to that extent,
23 but I don't know if my colleagues here who are more
24 in touch with some of the other organizations that

provide support can speak a bit more like the
feedback that they're providing.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

Thank you, and thank you, Council Member. I'm happy
to speak to, I think, a couple of items that are
relevant to this line of questioning, specifically on
construction site safety training. We partner with
multiple day labor organizations to allow the broad
delivery of construction site safety training
citywide, some of which were referred to by Lorena in
her testimony. Those include the New York Committee
for Occupational Safety and Health in Manhattan, the
New Immigrant Community Empowerment in Queens, the
Workers' Justice Project in Brooklyn, La Colmena in
Staten Island, and Catholic Charities in the Bronx.
We also deliver construction site safety training
through our Workforce One hub centers across the five
boroughs and, since 2018, we have offered that
training in multiple languages based on a DOB
identification of construction workforce participants
with limited English proficiency from that time, so
we offer the training in English, Spanish, Polish,
Russian, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

1
2 In addition to that work with non-profits
3 and Workforce One offering construction site safety
4 training, a community partners program is a large
5 part of our Workforce One service delivery, and I'll
6 talk to you a bit about our community partners
7 program. Thank you for your patience.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Is there
9 consideration of adding Arabic or French to the list
10 of languages that you just mentioned?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Yes,
12 we're very interested in further increasing language
13 access to that training, and we'll work with our
14 partners in the Mayor's Office of Talent and
15 Workforce Development on understanding those needs as
16 those individuals present themselves and receive work
17 authorization so that we can increase access.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Just so you know,
19 we had a hearing, and it is a huge gap, a huge, huge
20 gap that I've still, I mean, French, go figure. New
21 York City, we don't even have resources in French, so
22 I would strongly encourage that we get it done
23 yesterday, French, at least Arabic at minimum, and
24 then the other languages are obviously more
25 complicated, but those are two foundational that will

3 reach populations where there is a real lack of
4 support in language accessibility.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

6 Understood, Council Member, and SBS's role in
7 delivering this training citywide is a result of a
8 law passed by the Council, I believe, in 2017, right?
9 We want to increase safety on construction work sites
10 across the city that involve construction and
11 demolition. We don't want to reduce access to entry-
12 level jobs for new New Yorkers or other New Yorkers,
13 and so SBS was tasked with providing, ensuring that
14 broad access to the training was accessible, and it's
15 through that commitment that we have stably offered
16 this training across our network of Workforce One
17 centers and in partnership with non-profit
18 organizations who also receive other support from
19 City Council discretionary funding and through other
20 City agencies such as MOIA.

21 I wanted to talk a bit about our work in
22 Workforce One with community partners on this theme
23 of non-profit partnerships. Our Workforce One centers
24 work with over 300 community partners citywide, and
25 they expand the impact of Workforce One work through
26 outreach, recruitment, holding community-wide events

1 that help us reach more jobseekers, and by referring
2 clients that they serve through their own missions to
3 Workforce One for additional services and matching
4 with employers or other training connections. We
5 organized an info session at the initiation of our
6 American Dream Works initiative in October/November,
7 attended by about 50 of our community partners, and
8 we have over 40 active community partners partnering
9 with our system to provide services for asylum
10 seekers from ESL, legal assistance, connections to
11 access to temporary housing, assistance with filing
12 for asylum and work authorization, food, clothing,
13 access to public benefits, and proper identification.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much
16 and, just for the record, Workforce One centers are
17 only accessible for people with work authorization?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: No,
19 Chair. I'm really happy you asked that, because I
20 don't want to leave this hearing with that
21 understanding across the city. Some of our services,
22 based on our federal funding, are restricted to
23 individuals who have received work authorization, so
24 those are any trainings that we provide that are
25 federally funded and actual matching with employers.

1
2 It's important, Workforce One operates on a dual
3 service network, and so we want the employers to whom
4 we're referring candidates to be clear that we're
5 connecting them with candidates that will allow them
6 to be in compliance with their mandates to only
7 employ folks who are authorized to work. However, the
8 remainder of our Workforce One services are
9 accessible to any New Yorker over the age of 18, and
10 those include, thank you, Yuriy, our intake
11 appointments, career services, activities such as
12 workshops, supportive services referrals, trainings
13 like our construction site safety training that are
14 provided with City tax levy dollars. We work on
15 developing resumes that help them highlight their
16 relevant experience, whether they acquired it here or
17 in another country, preparing for interviews. Some of
18 the workshops we offer include understanding the
19 American workplace to help them adapt to workplace
20 norms here and then, if they're work authorized, we
21 go on to the job search assistance and job connection
22 services and any federally funded trainings.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, and I
24 understand from MOIA's perspective that this hasn't
25 been their primary focus, and it's a relatively new

1 area of support, of exploration, obviously a really
2 critical one. Does MOIA plan to kind of expand their
3 effort in workforce development, and if so, how?
4

5 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I mean, if
6 the last two years tell you anything, you really
7 can't plan for much because things sort of evolve,
8 but I'll say that we'll continue to support our
9 sister agencies as the needs arise. Obviously, this
10 is an important issue for immigrant New Yorkers.
11 We're learning a lot from some of the pilots that
12 we've put out, including the English learning
13 language support center. I know I didn't really touch
14 on this, but if I may, on the immigrant peer
15 navigator program, which is actually one of the
16 things that I think Commissioner Castro's most proud
17 of, this was funded by private philanthropy. It's a
18 small group of people, but it's 500 people, 24
19 mentors and 25 mentees to show them the ropes around
20 the City of New York, so the question that we ask
21 ourselves is like, how do we create like this
22 (INAUDIBLE) network, or like a network of local
23 support for recent arrivals who have no ties in the
24 City of New York? The curriculum that was built out
25 for this particular program consists of a few

1 components. The first one is to build relationships
2 from old and new migrants. The second is to talk
3 about conversations like, how do you find work if
4 you're undocumented, how do you find a babysitter if
5 you're living in this neighborhood. What I can say
6 from that program in particular, it has been
7 successful and, again, we're pulling some of the
8 data. The program isn't over yet, but the real sort
9 of goal here was to create longstanding relationships
10 about mentors and mentees but, again, it's something
11 that we're proud of. We're still building it now, but
12 time will tell. Chair, I think that we're obviously,
13 and given the Commissioner's background, well-versed
14 in this subject so I think we'll continue to support
15 but, as far as planning, I think we're looking at
16 just to see what our pilots will tell us and then
17 develop issues as they grow.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I appreciate that,
20 and I have to push back just a little bit on the
21 notion that this is new or you cannot plan for. I
22 think we are well past, as an immigrant city,
23 claiming that we don't know what to do. We have an
24 enormous amount of expertise in workforce development
25 across the city. The question becomes do we

3 appropriately scale up, are we listening to the
4 feedback we're receiving from our partners on the
5 ground, and are we able to meet that need. I think
6 the expertise is clearly here. The question is, are
7 we offering the resources to allow them to scale up
8 appropriately.

9 Just specifically, does MOIA direct any
10 specific funding for workforce at this moment?

11 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: The two that
12 I mentioned, well, I would say specifically because
13 it's the navigator centers, just the two
14 organizations, La Colmena and NICE, are the two that
15 are specifically providing OSHA and SST so those are
16 the two that I can specifically say.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it. In terms
18 of when, does MOIA work with non-profits and/or
19 partner agencies when they're putting out RFPs for
20 this work?

21 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I would say
22 yes and, when you say this work, do you mean just?

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: The broad
24 workforce development. We know it's scattered across
25 multiple agencies. We know many non-profits are
tapping in and responding. We'd like to know, as the

1 agency that holds the expertise, right, around
2 policies and approaches as it relates to immigrants
3 across New York City, are you able to go to SBS and
4 say, this RFP may or may not work for these purposes?
5 Are you going to the Department of Education and
6 saying these proposals may or may not work for these
7 purposes and holding to a kind of a standard of
8 effective approaches?
9

10 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I'm
11 certainly not the expert on RFPs, and I know that's
12 an entire sort of realm, but I'll say that as issues
13 come up, sister agencies have reached out. When it
14 comes to MOIA and the RFPs that we have put out, I
15 can say that there are, you know, there's one that
16 we're currently working on that, you know, Tom, feel
17 free to jump in, but on the legal support centers in
18 particular where there's feedback that we get from
19 providers. In regards to the other, I can't speak on
20 that because, on other agencies, because I haven't
21 been a part of those conversations, but I'm happy to
22 circle back if that's contrary to what I'm stating.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No, I think, I
24 would expect all the City agencies, if MOIA is the
25 entity, right, whose role is to hold the best

1
2 practice and policy for a particular population, that
3 every City agency should be vetting their proposals,
4 their RFPs that are working to impact this community
5 with you all to get your good eyes and expertise on
6 it. It is a missed opportunity for agencies to work
7 independently.

8 We'd like to recognize Council Member
9 Hanif, and we'd also like to offer her the
10 opportunity to make a statement on the legislation
11 we're hearing today. Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much,
13 Chairs Avilés and Feliz, for holding today's
14 important hearing and for including Intro. 216 on
15 today's agenda. I want to also thank Deputy Speaker
16 Ayala and Council Member Brewer for introducing this
17 bill alongside me. I also want to express gratitude
18 to Brooklyn Defender Services for using the
19 experiences of their clients to help inform this
20 legislation.

21 IDNYC is a valuable resource for all New
22 Yorkers and is especially critical for those who are
23 newly arrived immigrants. However, due to the
24 Administration's failure to properly operationalize
25 the application process, many who need an IDNYC are

1 currently unable to get one. Right now, walk-in
2 applications are not permitted, and it is extremely
3 difficult to make an appointment. Just last night, I
4 went on the website, which is very challenging to
5 operate, and was unable to make an appointment. It is
6 clear that more slots, including walk-ins, need to be
7 made available, and the online interface needs to be
8 more user friendly. Additionally, when people are
9 able to get an appointment, they are often rejected
10 due to unclear and arbitrary implementation of
11 requirements regarding document eligibility and the
12 process for decision appeals. These barriers to
13 access are leaving people without the proper
14 identification to carry out a number of important
15 tasks, including completing a work permit application
16 or job application, both of which require some form
17 of government ID. As the City looks to decrease the
18 dependence of new arrivals on the shelter system,
19 helping people get to work is of the utmost
20 importance. There are also massive human costs to
21 lacking the ID needed to navigate basic day-to-day
22 activities in the city, such as a parent being unable
23 to enter a school to pick up their child. Intro. 216
24 would address these issues by instituting a set of
25

1 reforms for the IDNYC application process, including
2 requiring the Administration to, one, make same-day
3 and walk-in appointments available at IDNYC
4 enrollment centers, two, provide adequate in-person
5 application appointments to match the growing demand
6 for IDNYC cards, three, develop a training program
7 for IDNYC workers on the application process and,
8 four, provide an appeals system for applicants who
9 have been denied IDNYC cards.
10

11 I am sure that the Administration would
12 agree that the establishment of the IDNYC program is
13 one of the City government's greatest successes over
14 the past decade. We have created a resource that
15 plugged a gap that has existed for our communities
16 for decades. Now it's time to make sure that those
17 who need this resource can access it. Thank you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much,
19 Council Member Hanif.

20 I just want to talk a little bit about
21 worker protections. We know labor traffickers have
22 been very proactive and aggressive in their outreach
23 to recent arrivals who are being exploited because
24 they do not have work authorization or legal status
25 yet. What has MOIA and SBS done proactively to reach

1 out to these populations preemptively ahead of these
2 bad actors?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

5 Thank you, Council Member. In terms of proactive
6 outreach to new New Yorkers, I'll refer back to some
7 stats I shared in our testimony. We've received lists
8 of applicants for work authorization from the New
9 York State Department of Labor, we've also received
10 lists from our partners in city agencies that are
11 providing shelter for new New Yorkers, and we have
12 proactively reached out to contact nearly 9,000
13 asylum seekers. This involves phone calling, text
14 messaging, and emails to inform them of the services
15 of Workforce One and encourage them to connect. In
16 addition, we've participated in many resource fairs
17 where we are sharing our translated materials that
18 introduce the system and its services. We've created
19 a palm card that includes a QR code that connects to
20 the American Dream Works website, which is a simple
21 resource that helps folks share contact information
22 with SBS and Workforce One so that we can provide
23 further outreach to them and, through those efforts,
24 we have served thus far a total of 5,590 New Yorkers
25 through the Workforce One system.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And is the bulk of
3 your outreach is in person with the cards? You said
4 you've texted?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Yes.
6 We've called, texted, and emailed new New Yorkers
7 whose contact information we've received. In
8 addition, we're doing in-person outreach through non-
9 profit partners, through events, resource fairs, in
10 many cases organized by elected officials, other
11 organizations, and we also stood up the American
12 Dream Works landing page to have a simple entry point
13 for both jobseekers and employers who want to connect
14 to Workforce One services, just to have a simple
15 landing page to collect their contact information for
16 follow-up to either onboard them into the system with
17 jobs to which we can match new New Yorkers, or if
18 they're individuals, to connect them to Workforce One
19 staff directly.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are you
21 maintaining metrics on the effectiveness of the
22 outreach, and have you received feedback around
23 unscrupulous actors or bad actors? Complaints?

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I'm
25 not aware that we've received complaints about bad

1 actors. Alongside our own materials, we do share
2 materials developed by the Department of Consumer and
3 Worker Protection focused on workers' rights. We
4 display that information at our Workforce One
5 centers, and we also share it on our mobile unit or
6 in outreach materials with Workforce One. In addition
7 to those new New Yorkers who do complete workshops at
8 a Workforce One center, we're offering a workshop on
9 knowing the American workplace or understanding the
10 American workplace, which includes content about
11 workers' rights in English and in Spanish.

12
13 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. We'd
14 like to recognize Council Member Ariola, who has
15 joined us. Thank you, Council Member.

16 I guess what other organizations has MOIA
17 maybe coordinated with around this issue of
18 protecting newly arrived people and exploitation in
19 the workforce?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Thank you,
21 Chair. The Department of Consumer and Worker
22 Protection is the primary agency focused on informing
23 the public about bad employer actors. MOIA works to
24 amplify the Workers' Bill of Rights, and I want to
25 recognize and thank the Council and Chair Hanif for

1
2 revising the Workers' Bill of Rights and bringing
3 that forward. That information is distributed
4 throughout our network so, basically, through the
5 small portfolio of programs that MOIA oversees, the
6 case management and navigation sessions, tens of
7 thousands of them, with individual community members,
8 are touchpoints through which information about
9 recognizing and avoiding employer exploitation and
10 fraud can be transmitted. The ActionNYC Hotline or
11 MOIA Immigration Legal Support Hotline received
12 65,000 calls last calendar year and refers
13 individuals who have complaints about employer abuses
14 to the Office of New Americans Hotline so they can
15 report through the New York State Channel.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Do you have a
17 sense of how much reporting has been done out of
18 those 65,000? Is there, like, a percentage
19 sensibility about that?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I don't
21 have a clear number, but my anecdotal understanding
22 is not much. There are other better pathways for
23 reporting employer abuse.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And what would be
25 the better pathways?

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: The Office
4 of New Americans Hotline through New York State since
5 the Department of Labor and New York State Attorney
6 General's Office is a good pathway on most of the
7 materials that exist, the Department of Consumer and
8 Worker Protection as well.

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I wanted to
10 add one more touchpoint. The language, the English
11 Learning and Support Center, as I mentioned, uses We
12 Speak curriculum. Season two, I think, provides
13 information about worker protection and career
14 preparation so that's disseminated through the actual
15 curriculum that students take.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are there other
17 creative mechanisms that MOIA might be exploring to
18 ensure that migrants, regardless of work
19 authorization status, are being prepared for the
20 formal economy?

21 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I mean, I
22 think I mentioned, I think one of the more creative
23 ones that we've had is the Immigrant Navigator
24 Program that I mentioned, which is really creating
25 community, and that's sort of the idea with that
pilot. I'll say that in addition to what Tom said,

1 something that the Commissioner has been very, just
2 actively pushing for is ethnic media roundtables so
3 we can ensure that the public gets information from
4 the sources that they hear at home so on May Day,
5 Commissioner Castro and the Commissioner for DCWP
6 hosted an ethnic media roundtable to talk about the
7 Worker Bill of Rights so I would say those two, the
8 more creative one being the Immigrant Navigator
9 Program and, two, really using the media as a source
10 of disseminating information.
11

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Has
13 MOIA engaged with any workers that have been victims
14 of labor rights violations that may be eligible for
15 deferred action and, if so, how have you handled
16 these cases?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Thank you.
18 MOIA as an office has not engaged directly with those
19 individuals. However, MOIA has been in conversation
20 with the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
21 to get information out about DALE, or Deferred Action
22 for Labor Enforcement. We've also provided materials
23 and information and trainings to providers in our
24 provider network, Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance
25 Network, MOIA Legal Support Centers. Our legal

1 service providers do screen for eligibility for DALE
2 in the regular course of their comprehensive
3 immigration legal screenings. Typically, the cases
4 are considered complex so often referred to non-
5 profit legal service providers that work specifically
6 in the area of workers' rights, such as the Low Wage
7 Workers Initiative and that group of programs, and
8 Immigrant Opportunities Initiative under the Office
9 of Civil Justice.
10

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Has MOIA

12 coordinated with the New York Department of Labor on
13 how to access DALE and other City agencies? I'll just
14 say, I've asked a number of agencies, and no one
15 knows this exists. No one knows that they are able to
16 participate in supporting so, maybe for the record,
17 let me take a step back. If you would explain what
18 DALE is and explain, for the record, how City
19 agencies can support and participate in accessing
20 these tools for workers.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Thank you.

22 DALE is a form of deferred action that was introduced
23 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in
24 January of 2023. Its purpose is to encourage
25 individuals without lawful immigration status,

1 undocumented individuals, to come forward and report
2 employer abuses, because oftentimes they're afraid to
3 come forward and report them out of fear of
4 retribution and retaliation because of the
5 vulnerability that they carry not having status, and
6 so essentially, an individual who has been the victim
7 of an employer abuse, such as unpaid wages,
8 discrimination, lack of fulfillment of paid leave
9 that they're entitled to, can first go to a
10 certifying agency, typically a city, state, or
11 federal agency, the appropriate one based on the
12 violation, and request what's called a statement of
13 interest so the individual would provide all the
14 information related to their case to that agency.
15 Let's say it's the Department of Labor in New York
16 State, and then the Department of Labor would assess
17 that request and issue a statement of interest that
18 that individual could then use as part of their
19 application to USCIS to request deferred action. If
20 granted, deferred action would mean that the federal
21 government agrees to not attempt to enforce removal
22 of that individual for a period of approximately two
23 years, although it can vary on a case-by-case basis.
24
25

3 They would also be eligible for employment
4 authorization for that period.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Are you aware of
6 how many letters of interest New York State
7 Department of Labor has granted over the past year?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I'm not,
9 but I can get back to you on that.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I guess the
11 question is, has DCWP granted any letters of interest
12 over the past year?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I can get
14 back to you on that number.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great, and I'd
16 love to know how MOIA is planning to engage with
17 other city agencies around informing them around how
18 they can participate and use this tool to support
19 workers who are being exploited.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Understood,
21 thank you.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great, thank you.
23 I think I'm going to pass it over to my Colleague,
24 Council Member Feliz.
25

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,
Chair Avilés, for all the questions, and thank you to
the agencies for all the information.

A few questions for MOIA and OASO but,
before that, I just want to reiterate two things.
Number one, two years later, after the migrant
crisis, we need good systems to prep migrants for the
workforce, make sure they're being prepped without
delays. At the same time, on the issue of employment,
the federal government needs to step up. We don't
have time to wait or waste. The jobs are available in
the public sector and in the private sector. The
migrants have specifically come here to work, and
we're telling them to wait 6, 12, and even 18 months.
Wait for what? That is unacceptable, outrageous, and
detrimental to our city and our economy.

A few questions, general questions. The
first one's for MOIA and OASO. Talk to us about the
general budget for your office and how much is
allocated for the issue of migrants, workforce, and
everything else.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Thank you.
For programming overall, this is MOIA contracting
with immigrant-serving non-profits across a variety

1 of service areas, including navigation, case
2 management, legal services, navigation services,
3 including worker training navigations, and some small
4 amounts for worker training. The overall budget is
5 about 7.4 million. Specifically with respect to OSHA,
6 Lorena mentioned NICE and La Colmena. La Colmena
7 receives 125,000 and NICE, 350,000 in Fiscal '24 for
8 that service.
9

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right. Thank
11 you for the information. OASO has helped many
12 migrants with different applications, TPS, asylum,
13 work permit applications. How many applications have
14 been submitted and how many have been granted? Again,
15 work permit applications, asylum, TPS, and all the
16 others.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Hi. I can
18 take that. We have filed over 20,000 asylum
19 applications, around 12,000 TPS applications, and
20 nearly 20,000 work authorization applications. We
21 file them pro se, so the pro se clinic, rather than
22 doing full representation. The only way we can know
23 the success of those applications is either through
24 the federal government or by self-report, talking to
25 the clients, so we are working with the federal

3 government to get a data sharing agreement that will
4 allow us to hear the success metrics of these
5 applications. We know anecdotally that most of them
6 have been successful for work authorization
7 specifically, but we'd like to obviously get more
8 data than that and are working on it.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah. How many for
10 the work permit applications? How many have been
11 granted? Do we have any data on that?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I don't have
13 a full number because we are working with the federal
14 government to get the data sharing agreement so that
15 we can get that back but, in the meantime, because we
16 don't want to wait for that to get stood up, we're
17 standing up our own call center to be able to call
18 through our clients and understand where they are in
19 the process.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and we know
21 the City and the Mayor's Office, all of you have had
22 a lot of conversations with the federal government
23 about help related to funding and also help related
24 to the changes in federal policies. What's the latest
25 on those conversations, funding and also federal

1 policies? If there's any updates from the last time
2 we heard.
3

4 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I'll defer
5 to OASO on the funding piece but, on the policy
6 piece, I can talk about three efforts that we've led
7 via MOIA with the Mayor's Office and Mayor Adams, of
8 course, via a coalition of cities called Cities for
9 Action. Since the beginning, we have led three
10 letters specifically on workforce. The first one on
11 expediting workforce permits. The first one on March
12 28, 2023. This letter signed by more than 50 mayors
13 with bipartisan support called for faster and more
14 equitable access to work authorization. The outcome
15 of this, about a month later, USCIS responded to the
16 letter and said that it already began working on many
17 of the policy recommendations. The second one, which
18 was referenced in the Committee report issued on
19 February 12, 2024, the Coalition of Mayors, 43 mayors
20 to be exact, requested that USCIS urgently issue a
21 permanent automatic extension of work authorization
22 in the form of a temporary final rule or TFR that
23 extend work permits for 540 days or longer. The
24 outcome was that on April 5th, USCIS issued a new TFR
25 extending the work authorization. So, major win, lots

1 of claps in our office when that came out. The latest
2 that we're working on right now that is quite
3 important, on May 23, 2024, a letter led by Chicago
4 Mayor Brandon Johnson and our Mayor, Eric Adams, we
5 sent a letter to Biden's Administration calling for
6 work authorization for both recent arrivals and
7 longstanding undocumented immigrants in the absence
8 of the long-awaited comprehensive immigration reform.
9 What this letter is calling for would be to expand an
10 existing program that grants parole to the spouses
11 and parents of U.S. military service members to
12 include the 1.2 million undocumented spouses of U.S.
13 citizens. We're going to continue and continue to
14 push on this effort because so many U.S. citizens,
15 you fall in love with who you fall in love with, but
16 there is a marriage tax, really, and penalty that
17 goes with folks who marry undocumented individuals
18 who equally provide and pay taxes and have families
19 here in the United States but don't have the ability
20 to amend status without one going back to their home
21 country. Many of them fear that if their visa is
22 denied, they might not be able to come back. That's
23 true, an issue very close to my heart. My 26-year-old
24 nephew hasn't seen his father in seven years because
25

1 his visa was denied back in his home country, and
2 this story repeats itself around the country so we
3 hope that this effort would be one, and it's really a
4 win-win, right, for folks who are here so that's the
5 latest in regards to the national policy landscape,
6 but I'll pass it over to OASO if you want to speak
7 specifically about funding streams.
8

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I don't have
10 information. Sorry, I'm Grace Riddick. I'm the
11 Executive Director of Workforce Diversion and Exit
12 Strategies for the Office of Asylum Seeker
13 Operations. My role is primarily to serve as a
14 liaison between our many City agencies working on
15 workforce development as well as CBOs across the city
16 and the state and federal Departments of Labor so I'm
17 happy to provide information on any of those
18 initiatives relevant to some of your prior questions,
19 Chair, in addition to the wonderful programs that my
20 colleagues at MOIA are spearheading. I will let Masha
21 speak to whether she has information on federal
22 funding relevant to the AAHC. I don't have that
23 information for OASO, but we're taking notes and
24 happy to follow up.
25

1
2 I can share additional work that our
3 office has been doing to address federal policy in
4 the area of workforce development. For example,
5 Chair, you mentioned OSHA and the importance of OSHA
6 training. One of the challenges that we have faced
7 and that we have heard from our CBO partners is that
8 we may have all the site safety trainings in the
9 world here in the city in all the languages that
10 could be offered but, nevertheless, at the federal
11 level, you can only be OSHA certified if you take an
12 OSHA class with an instructor where the instructor
13 has been certified in that language so we have
14 several Spanish-speaking OSHA instructors in the
15 city, but our CBO partners tell us that OSHA has
16 informed them the closest French-speaking OSHA
17 certification instructor is in Washington, D.C. So
18 that seems like a solvable problem, and that's an
19 issue that we brought to the Federal Department of
20 Labor. They have it under review. Those examples are
21 the kinds of things where we look for potential gaps
22 that we hear from across our partners, be they CBOs
23 or City agencies, and then we try to resolve them
24 with what letters we may have as the Mayor's Office.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and also on
3 the three letters that we sent to the federal
4 government, what response, if any, did we get from
5 them?

6 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, well,
7 we haven't gotten a response on our most recent
8 letter, which was in May, but the one in February,
9 the one in March 28, 2023, we did receive a response,
10 and USCIS responded, stating that they already began
11 working on many of the policy recommendations laid
12 out. In the months following, USCIS processing time
13 did improve and has come much closer to compliance.
14 On the second letter, which called for the permanent
15 automatic extension of work authorization, the
16 outcome was what we called for, which was on April 5,
17 2024, so I would say they were responsive and have
18 been following some of the recommendations we
19 provided but, again, this is with Mayor Adams and a
20 coalition of additional mayors across the country.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and how much
22 funding have we received from the federal government
23 for this migrant topic and asylum-seeker topic?
24 What's the latest number on that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We'll have to get back to you on the full number. For the Asylum Application Help Center, we receive our funding from the State government.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, how much funding have we received from the State government? What's the latest number on that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We just finalized an MOU for 30 million for this past Fiscal Year, and we're working on an agreement for the next Fiscal Year.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, how often does MOIA meet with our federal partners, whether it's DOT, President Biden's team, but also federal legislators?

CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I would say I can't give you a number. I think that Commissioner Castro has met with folks of the Administration a handful of times, but I think that some of those conversations are also led by our counterparts at OASO so I would say a handful of times, but I don't have a specific number, Chair.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, all right, thank you for the information.

1
2 A few questions for SBS. A few questions
3 about the American Dream Works program, but before
4 that, just a general question. This is obviously a
5 new issue for SBS, the issue of advocacy for
6 migrants, including workforce, and much more. How
7 much new funding, if any, has SBS received for these
8 issues related to migrants, asylum seekers?

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: If I
10 can just comment on the newness of the issue, this
11 has been a surge, and we've had a lot to learn to
12 adapt to the surge and work to meet the needs of this
13 moment. However, you began in your testimony, and
14 also Chair Avilés, by sharing the economic
15 contribution of immigrants in New York City, and we
16 recognize that immigrant New Yorkers are a
17 significant and a valuable part of our workforce, and
18 SBS' focus on serving immigrant New Yorkers with
19 workforce services did not begin with this crisis. As
20 I said, we launched the Washington Heights Center to
21 specialize in that focus in 2016, and we serve
22 thousands of immigrant New Yorkers annually through
23 Workforce One, I believe more than 12,000 New Yorkers
24 with foreign roots, if I'm not mistaken, on an
25 ongoing basis.

1
2 To directly focus on your question of
3 additional budget to meet needs relating to this
4 surge, we have met all of the needs for all of the
5 work that we have stood up with existing resources.
6 Workforce One has a funding basis that relies on
7 federal funding through WIOA, and we have been able
8 to meet the needs of the work that we have performed
9 thus far with that basis of federal funding. There's
10 been no additional funding specifically focused on
11 this need.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, so just to
13 make sure that I understand your answer correctly, so
14 we've obviously always had a workforce program but,
15 since the start of the migrant crisis, we haven't had
16 any new funding for SBS specifically for this
17 program. Just to make sure I understand your answer
18 correctly.

19 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Yes.
20 The Mayor has called for additional federal resources
21 to help the City meet the vast set of needs that are
22 required to meet the migrant surge, and those include
23 needs in our workforce system. Thus far, we've not
24 received any enhancement of federal resources focused
25 on this population.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, so not one penny for the workforce program, not one new penny. We have what we've had in the past and nothing more.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: We have what we've had in the past, and we're grateful for it. If we'd had to build a system like Workforce One to respond to asylum seeker and migrant workforce needs during this crisis, I think it would have been beyond the City's capacity to do so, so the fact that we have a stable, federally supported workforce system in Workforce One is what has allowed us to be somewhat nimble in responding to this surge.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right, thank you for the information. A few questions about the American Dream Works program. Talk to us about the program. It's obviously a program where you connect work-authorized asylum seekers with businesses and employment opportunities. Tell us more about the program. How does it work? How many employees have registered under it?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Thank you, Council Member Feliz. American Dream Works describes a website or landing page that we launched in October to help both employers and work-authorized

1
2 asylum seekers connect with Workforce One. Employers
3 to share job opportunities that they were willing to
4 consider new New Yorkers for because they were
5 aligned with those communities with that mission of
6 the City to help them work and to help jobseekers
7 connect with the resources of our Workforce One
8 Career Center network. The website is accessible to
9 users in approximately 132 languages as is typical
10 for City websites and, since October, we've received
11 more than 8,000 views on the website, and the primary
12 goal of the website is to ask jobseekers who want to
13 connect to Workforce One services to share their
14 contact information with us so we can put them in
15 touch with the human beings in the Workforce One
16 network that are expert in serving them, and for
17 employers to express that interest so that we can
18 engage with them to understand what the job
19 opportunities are, what the requirements are for
20 candidates for those roles, and successfully begin
21 working to merge those two needs.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What are the
23 requirements for employers to register through the
24 American Dream Works program and also how many have
25 registered to date?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

We're collecting basic information in the form on American Dream Works, and we do a more robust enrollment of employers using our Workforce One staff so we want to know the name of the employer, the location, and we want them to express their interest in hiring new New Yorkers. Thus far, 241 businesses have signed up through the portal to express an interest in hiring new New Yorkers. However, the employers that we've worked to connect new New Yorkers to are not limited to those that enroll through the American Dream Works portal. As I said, Workforce One is a robust citywide system and part of the responsibilities at every center is business engagement and job development. So currently, I love my team, you guys are so helpful. Currently, we have about 5,000 jobs available across the Workforce One system to which we're attempting to connect all of our candidates, including new New Yorkers.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right, 5,000 jobs. Okay. How are potential employers vetted before participating in this program, American Dream Works program?

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

3 We're collecting...

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: If there's any
5 vetting.

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

7 We're collecting information about the employers,
8 again, the location of their jobs, the requirement
9 for candidates for those roles, how they're going to
10 accept referrals from Workforce One, how many
11 openings they have, and we're sharing our standards
12 for wages. We want to be sure that, they're paying
13 folks a reasonable wage and, currently, we have in
14 the 5,000-plus employers in the system, they are
15 representing 411 businesses citywide that currently
16 have job orders with Workforce One, and I hope that
17 answered your question.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right. What are
19 top jobs and industries under this program? I'm sure
20 there's a lot of jobs available in the food industry,
21 healthcare. What are some of the top industries?

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

23 Yeah. The jobs available in the system really reflect
24 the range of private sector jobs available across the
25 city of New York. In the sector of administrative

1 support and waste management, that's representing
2 about 25 percent of existing job orders in the
3 system. As an example, think about security guard
4 jobs, entry level jobs in healthcare and social
5 assistance, might include home health aide jobs. In
6 the accommodation and food services, we're looking at
7 restaurant workers, food service workers, and
8 businesses of many kinds, including the example I
9 gave in my testimony of the airline catering company
10 to which we connected a new New Yorker. Additionally,
11 jobs in the transportation and warehousing sector so
12 we're referring clients of Workforce One to jobs
13 driving and in parking facilities citywide.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What are the
16 requirements for asylum seekers and migrants to
17 participate in this program and, also, how are these
18 requirements communicated and advertised to the
19 migrants?

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: As I
21 said, we try to create very broad access to our
22 services and to our centers. Our centers, as I said,
23 being brick and mortar locations, include some
24 resources of real use to new New Yorkers, such as the
25 computer labs so there is no screening for work

1 authorization at the door of a Workforce One center.
2 We do require one piece of ID, and we're flexible on
3 the type of ID. That's because our centers, we have
4 to document to our funders that we're serving adults.
5 That's one limitation on even our basic services.
6 They're available for individuals 18 and up so we
7 want some verification of age. Other than that, most
8 of the documentation to engage with Workforce One is
9 self-reported. We want contact information but,
10 really importantly, we want information on what that
11 jobseeker has done in the past. What are the work
12 experiences they've had previously or in another
13 country that can help us assess their match with jobs
14 in our database.
15

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How are individuals
17 connected to the American Dream Works program? Is
18 that available to individuals living in HERRCs and
19 also outside of HERRCs, and also how are they
20 informed about these opportunities?

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Yes.
22 American Dream Works, as I said, it's a web portal, a
23 landing page, and we promote it through our outreach
24 materials. I think my team has examples of some of
25 the palm cards that we've created that we'd love to

1 share with you today. We have them available in many
2 languages with a QR code included that connects folks
3 to the American Dream Works portal. Here's an example
4 with the QR code on the back. Great. Thank you, Chair
5 Feliz. We're promoting our web assets through social
6 media, through advertising, Google search
7 advertising, all of the ways that we can promote our
8 services. Outreach has been a real focus for SBS in
9 this administration. We recognize that creating broad
10 awareness of the availability of government
11 programming so that the individual who needs that
12 assistance can access it at the point where they're
13 most open to it or that need becomes prominent. I
14 think it's a pervasive problem of government, and so
15 we're also sharing our resources through partners
16 that are deeply embedded in these communities so that
17 they can help us turnkey the information. We are also
18 participating in events to the extent that we can
19 cover them and, for this surge, our coverage of
20 events has really expanded, and it's our outreach
21 team members, our executive team members, our
22 Commissioner, we've done some connection to shelters.
23 We're also working with shelters to schedule
24 appointments for their clients at Workforce One hub
25

1 centers closest to them to really create that warm
2 handoff, really lead them to the shelters to be aware
3 of the services so really every way that we can think
4 of to spread the word about the availability of these
5 services so that folks can take advantage of them
6 and, of course, we want to partner with you all in
7 getting out the word and are open to your suggestions
8 for broadening that outreach.
9

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Does SBS take
11 steps to prioritize outreach of specifically migrants
12 who are susceptible and vulnerable to exploitation by
13 unscrupulous employers or human trafficking?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I
15 think through our community partners network, if we
16 encounter clients in Workforce One who are struggling
17 with any of those challenges, we would connect them
18 to wraparound services through those partners. One
19 example of a new partnership that we've developed in
20 response to this particular crisis is with the
21 Educational Alliance. They've hosted a number of
22 types of activities for migrants during this surge,
23 but they have been assisting folks who are kind of
24 emerging from the process of work authorization with
25 some of those last steps, and we have sent staff from

1 our Washington Heights centers to their legal
2 clinics. We've covered seven of those just since
3 March, met with 167 participants that they have
4 served through that program, about 70 of which we've
5 onboarded as Workforce One clients. In addition,
6 they're hosting kind of Welcome to New York resource
7 fairs, serving a broader set of new New Yorkers, and
8 we're staffing those with our outreach team so,
9 again, engaging in partnerships with mission-aligned
10 non-profits is a critical way of increasing awareness
11 of our services and reaching new New Yorkers.
12

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How much funding is
14 dedicated specifically to the American Dream Works
15 program, apart from funding already allocated to the
16 Workforce One programs?

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
18 We've used existing resources, primarily federal
19 resources, to cover the American Dream Works
20 activities.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: So no new money for
22 the American Dream Works program?

23 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: We
24 have not received any new federal resources for
25 American Dream Works.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How many staff members are dedicated specifically for this program?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: For the American Dream Works initiative specifically, we've created a team of five SBS staffers.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Sorry, how many?

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
Excuse me?

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How many? Sorry.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Five SBS staff people who for the past several months have been primarily focused on the American Dream Works initiative. That has included outreach activities, organizing hiring events, staffing outreach events and, importantly, attempting to do some real-time tracking of our success in connecting New Yorkers to these services so that we can adapt. Generally, though, as in keeping with the answer I gave you about our budget, we're using existing resources within Workforce One and across SBS to staff these activities.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can I ask a followup question? I'm sorry. Just for clarity, in

1
2 terms of the federal funding that goes to SBS, what
3 percentage of the budget is federally funded?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I'm
5 not sure I have that answer for you today, but I'm
6 happy to get back to you. The vast majority of our
7 budget for Workforce One is federal funded, and it's
8 allocated by formula based on unemployment rate, and
9 I believe the budget is just over 30 million dollars
10 annually to operate the Workforce One network and
11 fund some of the WDD staff that support the delivery
12 of those programs.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: What restrictions
14 come with federal funding as it relates to immigrant
15 communities?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
17 Again, we have to serve adults and, in terms of the
18 services we can deliver through Workforce One, we can
19 deliver all services up to the point of connection to
20 federally funded training or matching to a job. We
21 cannot refer an individual who's not self-reported
22 that they have work authorization to a job.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So you have to
24 have work authorization in order to get the referral
25 to the job?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
3 Through Workforce One, yes.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. Thank you.
5 I'm trying to understand the gap. In terms of the
6 vast majority is federally funded, and you can only
7 refer to actual jobs for folks that have work
8 authorization, how does anyone else without
9 authorization receive services, and what's the
10 funding mechanism for that?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: We
12 are not restricted from onboarding clients to
13 Workforce One prior to their receipt of work
14 authorization, and that's why the lists that are
15 shared by NYS DOL, OASO, our partners who are
16 providing shelter are so important. The shelter
17 directors, for example, they understand within their
18 client population individuals who have applied for
19 work authorization or may have received work
20 authorization. We're coordinating so that they can
21 schedule those folks for intake appointments with
22 Workforce One. We are also receiving lists of clients
23 who have applied for work authorization with the
24 City's support. Those are the clients, nearly 9,000
25 at this point, to which we're doing proactive

3 outreach using telephone calls, texts, and emails to
4 inform them of the services, drive them toward
5 Workforce One's doors.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So how are the
7 other needs being resourced? Is that City dollars or?
8 I'm trying to understand the gap here. If the
9 majority of the funding is federal, and it works up
10 to a certain limitation, I'm trying to understand
11 where is the other resources coming from to address
12 the remaining needs?

13 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Within
14 Workforce One, again, I would refer back to our
15 network of community partners for which we can refer
16 candidates who have needs that we can't meet through
17 the system, and perhaps OASO would take a question
18 about other support for workforce services outside of
19 our system.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Sure. Thank
21 you. To address one of your questions and to just
22 expand a bit on the Commissioner's answer, those who
23 have applied for EADs and are somewhere in that 6 to
24 18 months' time are eligible for support services
25 from SBS, and so one of the things that we've been
working to do is to collaborate and identify across

1
2 their 22 different centers where they have centers
3 that are near to individuals we know that have
4 applied to EADs and have not yet engaged. Actually
5 just last week at the SBS Long Island City Center, we
6 did a sprint over three days for the clients in one
7 of the larger sites that we have in Long Island City,
8 and we were able to get, I believe, 41 clients pre-
9 screened for authorization and get their resumes
10 completed, because obviously resume writing and
11 English resumes is something that we can assist with
12 if you don't speak English fluently so that's one
13 example. Another I would give is that as you
14 identified previously, ESL is a huge need for our
15 population. For many of the asylum seekers, ESL is
16 workforce development because it is incredibly
17 difficult to get a job in America if you do not speak
18 English or Spanish. Spanish is slightly easier in
19 some communities so, to that end, we have heard from
20 our CBO partners that their ESL classes are full,
21 they are at capacity, they have gotten no new funding
22 so very much to the credit of my colleagues at SBS
23 and other City agencies, we are currently working on
24 a pilot for the fall between SBS and District 79 to
25 think about how we can get District 79-based

1
2 instructors in ESL to use space that's not currently
3 being used, at times it's not being used, at
4 Workforce One centers that are nearby to where we
5 know that we have folks that need to learn how to
6 speak English so those are the kinds of things that
7 we're trying to do.

8 We haven't received more funding, but I
9 think we're being quite scrappy and creative where we
10 can be to figure out how we can bring things together
11 across agencies to create solutions that begin to
12 address some of these problems.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Going back to some
14 of the earlier questions, can you repeat again how
15 many work permit applications we've submitted? Also,
16 I know you mentioned you don't have a hard number on
17 how many have been approved, but if you could give us
18 the roughest number on more or less how many work
19 permits have been approved.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We have
21 completed 20,000 work authorizations, 20,000 asylum,
22 and 15,000 TPS. I would have to get back to you on
23 the rough number because, while both Health and
24 Hospitals and the Department of Labor have their own
25 efforts to talk to these clients and get the numbers,

1
2 I don't have that handy, but those are still self-
3 reports, and I think what we ultimately want is data
4 from the federal government about who has applied and
5 who hasn't applied. We're working on the MOU now.
6 What I like to say sometimes is as a program manager,
7 I want the data right away, but as a former emigrant
8 of the Soviet Union, I want the government to make
9 sure my privacy is protected before any information
10 is shared so I understand that it's important that we
11 go through a careful privacy MOU process to get it,
12 but I am looking forward to it, and I want to know
13 exactly how many of our applications were accepted,
14 did more get accepted on Fridays or on Mondays, which
15 application assistants worked on them? As a program
16 manager, I will get to a place where I have that
17 information.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. If you were
19 to guess, though, would you say more than 1,000 have
20 been approved?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: If I were to
22 guess, which I feel like I've been advised not to do...

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: We can get
24 back to you.

25

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: No, no, no.
3 I'm fine. I think that I have enough anecdotal data
4 to feel like at least half of them have been
5 approved.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: At least half of
7 the 20,000?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Yeah.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Super rough guess.
10 Okay.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Super rough
12 guess, but I feel good about it.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: It's just an
14 educated guess, right?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: If I may, we
16 do have self-reported data from the sites that have
17 rolled out a new set of questions as part of their
18 case management program. So that's now currently
19 active across 18 of our H and H managed sites, so we
20 do have self-reported EAD data for those sites, and
21 we can at least share that number afterwards.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. A few
23 questions for SBS. How many asylum seekers and
24 migrants have obtained employment through Workforce
25 or the American Dreams Program based on the numbers

1 that have obtained the work authorization, whatever
2 that number is?

3
4 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Thus far,
5 we've provided services to 5,500 new New Yorkers. We
6 have referred 2,000 of those unique individuals to
7 jobs with local employers, and we will be able to
8 report out at the end of the Fiscal Year on actual
9 successful connections to employment for those
10 jobseekers, and the reason for that lag is just what
11 we're required to do in terms of validation of hires
12 because of our federal funding source so we're asking
13 the employers to verify and share payroll data that
14 validates the hire for us so what we shared in the
15 testimony were the stories we're hearing from the
16 jobseekers about the successes they're beginning to
17 have through the connections that we have made and,
18 as we're able to validate those hires with employers,
19 we'll be able to fill in the details about successful
20 connections to employment.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What's the process
22 like for an asylum seeker or migrant to move through
23 this program? Getting access, applying, how quick are
24 the appointments, and anything else in the process?

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: If
3 they are accessing our services through our Workforce
4 One centers, which is what we want primarily because
5 those centers, we've got most of those centers are
6 fixed physical locations. It's not an event happening
7 on a single day. They're staffed steadily. They're
8 staffed there 9 to 5. They're staffed with language
9 capacity or the ability to connect to translation
10 services so, if they're walking into a Workforce One
11 center, they're receiving, a friendly welcome. They
12 are completing a customer information form that
13 allows us to collect information, basic information
14 about that, like I said, their contact information,
15 name, and age, and that makes them a member of our
16 program. They receive an introduction to services
17 orientation, which informs them of all of the
18 services available to them through Workforce One. If
19 we are observing or they make us aware of needs they
20 have for supportive services, we're able to consider
21 which community partners we can connect them to to
22 meet those needs, and then they meet with a career
23 advisor one-on-one to discuss their experience, their
24 goals, and then we strategize for how to help them
25 move to the next step, whether that's a career

1 development activity, such as a training, or meeting
2 with an account manager if they're ready to be
3 connected with a job and so, assuming their work
4 authorized, once they've received the support
5 trainings they need, they're referred to an account
6 manager, and the account manager helps to screen and
7 match them to job opportunities that we've sourced
8 from local employers. For candidates who are deemed a
9 match, they're scheduled to connect with that
10 employer in the way that the employer has guided us
11 so that may mean support from Workforce One,
12 completing an application, being scheduled for an
13 interview, or whatever method the employer has
14 identified as a next step, and they're encouraged to
15 continue using our services until they connect with
16 employment.
17

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and I have
19 many more, I have pages of questions, but I'll ask a
20 few more and then I'll pass it on to my Colleagues
21 who also have questions so just a few more questions
22 on that topic.

23 I would also like to recognize Council
24 Member Rita Joseph.

25

1 At what point do we think training
2
3 migrants and asylum seekers is the proper point? Is
4 it when they're applying for any of these items, or
5 is it after they get the permits?

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: We
7 want to connect new New Yorkers to training
8 opportunities when they need it. Our goal is to meet
9 jobseekers where they are. That's one reason we're
10 very pleased that we do have the ability to offer
11 construction site safety training, both through our
12 hub centers and through our community partners, that
13 provides 30 hours of training approved by DOB on fall
14 prevention, drug and alcohol awareness, other topics
15 and, if the individual has managed to access OSHA
16 training, we provide a training supplement that gives
17 them the site safety card that's required to work on
18 a city construction site so our goal is to be able to
19 provide as much training as we can when the jobseeker
20 can accommodate it and based on their need. I
21 apologize. I think I said 30 hours of training. It's
22 40 hours of training in construction site safety.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and you
24 mentioned that we've assisted, is the number 5,500
25 asylum seekers and migrants under these programs?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Under the workforce
and American Dream Works.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:

That's correct. We've provided services to a total of
about over 5,000 new New Yorkers based on our
tracking in construction site safety specifically and
based on reporting and, again, because we need
insight about this work real time to make decisions
real time, we are asking our partners to share with
us in some ways that haven't been standard across our
operations of these programs, but our day laborer
partners estimate that about 90 percent of the folks
who've completed training since January of 2022 are
new New Yorkers, and so that's more than 2,500 New
Yorkers who've received construction site safety
training since January of 2022. Thank you, Yuri.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. I'll pass it
on to Council Member Gale Brewer but, before that, I
just want to go over some of the numbers, which kind
of signal that it seems like we need additional
resources for these programs. Number one, last I
heard, we have about 65,000 asylum seekers under our

1 care. Roughly 10,000, whether under the HERRCs or
2 not, more or less 10,000 have work permits.
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Oh, no.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Super roughly.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Super
7 roughly, yeah. Don't get me in trouble now.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah, okay, but
9 super roughly, let's say 5,000 to 10,000 have work
10 permits and we've only assisted about 5,500 under the
11 workforce and American Dream Works.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Yes,
13 we've reached out to more than that. We've reached
14 out to nearly 9,000. Those that have accepted
15 services and actually received services, it's about
16 5,500 of the nearly 9,000 we've attempted to contact.
17 We haven't made contact with every individual, so
18 we've been unable to reach some. Some have declined
19 services. They're finding their way through other
20 methods, but we are pleased to have connected 5,500
21 to services thus far.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Just in general,
23 even putting to the side the number of individuals
24 who have obtained the work permits, I think the fact
25 that we have about 65,000 asylum seekers under our

1 care and only 5,500 have been connected, I think that
2 shows we need a lot of work. We should not wait for
3 people to get work permits. With job training, we
4 should, by the time they get the work permits, they
5 should be prepared to work rather than starting
6 training after they get the permits so I think the
7 general numbers show that there's a little bit of
8 work in terms of creating a better system so that
9 we're making sure that these asylum seekers and
10 migrants are able to obtain economic financial
11 stability ASAP so thank you. I'll pause it there.
12 Let's hear from our Chair of Oversight, Gale Brewer.

13
14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
15 much. The 6,500, does that include children? 65,000,
16 does that include children? I think it does.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: It does, yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I love the
19 wonderful question, but I just want to say a baby
20 can't get a job yet.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: No, I
22 appreciate that, Council Member, so we estimate that
23 approximately 27,000 asylum seekers in our care are
24 available working age adults, meaning they are not
25 children and they are not responsible for childcare.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I want
3 to visit John Jay, where there is the federal, state,
4 and city, so it works, so how many centers are like
5 that? Are you going to continue that? I know the
6 building might be converted by CUNY, blah, blah, blah
7 so what is the status of that center? Do you have
8 other centers? Does that center work better than
9 anywhere else, etc.? That's my question, my first
10 question.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: No problem.
12 What you're referring to is our John Jay Center where
13 we have the federal government on site and they're
14 able to receive and take in work authorization
15 applications so our plan is to continue that
16 partnership. We got that space with the help of the
17 state and they've committed to finding us a
18 replacement when we might have to move out of that
19 space. Today's actually an exciting day. It's the
20 launch of an expansion of that program where they're
21 now also doing biometrics for our defensive asylum
22 applications, which will directly increase the amount
23 of folks with work authorization because, as some of
24 you know, even though you apply for asylum and your
25 clock starts for when you can get work authorization,

1 if you miss your biometrics appointment, your clock
2 stops and then you have to keep waiting, and so we're
3 able to create a one-stop shop for our clients now
4 where they can, starting today, for defensive
5 applicants can go there and get their biometrics,
6 therefore reducing that barrier where their clocks
7 would be stopped for that reason so we're very
8 excited about that, and we are grateful for the
9 federal government and being creative with us and
10 finding a way that they can kind of, policy aside,
11 operationally help increase the amount of folks with
12 work authorization, and we'd like more opportunities
13 like that.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So then the number
16 of persons that have gone through that, do you know
17 what the number is? I think they told me, but I
18 forget.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I can get
20 back to you, but that's exact.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. That's not
22 included in the SBS number and the workforce.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: That'd be a
24 separate number, but it'd be a subset of our AAHC
25 clients.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so then I'm
3 still confused about numbers. Council Member Feliz
4 was great. So we got 27,000 in care, some number that
5 maybe 5 to 10 have gotten work authorization of some
6 kind. 5,500 have been helped by SBS, 9,000 reached
7 out to, but it seems to me that there are larger
8 numbers that have been helped if you count this
9 particular center, John Jay, and I go to, I don't
10 know, centers all the time, Rutgers Church, Project
11 Russo, etc., I'm always at those centers, so do we
12 have the total number or who's in charge? That's what
13 I'm trying to figure out of this process. I'm having
14 trouble figuring that out, I have to say.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I think that
16 what I can speak to is from the AAHC side. We have
17 helped over 50,000 people with some sort of
18 application, TPS, asylum work authorization.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: When you say we,
20 you're talking about all the different groups,
21 Project Russo, Rutgers Church.

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I'm just
23 talking about the Asylum Application Help Center.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

25

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Apart from
3 us, there is a huge kind of coalition of non-profit
4 partners, some of whom are funded by our MOIA
5 partners...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And some not
7 funded, they just do it.

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: And some not
9 funded, they just do it, and there are people that
10 are seeking help through private attorneys so there's
11 a whole kind of ecosystem of folks working to get
12 these individuals taking their next legal step.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I don't know
14 who's in charge. It's a little loosey-goosey for me,
15 to be honest with you. I'd like to have somebody sort
16 of call in, keep track so that you can see what the
17 issues are.

18 ESL. Pisses me off that the Mayor cuts
19 ESL, and you guys don't say anything. That's the
20 Mayor, can't do anything. Pisses me off, okay,
21 because there are waiting lists in the libraries,
22 waiting lists everywhere, and here you're talking
23 about working with District 9, love District 9, and
24 finding some funding for ESL, but why don't you speak
25 up and say, we need ESL? Who's going to answer that

1 question? I mean, this is crazy not to have ESL. This
2 is insanity.
3

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I'm
5 happy to speak to how we're dealing with the need for
6 ESL among clients that we're serving. I believe 78
7 percent of the new New Yorkers that we've served
8 through Workforce One have expressed that they have a
9 primary language other than English, and ESL is
10 important at every stage of our ability to support
11 them. It's important in our marketing materials. It's
12 important in our intake process. It's important when
13 we're supporting them in developing resumes and our
14 delivery of workshops and in connecting them to
15 employers so it really is essential at every stage of
16 the process. Where we are making referrals to
17 community partners for ESL, the SUNY Educational
18 Opportunity Center and CUNY sites have been a primary
19 resource for us, and we are working to increase our
20 ability to connect Workforce One clients to ESL
21 seats, exploring ways that we can deliver ESL on-
22 site, seeking additional private resources to expand
23 ESL as well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I appreciate
25 that. I just want to point out, because it does make

1 me angry, I sat in all these budget hearings and all
2 we get are cut, cut, cut, and there's some stupid RFP
3 out that doesn't make any sense on this topic.
4

5 The other question I have is the change
6 of addresses so maybe it's working. You move
7 shelters, then I believe you still have to get
8 something in the mail from the federal government.
9 What is it you still need to get? This is about
10 worker authorization. Is it working if you have your
11 address at the Red Cross on 49th Street? How is that
12 all working or not working, if it's an issue? I get
13 it as a complaint, but maybe I'm wrong.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I can start
15 with the AAHC, but this would apply to all of our
16 migrants in care. Folks that receive federal mail at
17 our shelters can keep the mail. The mail stays there
18 indefinitely, so they can go back and receive it. For
19 some of our migrants in care, they are able to use
20 the Red Cross address. That is a NYCEM-run program,
21 so I'd defer to them on the details there if you'd
22 like, and then at the Application Help Center, we
23 always proactively check with folks if they need a
24 change of address form or a change of venue motion,
25 and we will do that for them.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm just
4 saying it's still an issue. Sometimes the shelter
5 tells, sometimes the shelter doesn't. Again, I'm not
6 a big 30-, 60-day move-out proponent personally, but
7 I do think that somebody should be paying more
8 attention to that issue. Red Cross works. I'm not
9 sure the shelter does.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I think one
11 area that we have been trying to work with the
12 federal government on is making as much of this
13 process as digital as possible..

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But there is still
15 one piece of paper that is needed, I believe.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Exactly, but
17 I think that at least if it was digital, you'd have
18 greater clarity about where it is.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How are you
20 contacting, because I heard three letters, but I
21 didn't hear any letter about that piece of paper.
22 Who's working on that? Is it the Washington office,
23 which I used to head under Mayor Dinkins?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Can you
25 clarify the piece of paper? You mean the actual EAD?

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes. How do you
3 get the law changed so they can be digital? Who's
4 doing that? Who's working on that?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I'll have to
6 get back to you about that one.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The other issue is
8 childcare. Obviously, a lot of women are working. I
9 think we're not talking exclusively about men here,
10 but it is often, so what are we doing about childcare
11 for Promise NYC, which also got cut by the Mayor?
12 What are we doing about childcare? Do you hear it as
13 a problem, either at the workforce or anyplace else?
14 What's going on with childcare for these wonderful
15 families?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I
17 can't speak to citywide connection to childcare
18 resources. I can say that as we've increased our
19 service to new New Yorkers at our Workforce One
20 centers, especially at the hiring events, there's not
21 one hiring event that I've attended that we haven't
22 seen women clients coming with their children in an
23 attempt to connect to work, and so we've worked to
24 accommodate them at those events, but that doesn't

1 speak to their larger need for quality child care to
2 actually participate.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Obviously, if
5 they're bringing their kids in school time, that's
6 not a good thing.

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
8 Often younger children, toddlers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. We're all
10 trying to make sure that there is childcare. Again,
11 if you could speak up about this, that would be
12 appreciated. Another cut, Promise NYC, excellent
13 program, cut. So we need to have it restored.
14 Obviously, the City Council will do that, should
15 never have been cut.

16 Then my other just final question at this
17 point is for the change of policies in the future, so
18 are you have any sense between the 30 and 60 day? I
19 understand people need to move on, I understand that.
20 The way to go about it would be have a caseworker
21 say, do you have friends in Idaho, Texas, or
22 whatever? That's what I would do. But do you have any
23 sense of this 30 or 60 day is having an impact on
24 people not getting jobs because of they have to move
25 all the time. You do see very long lines at St.

1 Bridget's, and I do worry about that. I was at an
2 event last night with a lot of the African language
3 issues, etc. so what are we doing specifically for
4 the African community? That would be my final
5 question in terms of all of these issues. Like, are
6 you going to Randall's Island or are you going to St.
7 Bridget's or what are you actually doing to help that
8 population? Because they don't have much from
9 Washington.
10

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I can start
12 and then I'm happy to have my colleagues add on as
13 well. We appreciate the highlight that was brought to
14 the challenges for black migrants during the hearing
15 in April, and we have made several changes so one
16 thing as I want to call out the work the AAHC has
17 done, they have so far never had an individual come
18 to the center who could not be served. We currently
19 have in care and shelter, as of our most recent
20 numbers, 12 African languages or dialects at least
21 beyond Arabic and French, and Chair Avilés earlier
22 called out Arabic as a necessary translation.
23 Completely agree. We recently had Wolof speakers but
24 their primary language surpassed Arabic for people in
25 our care so it is an incredible issue and I

1 appreciate you bringing attention to it. This comes
2 back to our collaboration with our CBOs and how very
3 key they are to our ability to identify what asylum
4 seekers need and respond. Council Member Brewer, I
5 think you actually mentioned Project Rousseau, an
6 incredible organization that's going above and beyond
7 to serve.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Way beyond.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Yes,
11 absolutely. I agree. So recently we spoke to them and
12 said, you know, we have folks who would love to get
13 their food certifications or their CDL licenses but
14 they can't find those programs to study in French so
15 that CBO is now offering both of those classes this
16 month to its clients. However, in New York State, you
17 can get your driver's license in 10 different
18 languages, but the CDL test is only offered in
19 English, Spanish, Russian, and what they call Chinese
20 so we took that to State Transportation and said, can
21 we please get this language in French? We have 10
22 percent of our asylum seekers in care who speak
23 French as their preferred language. Those are a few
24 of the attempts that we're making, and we recognize
25 that there's more to do.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council
4 Member Brewer.

5 Council Member Paladino.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon,
7 and thank you, Chairs, for pushing me up a little
8 bit. I appreciate that.

9 This hearing should, if none other, would
10 show us the frustration that the city is going
11 through right now. It's huge. This is a mountainous
12 task that has been placed upon this city. We have
13 over 200,000 or close to 200,000 migrants in this
14 city right now, 65,000 that we know about so I
15 commend you for what you're doing and trying to do.
16 We haven't seen anything like this ever in the
17 history of New York City. While we're trying to place
18 27,000 adults, most of which do not speak English, so
19 there's so many different accommodations that we need
20 to make in order to find them work, does not surprise
21 me that it's taking the amount of time that it's
22 taking. It certainly would. We talked about
23 construction work, 2,500 construction jobs. Well,
24 we've got union guys who really need to work, and
25 we're placing unskilled workers where they should not

1 be, which could cause some detrimental and dire
2 situations, people's lives put in danger. I'm
3 interested to know, how do we determine if a migrant
4 seeking ID is really the person that they claim to
5 be? What documentation are the migrants presenting
6 when they enter this United States and the City of
7 New York, and are they vetted for these jobs that
8 they're going out for? Second question, how are we
9 tracking migrants who leave the shelter system? Is
10 there a system in place to check and see how things
11 are going to work or housing that they are entering
12 after they leave a temporary shelter? There are
13 several different things. There's also something
14 here, and the reason why I'm rushing through this,
15 and I apologize, is because I need to be back in my
16 District no later than 1:30. How do you propose to
17 quickly clear, this really troubles me, the backlog
18 of I-765 applications for employment authorizations?
19 Just to give everyone who applies employment
20 authorization, hire more caseworkers? What's the
21 plan? How do we plan to rush these people through?
22 You also brought up a CDL license. My husband has
23 every truck driving license known to man. That's what
24 he does for a living. A CDL license is not an easy
25

1 license to do, so the fact that you do offer it right
2 now in four languages, I think is commendable. When
3 we need to worry about 300 different African
4 dialects, I think that poses a big problem for this
5 City. This City is not equipped. We stressed this
6 back a year and a half ago. We were going to be
7 overburdened, and we are. If this meeting today does
8 not show everybody in the City of New York how we are
9 not equipped to handle what has come through our
10 system, I don't know what does so I'm going to leave
11 you with that. If you could answer my question about
12 the ID that they show, and how do they prove to be
13 who they say they are. We've got people going into
14 the food industry who are driving these mopeds like
15 madmen and women, okay? We've had crimes committed on
16 these mopeds. They are unlicensed. They are
17 uninsured. We are in a situation that New York City
18 does not know how to get out of, and it's nobody's
19 fault except the gates are open, and they just keep
20 flooding in so I wish you all a lot of luck. If you
21 could answer some of my questions, that would be
22 great, but this is an extremely frustrating
23 situation, one that New York City cannot handle.
24
25

1 You're doing your best to handle it. Thank you very
2 much.
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I can
5 respond to questions one and three. Regarding
6 individuals leaving the system, I defer to my
7 colleagues at OASO.

8 Regarding question one, how do people
9 prove who they are? I would defer to DSS. The
10 Department of Social Services oversees IDNYC. Their
11 website has a list of the documents that can make
12 someone eligible for IDNYC, and I can say that DSS
13 works in collaboration with other City agencies,
14 including NYPD, to confirm that the documents are
15 valid.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I know you do
17 try. I don't mean to interrupt you. I know you do
18 try, but the fact remains is that there are so many
19 people roaming this city right now, thousands and
20 thousands, who are not ID'd properly, who are
21 committing crimes that are heinous, and yet we cannot
22 process them in any way, shape, or form because we
23 don't know who they are or where they come from so
24 when it gets down to it, it's just one big, it's
25 false. It's all false. The few that do want, and I'm

1 going to tell you, I ran two small businesses, and
2 these people were sponsored by my sister to become
3 American citizens. It took years but they got their
4 sponsorship. I ran a landscaping business, day
5 workers. They work hard, but we did not get flooded
6 the way we are flooded right now. We just do not
7 have, the jobs are not available. The people are
8 plentiful. Some want to work very, very, very hard. I
9 wish we could help more than we can, but the reality
10 of this whole thing is that we simply cannot, and
11 this is proof. You heard Gale. You heard Chairman
12 Feliz. We've listened to everybody here, and all
13 we're hearing is just the frustration that we're not
14 doing enough. We're not doing enough because we
15 cannot do more than what we're already doing so we
16 could try, and we are, but I just don't see an easy
17 way out of this. I really don't. Thank you.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Regarding
20 question three related to the I-765 backlog, the
21 Office of Immigrant Affairs has engaged with the
22 federal government in collaboration with other
23 cities, submitted letters and requests to expedite
24 the production of work authorization, and the City
25 through OASO and the Asylum Application Help Center

1 and our other programs work tirelessly to help people
2 apply for work authorization and have in high
3 numbers.
4

5 I'll pass to my colleagues at OASO
6 regarding individuals leaving the system.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Thank you. I
8 would like to just push back on the assertion that
9 New York City has never before seen a surge like this
10 one. In the 1890s, in that one decade, we had 600,000
11 immigrants come through the city just from Italy and,
12 in the following decade, that number rose to a
13 million, and I could only imagine, you know...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: You cannot
15 compare the Industrial Revolution of the 1890s and
16 the early turn of the century to 2024. New York City
17 needed to be built back then, and you cannot in any
18 way, shape, or form compare that time to this time.
19 Totally different, apples and oranges. Please don't
20 try to push that on the citizens of the City of New
21 York because they won't buy it the same way I don't
22 buy it. You could try, but it won't work.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: To answer
24 question two, Council Member Paladino, while
25

1 individuals are within our care, obviously we can
2 track them...

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Just curious,
5 (INAUDIBLE)

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Because I
7 know that number.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: You just happen
9 to know Italians, 600,000. Really? Show me the list
10 of the 600,000. Italians. That was mixed European.
11 That was Italian. That was Irish. That was German.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I'm happy to
13 follow up with you on that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Don't go there
15 because I could take offense to that. Everybody seems
16 to take offense to when you single out a certain
17 nationality so, as an Italian, I think I'll take
18 offense to that, and you should never have said that,
19 ever.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: To your
21 second question, once individuals are out of care, we
22 can't track them, obviously. They may be moving to
23 shelter elsewhere outside of care. They may be coming
24 back into shelter at a later time. However, we do
25 have the ability to share information about

1 individuals who have applied for EADs. I think
2 several of my colleagues have referred to that
3 previously, and an example of that would be the
4 collaboration between New York State Department of
5 Labor and SBS.
6

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.
8 Thank you for inserting some historical facts into
9 the dialogue here.

10 How many change of addresses applications
11 have been filed through the Asylum Application Help
12 Center?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We filed
14 6,588.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: 6,580. And do you
16 know how many applicants are using the Red Cross
17 location as their address?

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I don't, but
19 we'll get back to you on that number.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And you mentioned
21 earlier that perhaps that mail is being maintained
22 indefinitely. Is it at all the centers or just at
23 the...

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: It's all the
25 shelters currently, if it's federal mail, so not all

1 mail, but federal mail so if it would be an EAD, it
2 would be maintained.
3

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of if an
5 individual has filed an application with the Help
6 Center while they were living in the shelters but are
7 not now living in the shelter, can they still access
8 services at the Help Center?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: That's a
10 great question. Yes. If they're a former client and
11 especially if we applied asylum for them and now, six
12 months later, they want work authorization, we'll
13 actually proactively call them to try to get them
14 into appointment. We call our previous list at least
15 three times and then, if they have a question or a
16 rejection or request for more information from the
17 federal government, they can come in and we'll see
18 that application through.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So any touchpoint
20 with the system will allow you access to follow back
21 up?

22 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Yeah,
23 exactly.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. Now in terms
25 of, so the Administration has prioritized obviously

1
2 asylum and TPS and corresponding work authorization
3 applications through the Help Center but asylum, as
4 we know, is enormously complicated to apply for and
5 defend and requires a delay to apply for work
6 authorization so individuals are not in shelters
7 after the 30, 60 days would become ineligible for
8 Help Center services, and the number of new arrivals
9 may be better suited for a different immigration
10 status that may provide more streamlined work
11 authorization status so, additionally, sorry, this is
12 building context here, additionally, because the TPS
13 must be reapplied for, there needs to be
14 consideration of what services are available to new
15 arrivals closer to their future renewal dates,
16 especially if TPS recipients have integrated
17 themselves into New York City and its local economy.
18 So here's the question, so are there any plans to
19 direct funding away from the Help Center towards
20 immigration service providers to address these
21 complexities and the fact that these applications
22 take a very, very long time and people need full
23 representation, not a quick application to better
24 likely provide access to work authorization. What are
25 the plans to address this full pipeline?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Okay, so I'll take that in parts. The Asylum Application Help Center is definitely an emergency operation that complements but does not replace all the amazing work that has been done, is done, will be done by the CBO community, and I am very proud of the work we do, but I'll be the first to say that nothing really can replace full representation, but what we're doing is alleviating a crisis situation.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: But when are we going to move out of this emergency position, right? This is part of our reality. Migration will be happening to this amazing city that immigrants from all over have built. When are we moving out of this posture and actually building the full representation pipeline that we're going to need to support the investment of these applicants?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I understand, and I'll get to that and also defer to my colleagues, but in terms of the funding for the AAHC and for the emergency operation that we are, we get funded by the state government and we know that we got funding for six months. We're working on an extension, but I think part of the answer is we don't always know how

1 long a crisis can last. You know, I've worked
2 previously in the COVID crisis. In the middle of
3 that, we didn't know how long we'd be there as well.
4 I agree with you that, ultimately, we have to make
5 sure that we support our CBO community and legal
6 service providers that have been doing this work, and
7 I'd like to defer to MOIA and my colleagues there on
8 their work there.
9

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I'll just
11 add that the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network
12 is 5 million in annual funding for non-profit legal
13 service providers, and they've done a significant
14 amount of work last year, and continue to, to provide
15 individuals with application assistance and also
16 trainings and capacity building. One of our primary
17 focuses at MOIA is building the professional capacity
18 of the field. There currently are not a sufficient
19 number of immigration paralegals or attorneys,
20 especially those working in non-profits, to be able
21 to handle the broader need and so, under the
22 direction of Commissioner Castro and in collaboration
23 with our contracted and non-contracted partners, we
24 continue to focus on that, and it also will be a
25 primary focus of the upcoming request for proposals

1 that we have mentioned in previous hearings regarding
2 MOIA Immigration Legal Support Centers.
3

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, but
5 what I'm not hearing is that we are increasing both
6 the contract terms, right? We're losing attorneys
7 because we are not paying them what they need to be
8 paid for in order to stay in the system so I hope
9 that new RFP is going to expand both the cost for
10 legal services providers to adequately fund them, but
11 also expand to address the need because what we see
12 is we don't have enough attorneys in the field to be
13 able to address, certainly, or even meet the need of
14 the asylum applications that we have already invested
15 in beginning.

16 Just for the record from OASO, you
17 mentioned 30 million dollars. Is that the investment
18 that was made for this Fiscal Year for the help
19 centers? I just want to be clear about what you were
20 saying.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: That's for
22 this past Fiscal Year.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: For Fiscal '24?
24
25

3 Yes. And the State has indicated that
4 they will continue funding into the new year, and
5 we're excited to work with them on that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: At the same level?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We're still
8 working through the details there, but I think the
9 interest is to maintain our productivity at the same
10 level because we have been very productive.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And it would be
12 specifically for the help centers?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: That is my
14 understanding.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, and the
16 whole 30 million has been just for the center?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: The previous
18 30 million has been for the asylum application help
19 center.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it. Got it. I
21 guess I'd like to turn it over to Council Member
22 Hanif for questions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much,
24 Chairs Avilés and Feliz, and thank you all for being
25 here and the work that you do.

1
2 I've been grateful to learn about SBS's
3 just extraordinary, commendable work to pair asylum
4 seekers with good jobs and that there's an
5 infrastructure but, of course, I'm disappointed to
6 learn that you're doing this with no new funding.
7 This is all funding that you're piecing together from
8 existing monies, and I can't help but think what
9 could be possible if there were investments going to
10 the agencies to adequately support ESL programs and
11 the workforce programming that you all are working
12 on.

13 Also just for the record, I wanted to
14 distance myself from the comments of my Queen's
15 colleague. Gratefully, that is a minority in this
16 City Council, and I share this out loud because I
17 want to be respectful of the guests who are here who
18 will be testifying who are impacted by what we're
19 witnessing right now in this city, and I didn't want
20 that to just go unnoticed.

21 Just one more comment on MOIA. Thank you
22 so much for your partnership on the Workers' Bill of
23 Rights. So grateful for the workshops that are
24 underway right now to ensure that our communities are
25 informed about the protections that are here

1
2 irrespective of their immigration status, and New
3 York City is certainly going to continue to be a
4 destination because of the protections that we've
5 been able to field together with the Administration
6 and the City Council.

7 Could you share the Administration's
8 position on Intro. 216?

9 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Is this the
10 IDNYC?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes. This is my
12 legislation.

13 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: The
14 Department of Social Services couldn't be here, and
15 we don't have a position, unfortunately, Council
16 Member. I know that they had another hearing, but I
17 think they are available to discuss it at a later
18 point. It was just a matter of not having capacity to
19 send somebody to this hearing.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, that's pretty
21 disappointing and, of course, this isn't directed to
22 any one of you. This is the second day in a row that
23 the Administration has failed to send an adequate
24 representative to share testimony about a bill that I
25 have getting heard, and that obviously makes

1 collaboration with the Administration really, really
2 difficult for this Council. I mean, we can't move on
3 legislation if the Administration isn't here on the
4 record to speak on the challenges or the positives of
5 a particular legislation that would ease this bill in
6 particular would ease the process for IDNYC so I'm
7 disappointed, but I'm going to ask a few questions
8 about the one for MOIA workshops. What are you
9 hearing? What are you learning from these sessions
10 about what workers are experiencing? And then two,
11 for SBS, can you share what you all are hearing in
12 terms of work placements? I'm particularly concerned
13 about asylum-seeker women who without the promise of
14 Promise NYC, which the City Council is fighting for a
15 25-million-dollar investment for FY25. Without it,
16 we're leaving out an entirety of people who need to
17 get to work in order to be able to leave the shelter
18 system, and so I don't want to forget women. I want
19 to understand just the data on women and placement to
20 work and what more could be done to really support
21 women in particular.

22
23 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: For the Bill
24 of Rights, as you know, the work is going to be
25 concluding on or before July 1, 2024, so we're still

1 working through some of it. I just want to share some
2 of the top issues and things that we've done so far.
3 As of today, the Bill of Rights has been updated and
4 disseminated into LinkNYC kiosks through social media
5 platforms. Commissioner Castro and Commissioner
6 Mayuga, I think is the right name here, also hosted
7 an ethnic and media roundtable to get the information
8 out. I have nothing to report right now regarding the
9 workshops because that's ongoing, but I'm happy to
10 circle back with you post hearing.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great. I'd love to
13 learn about just what you're hearing directly.

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: In
15 terms of what we're hearing about barriers to
16 employment, the most prominent has been English as a
17 second language access. I mentioned an anecdotal
18 observation of the of mothers with young children at
19 our hiring events. However, in the stories that are
20 beginning to come back to our centers, we are seeing
21 jobseekers who are women and mothers having success
22 in job placements with our support. One example is a
23 woman who attended a hiring event that we held in
24 March 2024. She was subsequently hired by Collins
25 Building Services as a cleaner with a wage of \$19.10

1 per hour and has also accepted a part-time food prep
2 position as a dishwasher, making \$22.10 per hour.

3
4 There's a Haitian immigrant who recently was referred
5 to an ESL course through SUNY, through the Queens EOC
6 program, and we're following up once she's completed
7 that ESL program to explore job opportunities. I just
8 don't have data right now on the incidence of
9 referrals for childcare-specific needs but, again, we
10 would attempt to meet that need for services through
11 our community partners program.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could I just ask
13 one more question, Chairs?

14 Can you speak on how much funding right
15 now is going towards ESL programs?

16 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I can speak
17 to what MOIA has, because I know that our, I think
18 one of the agencies that it's not here, well, it
19 wasn't called either, but it's DYCD who oversees a
20 lot of the adult literacy funding, but what MOIA has
21 developed, I'm just trying to find my page here, is
22 the English Learning Centers and Support Centers. We
23 have 85 English Learning and Support Centers for
24 immigrant New Yorkers across the city. This is using
25 our We Speak curriculum that we're now sharing with

1 10 CBOs and 75 plus City libraries across the city. I
2 think that number is 1 million if I'm not mistaken.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And in those ESL
5 classes, is there a component of how to apply for
6 IDNYC?

7 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: There's
8 several components. I don't have the full list, but
9 there's three seasons to the curriculum, and the goal
10 of this program was really to help people, just
11 anyone who's a non-English speaker, navigate City
12 resources. Included, I can say, I just don't have the
13 full list in front of me, is resources to schools,
14 transportation, emergency preparation in season one,
15 season two, career preparation, immigration legal
16 help, and pre-K resources and, season three, health
17 and tenant rights. I think there might be an episode,
18 but I just, I can't say it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, I think that
20 would be imperative. Also, are you able to respond to
21 anything about IDNYC this afternoon?

22 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO:
23 Unfortunately, I can't speak to anything. If you want
24 to ask your question, Council Member, I'll try, I
25 don't know.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay, great.

4 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: But I may
5 have to defer.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yeah, no, I want to
7 understand SBS' role, MOIA's role, OASA's role in
8 ensuring that folks are connected to IDNYC. I'm
9 assuming that there's an interagency meeting that
10 happens weekly or bi-weekly, and there has to be some
11 infrastructure and talk about the IDNYC process and
12 the challenges of that.

13 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: So, I can
14 say, I can't speak specifics because I'm not a part
15 of the meeting, but there is an interagency meeting
16 that happens with IDNYC and several other agencies,
17 including MOIA. Again, I'm not a part of those
18 meetings, so I can't speak to that and like what's
19 discussed, but I know that an effort has been made to
20 streamline processes and to work through just better
21 systems. On MOIA's end, our Deputy Commissioner and
22 Assistant Commissioner lead the effort in helping
23 with outreach. I don't have specific numbers for you
24 here.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, MOIA does some
outreach.

1
2 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: We do some,
3 we help with, that arm is specifically dedicated to
4 just general outreach to the immigrant community, and
5 we have touchpoints that touch on IDNYC. We also play
6 a depending on as issues arise and pre-vetting and
7 supporting IDNYC and pre-vetting documents, primarily
8 with languages that we have in-house but, again, I
9 can't offer more than that, just sort of a broad
10 picture of some of the work that MOIA is working with
11 IDNYC on.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Understood. We will
13 submit written questions to DSS. Thank you.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council
15 Member. Council Member Zhuang.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Chair.
17 Also, I have some questions. I'm the first Chinese
18 American City Council from Brooklyn, and I am an
19 immigrant, like a lot of people here, and I don't
20 like people saying some what call Chinese. That's not
21 respectful, first of all. As a City agency, you
22 shouldn't use that word. That's first. And then also,
23 last year, there are 37,000 Chinese migrants across
24 U.S./Mexican border. Majority of them come to New
25 York City, and also, I want to know, do you guys know

1 how many Chinese immigrants in New York City? Asylum
2 seekers, I mean.

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We'll have to
4 circle back on that number.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay. I have the
6 data, 24 percent. Okay. That's the data, 24 percent.
7 And also, do you know where they go?

8 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: If I would
9 say neighborhoods, I would say Sunset Park is
10 probably a big one. Also, Queens, Flushing Queens.
11 And the reason why I'm responding on Sunset Park,
12 during our time at MOIA or during one of the visits,
13 Commissioner Castro has met with community groups in
14 Sunset Park, PCR, Parent-Child Relations in
15 particular, who has sort of discussed that, but that
16 would be anecdotal.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: That's the only
18 organization you guys work with?

19 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: There's
20 more. I just don't have the full list. That's the
21 only one that I joined.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Okay. I'd like to
23 have the full list. Also, right now this year, 10
24 times more Chinese American asylum seekers came to
25

1 New York City, and I want to know, when you guys are
2 doing outreach, how much resource is used to Chinese
3 American community?
4

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I do want to
6 clarify, Council Member, an earlier comment that was
7 made. That was not the City. That was the State's
8 legislation that refers to that language in that way,
9 and I agree with you that it is disrespectful. Within
10 the City and at the Asylum Seeker Help Center, we
11 break down at least five different languages that are
12 spoken in China so I apologize for any
13 miscommunication there.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: We're writing only
15 one language, just to let you know. I speak Chinese
16 fluently. I read and write.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Understood. I
18 will pass it on to my colleague, Masha, but I do
19 believe that across many different languages, for
20 people who give their country of origin as China, we
21 have served them at the Asylum Application Help
22 Center.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Yes. Thank
24 you, Grace. I'll be able to get back with you the
25 actual numbers of how many we've served, so you can

3 see that number as well. I don't have it handy, but
4 I'll make sure to follow up after this meeting.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: How do you guys do
6 outreach to Chinese community?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Asylum
8 seekers can get appointments through shelter.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: They have less
10 than 1 percent in the shelter.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: So the Asylum
12 Application Help Center, just this one program, we
13 serve clients in shelter. That is the demographic
14 that we are funded for.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: So how do you
16 reach out to the people not living in the shelter?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: So I would
18 refer to my MOIA colleagues, but for this specific
19 program that OASA runs, the Asylum Application Help
20 Center, we serve folks in shelter.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: So only in the
22 shelter? You guys never do the outreach outside the
23 shelter? 24 percent Chinese migrants in the city, but
24 less than 1 percent Chinese asylum seekers live in
25 the shelter so that means you guys forget that 23
percent. Is that correct?

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I would say
3 that we are, given how many individuals in the city
4 would want asylum seeker support for the
5 applications, for asylum applications, work
6 authorization, TPS, we're currently funded to serve
7 those in shelter, and that's the population we've
8 been focused on for that specific effort.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: So, you guys not
10 going to increase the outreach, the other part?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Well, this is
12 where I would want to refer to our MOIA colleagues,
13 because there are programs that are not necessarily
14 directed towards folks in shelter that would cover
15 greater swaths of the population as well.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: MOIA works
17 with Chinese American Planning Council, or CAPC.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: CPC?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: With the
20 ActionNYC program so they're essentially a navigation
21 site for immigration legal consultations, and also
22 navigation to other City resources. I'll pass to my
23 colleague, Lorena.

24 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, I just
25 wanted to add three, well, Tom just mentioned CPC.

1 We've also met with AAF, which is a bigger umbrella,
2 PCR. I don't have the numbers with me, but there have
3 been intentional outreach touchpoints through our
4 External Affairs Team to target heavily dense
5 communities that reflect some of the new arrivals are
6 coming. I just don't have that data with me. The
7 information that's provided there is the information
8 that's provided with all our sort of outreach events,
9 which include providing information on how to enroll
10 to IDNYC, providing information on how to access
11 legal services, and also information regarding your
12 rights as a migrant in the City of New York, just to
13 name a few. It's not the extensive list, but it's
14 some of the top three, but I can circle back
15 regarding the organizations and the specific targeted
16 outreach events in those communities as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Did you guys have
19 any study done on this issue, how to reach out to
20 Chinese American community?

21 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I can't say
22 that we have a study now, but I could say that
23 internally, we have been trying to get a sense of
24 some of the top issues via our external affairs arm
25 that this community is facing, primarily because of

1 what you pointed out, and what we know is that
2 they're not staying in shelter, they're remaining
3 outside of it, so figuring out how to best do
4 outreach and things like that.

5
6 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Also, do you guys
7 reach out to those Chinese township organizations?
8 It's not non-profit. Some may be filed as non-profit.
9 Do you guys do outreach to them?

10 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: The only
11 thing that I'm aware of, we do have ties with local
12 leaders and community-based organizations. If there's
13 anything outside of that or anything that you might
14 recommend, Council Member, we're happy to take it
15 back. I don't have the extensive list.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Do you guys have
17 other resources, apps, like WhatsApp, WeChat, these
18 type of outreach groups?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Yeah, our
20 External Affairs Team also has a lead liaison with
21 the Chinese community, Lydia, as well as two Chinese-
22 speaking language access specialists. We can get back
23 to you regarding more information.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Because I never
25 see any. I'm an immigrant. I know how hard the

1 process is, and I have to say you guys are brave to
2 come here and I want to help but, in the Chinese-
3 American community, I did not see any resources. Very
4 few non-profits have the resources, and I use my own
5 discretion and funding for all the programs, but I
6 only have very limited resources and, if MOIA doesn't
7 step up to help the Chinese-American community,
8 that's 24 percent, and it's growing, and that's not
9 fair for the Chinese-American community.
10

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: We'll take
12 that back to our external affairs team immediately.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Also, you guys
14 should reach out to every single different group.
15 They have their own way to communicate. Some groups
16 use WhatsApp. Some groups use WeChat. They have
17 different ways, but I did not see those platforms.

18 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: Yeah, if I
19 may, Council Member, so one of the specialists that
20 Tom mentioned does have a WeChat channel with about
21 10,000 followers, where she..

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: My follower is
23 more than MOIA.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council
25 Member.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: And I have one
3 more question. Also, SBS said you reached out to
4 9,000 asylum seekers. I want to know how many
5 Chinese-speaking there. What's the percentage?

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: It's
7 a small percentage of asylum seekers that we've
8 reached out to, but we're happy to get back to you
9 about the proportion served across our network. I do
10 want to point out that we have a Workforce One Center
11 located in Flushing, so data from that center may be
12 particularly relevant to this question. We also
13 manage an Asian American Small Business Task Force,
14 through which we're working with, I believe, Asian
15 American Federation, Chinatown Manpower, to try and
16 get out information about our services so I'm happy
17 to circle back with additional details, but we have
18 translated our palm cards into simplified Chinese and
19 traditional Chinese as well as our intake forms for
20 Workforce One into those languages as well so we
21 would love to partner on getting that out even more
22 broadly.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you. Also, I
24 want to know how many people speak Chinese in MOIA to
25 do outreach. How many, and what's the percentage?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: We have one primary liaison with the Chinese community and two language specialists that support them.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: That's only one?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: All Chinese speakers.

COUNCIL MEMBER ZHUANG: We have Flushing, we have Brooklyn, we have Queens, everywhere.

Probably one is not enough. I want to see the growth there. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: We'll be in touch following the meeting. Thank you.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, Council Member Zhuang.

I'd like to just go back quickly to OASO. Could you talk to me about what Workforce Diversion and Exit Strategies means as a title?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Yes. The Mayor recognizes that workforce development for our asylum seekers is not just about what jobs can we get new New Yorkers into today, right now. It's also about what jobs are going to be available and needed in this country in the near future, and how can we prepare folks for that? So diversion, we might think

1 about as encouraging folks to reach out to family
2 members, to friends, etc., and find alternative
3 pathways that are not directly through our shelter
4 sites here in New York, but we talk about exit
5 strategies. It's really everything that supports
6 ultimately finding employment and full-time
7 employment. A lot of what we've been talking about
8 today so, to me and to my colleagues, exit strategies
9 are ESL. Exit strategies are financial literacy
10 programs, they are workforce training programs
11 because we really want our individuals to be as
12 prepared as possible, to echo Chair Feliz, when that
13 EAD comes back. Whenever it is, that's a piece that
14 we don't have control over, but what we do have the
15 ability to do is help to prepare people while they're
16 in our care.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So in terms of how
19 long has this role existed in OASO?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Nine weeks.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So my next
22 question is, it doesn't make any sense because we
23 have no metrics around what even this means. Is there
24 success metrics that you're working under?

25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Yes, we have metrics that we are working towards although many of the projects and programs that we envision are still in the planning stages, and I've mentioned a few of them today. I will note that we now have two weekly standing interagency meetings attended by the folks at this table in addition to numerous other City agencies, including DHS, H and H, Talent, DCAS. One is devoted to identifying formal economy full-time jobs, the other is devoted to workforce development, and many of the initiatives that I've mentioned here today are a result of those collaborations. I would say one metric is how many weekly interagency meetings are we having, and that number is up to two. In the future, I would like to also include the number of asylum seekers in care who are attending ESL classes as well as the number of asylum seekers in our care who are attending workforce development certification programs but, as of yet, we're still working to build those out.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Again, I'm still mystified with this office and its overlap with MOIA. I don't understand the distinctions between... The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs should be

1 effectively coordinating interagency efforts, and yet
2 we've created a whole new agency who is also doing
3 that. I'm still a little mystified by these overlaps.
4 In terms of ESL and workforce, without additional
5 funding to support these programs, I'm not
6 understanding what we are doing here. Are we just
7 telling people produce more, serve more people
8 without any resources to actually address the issues?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: To my
11 understanding, there have been some limited pilots of
12 ESL classes led by DYCD in some sites, and we can
13 follow up with more information about that. Beyond
14 that, we are looking for additional funding. For
15 example, right now there are some regional EDC grants
16 that are open at the state level. They are capital
17 focused, but one of the things you can be eligible is
18 space and so, if we can potentially find space to
19 have ESL classes, that's a step in the right
20 direction, but it is a challenge to provide what is
21 needed in terms of ESL to this population with the
22 current funding.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So in terms of
24 your engagement with workforce development providers
25 that you're meeting with, what is the engagement?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Can you clarify what you mean by workforce development providers?

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, I guess, well, maybe I need to take a quick step back. Are you meeting with workforce development providers across the city and, if so, who are they?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: So within the city, workforce development is primarily in the provision of SBS, and so I would pass that question back to them.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So let me go back to you, because you did mention workforce as a metric. If you're not engaging with workforce, how is that a metric for your success?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: When we're talking about workforce development, we're looking not just within the City agencies, but also toward larger industry trends so we are having conversations with Talent about some of the site safety opportunities. I know we've discussed that today, but there are more languages that we could go into, and also another one of our potential applications that we're working on for REDC would be a green jobs

1 training center and or a skilled construction
2 training center so that we could have more folks
3 getting into those roles during the time that they
4 are in care.
5

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And why is OASO
7 the right place for this work?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I will leave
9 the question open for my colleagues at MOIA to say
10 more, but my understanding is that the Mayor's Office
11 of Immigrant Affairs is responsible for addressing
12 the needs and concerns of all immigrants across New
13 York City, not all of whom are asylum seekers who are
14 actively in our care, and so I believe that OASO's
15 role is to provide a laser focus on those
16 individuals, those 65,000 people we've been talking
17 about, who live in one of the sites which is managed
18 by OASO but, MOIA, I defer to you to expand.

19 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I mean, I'll
20 say that as the role became what it is now through
21 conversations, I think it's because they have access
22 to the folks in care, more direct access than I think
23 anybody else here does, and I think that was part of
24 it. It's attached to some of the operational work
25 that OASO has been leading.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So in terms of, do
3 exit strategies include facilitating access to IDNYC?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: We can follow
5 up with you on that. I don't have information on that
6 currently.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And I guess, okay,
8 I'd love to get some more information.

9 In terms of what information has been
10 provided to newly arriving folks on the uses of
11 IDNYC?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I can speak
13 to the quantity of MOIA's outreach now and get back
14 to you on the actual materials that are provided.
15 From January 3rd through May 12th of this year, the
16 MOIA Outreach Team assisted 10,000 New Yorkers in
17 preparing their documents for and submitting their
18 IDNYC application. An additional 2,018 from May 13th
19 to present, so about 12,000 to 13,000 total for this
20 year, and I can get back to you on what materials
21 were submitted, but essentially the document review
22 is part of an educational process about the use of
23 the ID as well and its purpose.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. In
25 terms of, I guess back to the exit strategy, we're

1 hearing a lot about intensive case management. Can
2 you give us some clear data around what is happening
3 upon exit? Where are people going? Where are they
4 staying? What is happening?
5

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: There has
7 been an intensive case management program launched at
8 18 of the sites managed by H and H. We are not H and
9 H and so we are also waiting for them to release
10 their data, but we're happy to follow up with you
11 when we have that information.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. I think that
13 wraps up my questions.

14 I guess just one observation here is what
15 we're seeing is like this, we need every City agency
16 to come to a hearing to get a coherent picture of
17 what is happening. What we get is like a quarter of a
18 picture because that's a quarter of only what you do
19 or MOIA does or SBS does and it's exceedingly
20 frustrating because what we're seeing is all the
21 disconnects and yet we cannot get a coherent picture
22 from this Administration. If we want to provide ESL
23 courses, if we want to ensure that there is literacy,
24 which is a foundational element to succeed here, we
25 have to fund these programs, yet they are being

1 defunded. There are new RFPs happening with the DYCD,
2 which is reducing the amount of actual providers,
3 reducing the amount of people that can be reached.
4 This Administration is so frustrating that it does
5 not want to, it says it's trying to meet the need,
6 yet defunding the very services that we need. It's
7 so, so frustrating. I know I'm preaching to the
8 choir. I know you share the frustration. I know
9 you're trying your best to do your best with the
10 limited resources that you have, but we can do better
11 as a City and it's just, what a, thank you. I don't
12 know, Chair.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
15 you, Chair Avilés. Yeah, I just wanted to reiterate
16 those points. Number one, first, thank you so much
17 for all the work that all of you have done to help
18 asylum seekers every way possible. We need to make it
19 very clear, and we cannot forget about the fact that
20 the City of New York has done more for these asylum
21 seekers than a lot of jurisdictions combined, than a
22 lot of jurisdictions combined so that's one fact that
23 we cannot forget about, and all of you have been
24 leading on that so I just want to thank you all for
25 everything you've been doing on that. Not easy, still

1 a lot of work. I think one thing that is clear, as
2 Chair Avilés mentioned, is that all of you need
3 financial help so that you could have more resources,
4 so you could be able to fully fulfill the mission
5 that you have, whether it's training, connecting
6 individuals to work, and so much more.
7

8 A few questions, and they're going to be
9 super brief so that we could hear from the advocates.
10 A few questions going back to workforce and general
11 economic stability. How many migrants under the
12 City's care are families with children, and also are
13 childcare needs a standard question for workforce
14 services?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PAWLUK: Do you mind
16 repeating what the focus of that particular question
17 was Council Member? Sorry, you were talking about
18 referrals to services?

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah, so how many
20 migrants under the City's care are families with
21 children, and also are childcare needs a question
22 when we're assessing at workforce centers?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PAWLUK: Sure. On the
24 first question, I would defer to my colleagues in the
25 Office of Asylum Seeker Operations.

1
2 On the second question, childcare
3 certainly is what we look at. One of the things when
4 we meet with clients, when they come into our
5 Workforce One centers, with our network of 300
6 community partners that we spoke on, childcare is
7 certainly one of the needs that we look at, and in
8 terms of what supports a family might need so we do
9 have in our network of community partners able to
10 make referrals to that particular resource if it's
11 needed, and I refer to my Office of Asylum Seeker
12 Operations colleagues on the number of families with
13 children in the system.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right, and
15 briefly going back to the work permit process. Last
16 line of questions, I promise. Obviously, these
17 families come here for one reason, for economic
18 stability and, of course, they cannot achieve that
19 unless they have the work permit so what's the
20 process for work permits? When can they apply? At
21 what stage can they apply? Obviously, there's many
22 different things, including TPS and having all sorts
23 of immigration things satisfied so when can they
24 apply for work permits? How can they apply? And also,
25 if we've received 200,000 migrants since the start of

1 this migrant crisis, why have we only helped 20,000
2 apply for work permits?
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I can take
5 that. The primary ways to get work authorization that
6 we're focusing on are, one, people that have been
7 paroled into the country so they need to have a very
8 specific humanitarian parole stamp and then they're
9 immediately eligible to apply. That's a minority of
10 the clients we're seeing in our shelters. Two, they
11 can get work authorization if they apply for TPS, if
12 they're TPS eligible, then they can apply for work
13 authorization alongside applying for temporary
14 protective status. That's an incredibly rigid
15 eligibility metric. We've cleared the backlog of TPS-
16 eligible folks in our care, and we're applying anyone
17 new that comes in, but it's kind of very strict.
18 Three, people can apply 150 days after applying for
19 asylum so we are trying to apply folks for asylum so
20 that 150 days we can call them back and apply them
21 for work authorization so I shared some numbers of
22 our productivity before. I'm really proud of it. We
23 apply about 100 people a day for work authorization.
24 We could do more, but there's just not more people
25 that are necessarily work authorization eligible, and

1 that's where it's really important to call on the
2 federal government to designate countries for TPS, to
3 increase the amount of folks that are getting
4 humanitarian parole, whatever it is, because we have
5 more capacity to apply more people for work
6 authorization. It's just that there are really strict
7 rules about who is eligible and, Tom, I saw you reach
8 for the mic. Anything you'd like to add?
9

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Just to
11 echo, I think part of the challenge is that work
12 authorization available through the federal
13 government is always based on a type of status in a
14 relief category. It could be family, it could be
15 humanitarian, but there is no pathway just to apply
16 for work authorization by virtue of being here, which
17 is why the City's calls for humanitarian parole, for
18 expanding TPS, temporary protected status, have been
19 frequent and strong. We need an expansion of pathways
20 to work authorization and an expedited process.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And if we were to
22 guess, how many migrants and asylum seekers are
23 eligible to apply for work permits? Super rough.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Again with
25 the guessing.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah, super rough
3 guess.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I feel
5 confident that of those in shelter, we have really
6 cleared the backlog and anyone new coming on, we are
7 applying them for work authorization and we are
8 calling back all of our clients that we have applied
9 150 days prior three times to try to reach them and
10 get them come in to do work authorization so I feel
11 really good that we're maxing out the accessible,
12 currently eligible population in our shelters, and I
13 would love to be able to do more and I would love for
14 more people to be eligible, but there is not a
15 backlog as it stands. We're applying everyone we can
16 find as quickly as we can.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, what number
18 are we talking about in terms of how many we can
19 find? How many are eligible?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: We've applied
21 20,000 folks for work authorization.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Oh, so basically,
23 more or less, everyone who is eligible has somewhat
24 applied.

1
2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: Virtually in
3 our care. Yeah, in our care, we provide virtually
4 everyone that is eligible and anyone new coming on
5 and anyone new becoming eligible so, every month, we
6 have our former clients that become newly eligible.
7 We're contacting them. We're calling them. We're
8 trying to see if they're still in the city and, if
9 they are, we'll apply them for work authorization.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and one final
11 question for SBS. So earlier you mentioned you've
12 served about 5,500 individuals through the workforce
13 and the American Dreams program and that you haven't
14 received one single penny since the start of the
15 migrant crisis in addition for these programs so just
16 curious if we needed to serve, let's say, 15,000
17 asylum seekers and migrants, would the current system
18 work for that? Would it have capacity to serve that?

19 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I
20 believe our current Workforce One system with the 18
21 centers and the staff we have could stretch to serve
22 those additional clients, and it's really the
23 advantage of having the infrastructure of space and
24 expert staff that we have. I don't mean to imply that
25 there aren't costs like related to serving folks. Our

1 centers are open 9 to 5. Could extra hours be useful
2 to new migrants potentially? Are there additional
3 costs related to translation? There are, and it
4 extends the time to serve individual jobseekers, but
5 I just want to emphasize that we are really lucky as
6 a City to have in Workforce One what we're asking
7 for, for the full scope of costs related to this
8 surge, which is a federal funding source that is
9 stable, that we can rely on to flex to the extent of
10 our ability at this time. You see an example of the
11 flexibility of the system in responding to the Valor
12 site safety card deactivations. We were able to
13 collaborate with the Department of Buildings to
14 notify all of the individuals whose cards were
15 deactivated as a result of that fraud that they could
16 access construction site safety training through
17 Workforce One to replace that resource and allow them
18 to reconnect to work so we are appreciative of the
19 flexibility that our federal funding source gives us.
20 We support the citywide ask for additional federal
21 resources, and we'll continue to look for ways to
22 expand our work.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: All right, sounds
25 good. Well, thank you so much for all the information

1
2 and, again, just want to reiterate, I'm very thankful
3 for all the work you do. Obviously, this is a crisis.
4 We're two years in. We should have better systems by
5 now, but still a crisis and, obviously, we need more
6 resources so we could be able to serve the amount of
7 people that need to be served and also at the level
8 that they need to be served. Also, it is clear that
9 all of you need help in terms of resources so that
10 you could be able to serve individuals, and we need
11 the federal government to step up so, federal
12 government, if you're listening to this hearing, we
13 need your help. Migrants just want to work. They have
14 come here to work and, if they're already in our
15 city, we've welcomed them to our great city. We
16 should also give them the opportunity to work here
17 and contribute to our economy. We need help and we
18 need it now, not tomorrow. We need it now. Thank you
19 so much, and I'll pass it back to Chair Avilés.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank
21 you for your patience and the going back and forth
22 and the time and I just want to do a quick rapid-fire
23 question for all of you. We've talked a lot about the
24 supports that we have in place. We talked a lot about
25 the infrastructure that we have. What I didn't hear

1 is what promising approaches or programs currently
2 exist that, if we were to scale up, we would be able
3 to really meet some needs. We noted at the top of the
4 hearing, Denver instituted a program of six months of
5 stable housing with work, with ESL, coupled a full
6 wraparound service for their population. We know
7 worker cooperatives work for undocumented people as a
8 potential. Can each of you name two specific programs
9 that if we could just fully invest would begin to
10 meet this need, and you can't repeat each other's
11 programs. You can't say what she said. But two
12 programs that currently build off the infrastructure
13 that we have in New York City, because we have
14 enormous amount of expertise and a lot of work that
15 has gone into building support for undocumented
16 workers. I'd love your answers to include a
17 significant part of the population that is
18 unfortunately being left out right now are people who
19 do not have work authorization, but need to work so
20 they are here and they need support. We have
21 expertise there so tell me two or three programs that
22 you wish we could get fully funded and scale up to
23 address the needs that you are seeing on the ground
24
25

1 that you want to have an impact in. I'll start with
2 SBS.
3

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I
5 hoped you'd start with me. We are doing some great
6 work, including contextualized ESL in occupational
7 trainings that we're delivering for immigrant New
8 Yorkers. These programs haven't all been developed
9 for new New Yorkers, but the integration of the
10 training that connects them to a license to be able
11 to work to the extent that they can earn in the
12 United States is really important and then
13 integrating ESL into those occupational training
14 programs, I would say is an area that we can expand.
15 One example is a program that we provide for
16 individuals who are trained as nurses in their home
17 countries, but perhaps have connected to work as a
18 home health aide or an Uber driver here. We want them
19 to be able to work in their profession, which also
20 meets a need in our workforce for healthcare
21 professionals so we're connecting them with training
22 to earn their licensure and also to healthcare-
23 focused ESL training within that single program. To
24 be able to grow programs like that would be, I think,
25 an incredible resource.

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And how much money
3 would you need to? You're getting a magic wand. How
4 much money do we need to scale up this program? For
5 the first year.

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Can
7 I get back to you?

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No.

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: I
10 honestly didn't bring the budget for our NCLEX
11 program today, but I'm honestly happy to follow up
12 with.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Several million, I
14 suspect. A good start.

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS:
16 Yeah, I think we're spending, it's an efficient
17 program in terms of how we deliver up to 15,000 per
18 client that we serve.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Amazing. So an
20 infusion of several million for this program sounds
21 incredibly beneficial.

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GROSS: Or
23 other programs that other occupational trainings that
24 we're enlisting, that we're enrolling for, that we're

1 delivering to be able to include contextualized ESL
2 in those programs.
3

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. Thank you.

5 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I'm going to
6 say our English language support sensors, which I
7 mentioned earlier. Again, I think the vision really
8 there is to create a community for folks who are
9 recent arrivals, but also long-term immigrant New
10 Yorkers. The connection to the libraries is one of
11 the examples. Again, we're learning through this
12 pilot. The second would be the program that we're
13 very proud of, it's very small, which is the
14 Immigrant Navigator Program, which is the mentor
15 mentorship program that I mentioned. If I may, Chair,
16 just one comment on Denver, we speak to them via our
17 Cities for Action network that I mentioned. They were
18 able to learn a lot from from New York and other
19 cities. The number of people that they received is
20 also much smaller. We clap and we commend their
21 program, but I just wanted to mention because, again,
22 we're in communication and we appreciate them, but
23 it's been innovative, but a smaller response that
24 they have to handle.
25

1
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: 100 percent. I
3 think we all know every city is going to be smaller
4 than New York City. That should not make us lower
5 standards or shoot for the floor. We should be
6 shooting for the sky and being able to meet that. How
7 much money would you need to expand these programs?

8 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: I mean, give
9 me all the money, Chair, but I can't say a lot. I
10 would say that what we have currently would be great.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So the one million
12 dollar program for, I'm going to call it the wrong
13 thing again, what percentage of new arrivals do you
14 think that program touches? Rough guess, and I know I
15 won't hold you to the actual number, but...

16 CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR LUCERO: The current
17 program as it is, I don't have the enrollees that we
18 have. They're new arrivals. It's a small pilot, which
19 is 250. However, the impact that that has on the
20 networks that they build, I don't have that data for
21 you. We'll have it eventually so I can't really,
22 maybe 500 people.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, so less than
24 one percent so doubling that program would have a
25 have a greater impact so we'll aim for doubling the

3 program. Two million dollar investment on that
4 program, okay.

5 How about you?

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I second
7 Lorena's...

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I said that's
9 cheating. I'm going to allow it.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I would say
11 community-rooted immigration legal service programs,
12 much like MOIA Immigration Legal Support Centers and
13 the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network, where you
14 have a combination of professional immigration legal
15 assistance, capacity building, and community. It
16 really does multiply the value of the investment and
17 also ensures that folks are receiving a broader
18 continuum of care that involves immigration legal,
19 but is not constrained to it.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I agree with that.
21 Would you need 50 percent increase in funding for
22 that program? One hundred percent?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: I think
24 that the need is...

25 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Much larger than
100 percent?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: It's vast,
but I would echo Lorena and say the same amount if we
are able to continue and build upon current
offerings, that would be...

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So you want the
same program with no new money?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Any
resources would be well...

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Additional
resources would be. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TORTORICI: Yes.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: OASO.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: Public
schools launched a new program last month called
Young Adult Bridge, which is ESL classes for 18- to
20-year-olds who intend to then transition into
getting their GED so it is a shortened program. I
believe it goes through the end of this month or
maybe early July, but I think that would be a really
useful opportunity if that program was able to be
expanded to more of our asylum seekers in care.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: How much funding
does that require?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: I do not know. It's a Public Schools program, but I could follow up.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: How about a program that OASO controls and is funding?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RIDDICK: OASO is not currently funding any programs but the asylum seeker help centers.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I love this question for the asylum application help center. Well, first of all, we're extremely grateful for our funding from the State. That is part of the reason we've been able to be successful is they've been very generous with the funds, but one kind of programmatic improvement that I think is priceless is just the need for more immigration attorneys. I actually don't know if we have enough in the city, regardless of who gets the funding, regardless if I get a billion dollars to be able to meet the need of this population, so I just, however money it takes to magically appear immigration attorneys in the City of New York is what I would need because I think that's increasingly the ceiling that many of our programs are facing, and I think that the current immigration

3 workers and attorneys, whether they're pro bono or
4 private practice or CBOs, are really tapped out, and
5 I think we just need more so I really want to
6 highlight that because there's just going to be a
7 point where money won't cut it.

8 But the second program, I think, I
9 mentioned earlier here is this kind of callback
10 center so that the asylum application help center can
11 follow through with clients. We're already doing that
12 and we're going to try to do it in a way that doesn't
13 affect our productivity but keeps us at current
14 funding but, if that is not possible, then maybe I'll
15 be back and maybe I'll have an estimation for you and
16 for the State and for anyone else wants to listen?

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I appreciate you.
18 You're the gambler of the group.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINDLER: I know, I'm
20 still here.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: With a lot of
22 guessing today. Thank you. Thank you for indulging
23 the question. I think that the point of the question
24 is that we do have an enormous amount of foundational
25 infrastructure in New York City and expertise, and we
need to continue to fund, and there is no magical

3 number of immigration attorneys, but I will guarantee
4 you 100 percent, if we fully fund legal service
5 providers to stabilize this field and stay in public
6 service immigration ecosystem, they will stay and we
7 will stabilize, but what we cannot do is defund or
8 devalue that service to the point where people have
9 to make such hard choices and leave the field, which
10 we are seeing all the time. There's enormous amount
11 of work to do to attract folks across public service
12 to stay in these jobs and to do the best work that
13 they can by people, because that's why we're all here
14 so thank you so much.

15 I think, with that, I will not continue
16 to torture you all, but I appreciate the work you do,
17 and I'm really looking forward to public testimony.
18 Thank you.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you everybody
20 for testifying.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: With that, we are
22 now going to open the hearing for public testimony.

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

1 The witness table is reserved for people
2
3 who wish to testify. No video recording or
4 photography is allowed from the witness table.
5 Further, members of the public may not present audio
6 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
7 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
8 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

9 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
10 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-
11 at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,
12 you will have two minutes to speak on today's
13 oversight hearing topic, Preparing Asylum Seekers and
14 Migrants for Workforce.

15 Quiet in the chamber, please, to the
16 Administration, folks. Thank you.

17 Excuse me. Preparing Asylum Seekers and
18 Migrants for the Workforce on the legislation being
19 heard today, Introduction 216, Resolution 230, 235,
20 and Preconsidered Resolution.

21 If you have a written statement or
22 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
23 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
24 to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written
25 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72

1 hours of the close of this hearing. Audio and video
2 recordings will not be accepted.
3

4 For in-person panelists, please come to
5 the table when your name has been called. Now, we
6 will call the first panel of witnesses.

7 We'll have Magdalena Toapanta, Maria
8 Luisa Serrana, Maria Guzman, Ligia Hualpa, Sheike
9 Ward, I hope I'm pronouncing your name correct, and,
10 lastly, Yesenia Mata.

11 Thank you so much for being here and for
12 your patience on this long hearing today.

13 LIGIA GUALLPA: Thank you so much. I'm
14 going to be translating for Magdalena and, yeah,
15 we'll start. Thank you so much, Chair, for the
16 opportunity to testify today.

17 MAGDALENA TOAPANTA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

19 LIGIA GUALLPA (TRANSLATING): Thank you.
20 I'm going to be translating, but thank you so much,
21 Magdalena. I just wanted to share. Actually,
22 Magdalena's first language is Quechua from Ecuador
23 and Spanish is her second language and, for those
24 that don't know, actually in Ecuador, our first
25 official language is Quechua, which is our national

1 language so we're proud to, as Ecuadorian myself,
2 proud to know that Magdalena speaks my native
3 language.
4

5 So Magdalena wanted to say thank you,
6 Council Member Avilés, for the opportunity to
7 testify, and I'm here to share a little bit of the
8 nightmare that I experienced here. I work with an
9 employer that made me work from 8 a.m. to 12, almost
10 midnight, doing the work, but he never paid me, and I
11 was doing this hard work, with a lot of sacrifice,
12 hard work. Sometimes I didn't have water and I didn't
13 even eat in order to work and being able to provide
14 to my family, and this is a sacrifice that I made and
15 many others made, and I'm here, I came to the
16 Workers' Justice to actually demand protections and
17 also what I'm asking is to make sure that I can also
18 get immigration protection and immigration pathway so
19 I can bring my kids, and that's my dream, yeah, and
20 then I'm going to pass it on to Maria Guzman, who
21 actually work in the same company and wanted to also
22 speak today.

23 MARIA GUZMAN: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

24 LIGIA GUALLPA (TRANSLATING): Thank you so
25 much, Council Member Avilés, for allowing me to speak

1 today. My name is Maria Guzman. I actually come from
2 Dominican Republic. I came a year and a half ago and
3 I work with a company with my colleague there where I
4 received mistreatment, a lot of mistreatment in that
5 workplace and, because of the Workers' Justice
6 Project, we were able to demand and being able to
7 fight for justice in that workplace.
8

9 And then I will end with Maria Serrano,
10 Maria Luisa Serrano.

11 MARIA LUISA SERRANO: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

12 LIGIA GUALLPA (TRANSLATING): My name is
13 Maria Luisa Serrano, and I came here looking for
14 better opportunities and, as somebody without work
15 authorization and without training, it's really hard
16 to find jobs, and I was lucky because I was able to
17 get OSHA training, the SSTs, leadership training, and
18 now I'm able to organize myself and organize to make
19 sure that I can get not only work opportunities, but
20 we get a better treatment as well. And these
21 opportunities, I was able to get it through Workers'
22 Justice Project, and I just wanted to say thank you
23 so much for these opportunities in this training that
24 it's available to us.
25

1
2 LIGIA GUALLPA: Thank you, Maria, and we
3 didn't want to make it long but, as you can see
4 behind me, there is many other women, and mostly
5 women, who wanted to speak. Actually, one of them
6 wanted me to share that, and she said, ask the
7 Council Member and ask them, what about us? What
8 about those that came here and didn't really interact
9 with the agencies to get all that support? What about
10 us that are not able to apply for asylum-seeking
11 permits because we didn't cross the border, but we
12 found other means to get here? She also said, what
13 about us, about making sure not only we get work
14 authorization, but we also get job opportunities? And
15 another woman was like, what about us? Many of the
16 women who navigate job seeking without access to
17 childcare. And these are the women who will ask you
18 again and again, what about us? Today, it was shared
19 powerful testimonies about who are the communities,
20 that the agencies that we actually partner and our
21 partner is SBS, who we are grateful to receive a
22 grant to provide construction site safety trainings,
23 and also we're super grateful for New York City
24 Council who have been supporting the Day Labor
25 Workforce Initiative, which are our main source of

1 investment that Workers' Justice relied on to do what
2 we have to do.

3
4 And a little bit about what we do.

5 Something that we do is we are a workers' rights
6 organization that combines workers' rights organizing
7 with workforce development. That's our recipe. If we
8 really aim as a community to create good living wage
9 jobs for immigrant communities, for newly arrived
10 immigrants, it's not only workforce development. It's
11 not only work authorization. We need to make sure
12 that every job that exists and many of the jobs that
13 we know immigrant communities will navigate are jobs
14 that lack protections, are jobs that are unregulated,
15 are jobs where these employers do not even consider
16 workers as workers, but independent contractors. We
17 want to see more commitment from City Council to make
18 sure that we invest in workforce development, on
19 workers' rights protections, and making sure we find
20 other pathways to provide opportunities for workers
21 to get worker authorization, especially through the
22 program that you highlighted today, which is the DALE
23 program, which is a program that continues to be not
24 known by many communities, nor by immigrant agencies.
25 We, ourselves, struggle to get our first deferred

1 action and the letter of interest for 40 workers to
2 apply for deferred action. The struggle is real, and
3 it's mostly impacting not just newly arrived
4 immigrants in communities, but particularly women
5 who'd have a unique set of struggles navigating the
6 workforce development programs, navigating how to
7 live and survive with dignity in the City of New
8 York.
9

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. I'm
11 going to return to you for some specific questions,
12 but I want to hear the testimony of the rest of the
13 panelists. Thank you.

14 SHEIKE WARD: Good morning, Members of the
15 City.. You're not hearing me? Okay. Good morning,
16 Members of the City Council. My name is Sheike Ward
17 (INAUDIBLE), and I am a nursing home worker and a
18 member political organizer at 1199SEIU. I would just
19 like to give a warm thank you to everyone for
20 allowing me the opportunity to speak here today. I
21 have a speech, but just listening to these women here
22 really brought back so much memories of when I was
23 like them. Because I remember when I did not have the
24 opportunity to work in this country and, for me, it
25 was very depressing and, if I could go back by

1 listening to them, I remember once I had the
2 opportunity where my husband was the only person in
3 this country I could depend on for support, for money
4 to buy food and to do anything. I was not used to
5 depending on anyone. I've always been independent in
6 my country, in Jamaica, I'm from Jamaica. I've been
7 independent since I was 18, but I came here for a
8 better opportunity, and I thought it was going to be
9 easy but, when I came here, it was very, very hard
10 for me. And even though I was lucky enough to have a
11 husband that I could depend on that was supporting
12 me, it was still hard. I literally, at one point, I
13 said, you know what? I don't want to be dependent on
14 a man anymore, and I got a job. I started out as an
15 HHA working for 75 dollars for 24 hours. 24 hours.
16 And I had no choice because, you know what? I did not
17 have any documents in this country. And with the
18 support of my husband who helped me, I became
19 documented, and I started working into the nursing
20 field. I started as an HHA, and I became a recreation
21 staff. I started working into recreation where I was
22 making people's life in America. I was making people
23 happy. I was doing stuff. I'm helping out people. And
24 I've listened here today, and I've heard a couple
25

1 people say that this state doesn't have any room for
2 some people because there's no job, and I work in
3 nursing home, and I'm there helping CNAs. I'm helping
4 nurses because we're short-staffed. We're overworked,
5 and we're understaffed, and thank God for 1199 was
6 been our pillar that is helping us to fight for
7 staffing, which is actually helping us so I believe
8 that if this City will help a lot of these people who
9 are in need, they can help us. We can help families
10 to be better. There's so much opportunities out there
11 for people, and America is for all. It's one people.
12 And that's why people come here. People are not going
13 to go anywhere where there's no opportunity, where
14 there's no love. They're here in America because they
15 think that this country is the best. They need help.
16 And I'm just urging because as somebody who is here,
17 I've taken myself from nothing, and I'm here helping
18 in the community. There's a lot of people that are
19 right here can help others who are coming up. 1199 is
20 a very strong union, and it has been helping us.
21 There is a lot of stuff that 1199 does where in the
22 educational program where you're helping people.
23 They're helping me right now. I'm only a week away
24 from becoming an American citizen. Because of 1199,
25

1 they are assisting us. They are programs that can
2 help these people in nursing homes. We have family in
3 hospitals. We have family in nursing homes. We have
4 family all walks in our care and, if we could help
5 these people who are sitting down in this shelter to
6 get up and go out there and work and become the next
7 nurses, the next CNAs that are going to help, or
8 family, because all of us has to go to the hospital.
9 We can't run from it. Sickness is something that we
10 can't help. And I am an immigrant, and I'm proud to
11 say that I'm helping a lot of Americans to become
12 healthy, to be happy, and I'm speaking for these
13 people today. They need help, and we're asking you
14 kindly. This is not a joke. They need help. I know
15 what it feels like, and I wish you guys the best. I
16 wish you guys the best, and I'm saying this
17 emotionally. I'm not in that situation anymore, but I
18 know what it feels like.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.

21 SHEIKE WARD: Thank you.

22 YESENIA MATA: That was beautifully said.

23 Well, I want to start off by saying thank you to
24 Chairwoman of the Immigration Committee, Council
25 Member Alexa Avilés, and to the rest of the Council

1 Members for allowing La Colmena to testify today. My
2 name is Yesenia Mata. I am the Executive Director of
3 La Colmena and, even though La Colmena is known for
4 providing construction training through OSHA and SST,
5 we provide much more. We provide flagger,
6 scaffolding, carpentry, childcare, hospitality
7 training, landscaping, and cleaning training.
8 Furthermore, we support immigrant workers in creating
9 resumes, providing mock job interviews, and providing
10 digital training, as workers are now getting paid
11 through Venmo and Cash App. However, it's not only
12 the hands-on training that we provide, but as well
13 conduct training on how to prevent wage theft and
14 what are your rights as an immigrant worker plus
15 provide English classes tailored for immigrant
16 workers to be able to communicate with their
17 employers. Through all of this, we have been able to
18 reach a total of 10,000 immigrants this year alone,
19 which includes asylum seekers. Additionally, we have
20 successfully dispatched over 1,000 immigrant workers
21 to job sites. This work is not easy, and it does take
22 a lot of effort. Because not only do we provide
23 workforce development, but we provide it in a way
24 that they feel at home. This is very personal to me
25

1 because my father was a day laborer, and my mother
2 was a domestic worker. And every person at La
3 Colmena, every employee at La Colmena has their own
4 immigrant story on why they do this work and, through
5 this work, everyone that comes to La Colmena feels at
6 home and they feel heard, and we understand the
7 importance of childcare, and this is why I wanted to
8 emphasize that going even further, the work that we
9 provide is providing childcare support through the
10 Promise NYC. As you have heard in this hearing, the
11 work that La Colmena does is crucial. Therefore, we
12 urge for our FY25 ask to be fully supported in order
13 to continue doing this work, and I truly want to
14 thank you for continuing supporting us and for not
15 forgetting Staten Island so thank you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.
18 Yes, and I'll start with you. We have heard today
19 from MOIA, and you guys have done exceptional work
20 under exceptional duress. Tell me if you can, for the
21 record really quickly, and I know they're telling me
22 I need to speed through, but tell me for the record,
23 number one, has your funding increased to compensate
24 for the amount of work that you're actually doing?

1
2 YESENIA MATA: No, it has not increased.
3 The work that we do is very important, as I emphasize
4 the amount of people that we have seen. This year
5 alone is 10,000. We've been seeing an increase of
6 2,000 people per year so last year was 8,000 people
7 the year before that is 6,000 so, in order for us to
8 continue doing the work, the additional funding does
9 need to be provided. Because, as we've seen a 2,000
10 increase each year, we are foreseeing seeing about
11 12,000 or so this year, this FY25 alone so this is
12 why we are urging for FY25 ask to be fully supported.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, and I guess
14 in terms of you have been working in immigrant
15 communities, I guess since La Colmena's inception,
16 you have best practices. You know what it takes to
17 integrate folks, to support them, to build
18 communities so that when they land in a workplace,
19 they are supported and empowered. What can the City
20 specifically do to build on these successes that we
21 have seen you do throughout the decades?

22 YESENIA MATA: Well, organizations like La
23 Colmena and organizations that are part of the Day
24 Laborer Coalition or the Domestic Worker Coalition,
25 we have the infrastructure to be able to communicate

1 with the community. As I said, we all have our own
2 immigrant story, but this work has been conducted
3 even years before because immigrants coming to New
4 York City is nothing new, right? It's been happening.
5 Each organization that forms part, as I said, the Day
6 Laborer Coalition, the Domestic Work Coalition, but
7 even other coalitions, they have the infrastructure.
8 One organization cannot do this alone. As La Colmena,
9 we are very open to saying we're really good at
10 workforce development, but when it comes to ESL
11 classes, there's other organizations that do better
12 work. When it comes to job interviews, there's other
13 maybe organizations that do better work that we do. I
14 guess what I'm trying to say and finish is that it
15 requires not just for organizations like La Colmena
16 to be sitting at the table, but many other
17 organizations that are well-equipped in order to
18 provide this work because this work cannot be done
19 alone even by one organization.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you for
22 that. I want to shift over to Worker Justice Project.
23 You seem to have been the only successful
24 organization to use DALE in maybe New York City,
25 maybe New York State. Can you tell us a little bit

1 for the record how this process has gone and also
2 what you would recommend the city really take into
3 account and implement in order to ensure using this
4 tool effectively?
5

6 LIGIA GUALLPA: Yeah. Well, thank you so
7 much for, I think, bringing this conversation that
8 not many agencies and I think the City of New York
9 and the State of New York is not having. We're
10 talking a lot about how we can guarantee a pathway
11 for workers to have some immigration protection, and
12 DALE is one alternative that has existed for more
13 than a year. It's going to be two years now, and what
14 that means is that any worker who has experienced any
15 type of worker violation from wage theft,
16 discrimination, could potentially apply for deferred
17 action, which is some sort of form of DACA for
18 immigrant workers but, in order to do that, the
19 federal government give us the discretion to the
20 agencies, to any labor agency, whether it's federal,
21 state, and city to offer a statement of interest. A
22 worker can only apply for this relief if the agency
23 has given them a letter of interest or a letter of
24 support, supporting the worker's application. Getting
25 this letter of interest has been a journey and a

1 challenge for Workers Justice. One of the cases that
2 we have been organizing is actually a trabajadoras
3 tabaqueras, or women who worked in a sweatshop that
4 were producing tabacos. I don't know if there was a
5 big story that came up in the City News talking about
6 the workers who work at a Hothead Grabba. This was an
7 emergency case. One of the biggest challenges is not
8 just making sure City agencies know about the
9 program, but also making sure City agencies can
10 expedite and prioritize in extreme cases. Some of the
11 workers that were here speaking, they were
12 experiencing not only exploitation, they were being
13 threats. Their own livelihood was put at threat. Some
14 of them had been experienced violence, workplace
15 violence, and some of them were even threatened with
16 deportation. On multiple occasions, even though we
17 highlighted the urgency of offering this statement of
18 interest so more workers can come forward without
19 fear, it took almost three months to get them in a
20 statement of interest, and that just speaks about the
21 fact that City agencies need to start prioritizing
22 that every worker who comes through a City's agency
23 door should be automatically educated and informed
24 that this is an immigration relief that they are
25

1 granted and that the agency is willing to offer a
2 statement of interest if that person is fearing
3 deportation or his immigration status is potentially
4 creating fear of him participating in a labor
5 investigation. We want to see, I think what you
6 asked, what we can do. One is making sure every
7 agency at every level understands what deferred
8 action is and how they can start prioritizing and
9 informing right at the moment they've received the
10 case. The second one, not many lawyers know about how
11 to apply deferred action, right? We did our first
12 clinic. We had to do it with volunteer lawyers that
13 many of them did not know so we had to bring experts
14 into it. And the second one is how we can build a
15 strong organizing campaign because I can tell you,
16 many of the workers that you ask out there who are
17 experiencing wage theft doesn't even know that this
18 program exists, and this could be an amazing
19 opportunity, not only to make sure workers have
20 additional pathway to obtain some sort of work
21 authorization, but this could be the pathway to make
22 sure that those jobs that do exist become better paid
23 jobs because workers are willing to come forward and
24 make sure that those employers are held accountable
25

3 and we can transform those jobs into better paid
4 jobs, safer jobs, and hopefully at some point, even
5 union jobs.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Amazing. Thank
7 you. Thank you so much.

8 (SPEAKING SPANISH)

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much.

10 Yeah, I just want to reiterate the words of Chair
11 Avilés. I just want to thank you all for all the work
12 all of you have been doing since day one. All of you
13 have been there for these migrants, meeting them
14 where they're at, whether it's receiving them or
15 anywhere and everywhere they're at. All of you have
16 been there, helping them every single way possible.
17 Just curious, all of us in the City of New York know
18 the great work all of you have been doing and also
19 with the resources that in some cases you don't have,
20 you're stretching every resource the most you can, so
21 just wondering, the agencies that testified today,
22 have they reached out to offer resources or to ask
23 how they could be helpful?

24 LIGIA GUALLPA: Yeah, so the agency that
25 we, the only agency that we have a strong partnership
because we receive directly funding is SBS. We don't

1 necessarily work nor have received any funding from
2 MOIA to support our work. This is why we're asking
3 City Council to step up to provide support. We depend
4 highly on the Day Labor Workforce Initiative, which
5 is one of our main source of income, and then we're
6 asking other initiatives like we have the support of
7 Immigrant Women and also the Low Wage Worker
8 Initiative and also for the Deliverista hubs.
9 Hopefully, we'll have two hubs opening very soon.
10 We're hoping that the City Council will step up. I
11 think WJP has been responding to a lot of the needs
12 to support newly arrived immigrants, mostly depending
13 on this type of funding. WJP hasn't received any
14 additional funding nor from the Administration to
15 support newly arrived immigrants in the past year so
16 Day Labor Workforce Initiative is sort of like the
17 backbone to keep our doors open.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay.

20 YESENIA MATA: Well, La Colmena, as you
21 all know, we're on Staten Island, right, so it's very
22 important for us to ensure that we can continue
23 having communication with all City Council Members
24 and all agencies because, if we don't, then we don't
25 want the same story that happened about two, three

1 years ago where funding was taken away, and I don't
2 want to re-emphasize that, but this is why we have
3 been very adamant on trying to ensure that we
4 continue communication with every City agency and all
5 elected officials but, to re-emphasize the work that
6 we do, it does take a toll. It does take a toll on
7 every staff member, including just the community
8 members, because we all have to work collectively in
9 order to continue doing the work. Just to reiterate
10 what Ligia mentioned is that each one of us that is
11 here today, we have applied for certain funding for
12 FY25 in order to continue doing this work because,
13 again, we do foresee an increase of 2,000 more
14 individuals coming to our center. Because of the
15 increase, we had to open up our third center, right?
16 So that's where we are at, but one thing that we do
17 want to re-emphasize and maybe ask for enforcement is
18 to ensure that when we do apply for certain RFPs and
19 we do get it, for us to get paid on time, for our
20 contracts to be registered, because then it leaves it
21 up to the organization to find ways or find
22 foundation money in order to do this work, and it's
23 not easy. I mean, La Colmena, we do great work, and
24 all of us here do great work, but we're small, small
25

1 but mighty, but we do ask to please push agencies to
2 ensure that our funding does get registered on time
3 and that we get paid on time.

4
5 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, thank you so
6 much. We know the strain that it puts on the
7 organization, particularly from my estimation, not
8 funded at the level that you should be funded for the
9 work that you are doing and then to add insult to
10 injury to not pay you for those services on time
11 destabilizes you all as organizations and quite
12 frankly, destabilizes the whole ecosystem and
13 community, because if you are not successful, you are
14 frontline responders.

15 And clearly the what about us? I wish I
16 had that at the top of the hearing because there is a
17 huge segment of the community that you are single-
18 handedly serving outside of these structures that are
19 so, so important so I want to thank you and lift up
20 the contracting fixes that need to happen, but also
21 funding you at the adequate levels. We need to
22 sustain and build the infrastructure that we've
23 developed over the years, and it needs to be beyond
24 the member initiative. It needs to be held by the
25 City institutionally as a matter of practice because

1 we will continue to welcome people from all over the
2 world for as long as we remain a city so thank you
3 for the work that you do.

4
5 Next, we'll have Darly Corniel, Eethia
6 Thomopolis, Jade Vasquez, Dorian Block, Fatoumata
7 Batouly Diallo, and Andrew Santa Ana.

8 Hi, y'all. Our clock is set for two
9 minutes, and I encourage you all to keep to it so
10 thank you. We'll start here.

11 DARLY CORNIEL: Thank you, Chair Avilés,
12 Chair Feliz, and Members of the Committee for the
13 opportunity to testify. My name is Darly Corniel, the
14 Director of Education at the Consortium for Worker
15 Education, a non-profit and the training arm of the
16 Central Labor Council. As evident by the unmet demand
17 for migrant services, we have seen firsthand the
18 urgent need for greater resources for the reputable
19 organizations serving new arrivals and asylum
20 seekers. Preparing for this many to enter the
21 workforce go beyond work authorization. We must
22 assess employability, language access and
23 acquisition, skill possessed and skill needed, and
24 determine available capacity and opportunity for
25 expansion. Stability in housing, healthcare and

1 childcare, including schooling, directly impact the
2 access and retention for these services. We are
3 greatly encouraged by the Council passing of Intro.
4 84 and 85, which will inform City agency and those
5 providing services to migrants and asylum seekers.
6 CWE had the opportunity to partner with smaller
7 organization that cannot afford what we hear La
8 Colmena said, which is to have contract and not be
9 paid on time. Some of our partners include our
10 initiative, the Astoria Worker Project, that have
11 provided navigating New York classes to immigrant in
12 the shelter system in Spanish and French, providing
13 skill development and information on pertinent City
14 programs for which immigrant can qualify. CANA, which
15 provide case manager, legal and educational services
16 to 3,000 asylees from 54 countries and expand their
17 ESL classes through CWE funds, and so Center for
18 Refugee and the New York Community for Change have
19 provided thousands of migrants each year with ESL,
20 digital skill, and job readiness classes, expanding
21 those services because that was not necessarily the
22 regular services provided. With Make the Road, we had
23 run Know Your Rights workshop for 1,300 immigrants
24 each year, providing them with education and assert
25

1 the right in the workplace. All this to say is that
2 organization needs funds to continue the work that we
3 have been doing. It is impossible to keep up with
4 services amid the demand that we are seeing on the
5 ground with the same level of funding or we cut
6 funding as it was mentioned before in this hearing.
7 Thank you.

9 EETHIO THOMOPOULOS: Thank you to the City
10 Council, Immigration Chair Avilés, Small Business
11 Chair Feliz, and the Committees on Immigration and
12 Small Business for their advocacy on the issue of
13 expediting work authorization for asylum seekers. I
14 am speaking on behalf of Hot Bread Kitchen, an
15 organization that uses the food industry as a
16 catalyst for economic mobility. Thank you to the
17 Council for your ongoing and steadfast support of our
18 work, our members, and our initiatives. Over the past
19 16 years, we have supported a community of over 1500
20 women and gender-expansive people, immigrants and
21 people of color in launching careers in the food
22 industry, starting and growing their small
23 businesses, and accessing additional resources. We do
24 this work through workforce training, job placement,
25 wraparound support services, and small business

1 incubation. This year, we have adapted our signature
2 workforce training program into a new bilingual
3 offering, culinary career pathways for new New
4 Yorkers. As an unprecedented number of migrants and
5 asylum seekers arrive in New York City, Hot Bread
6 Kitchen has responded with a program which
7 facilitates access to high-quality employment for
8 migrants who have received work authorization in New
9 York City. This program will train 80 participants
10 over four cohorts this year. It consists of five
11 weeks of kitchen and professional readiness training
12 with additional food protection training. The group
13 also undergoes three hours of intensive ESOL
14 instruction contextualized for the food industry
15 daily. Our first cohort graduated from the program in
16 late May, and we can say with confidence that there
17 is an overwhelming demand for this program. We have
18 received over 600 applications to date to fill just
19 40 program slots for our first two cohorts. We have
20 already learned many lessons from working directly
21 with migrants on workforce development to date, and
22 I'll be happy to connect with anyone who wants to
23 learn more to share our experience and expertise. I
24 wanted to just conclude by thanking the Council for
25

1 your call for a resolution to the work authorization
2 backlogs at the federal level and also underscore the
3 need for additional funding to ensure we can meet our
4 training goals for this program. We are seeking the
5 Council's support in Fiscal Year '25, specifically
6 for this program. We believe it is imperative for
7 organization and our city to welcome this community
8 into the workforce and to do our utmost to meet their
9 needs at this critical time, and we hope the Council
10 could support us in this effort. Thank you.
11

12 DORIAN BLOCK: Good afternoon. I am Dorian
13 Block, Senior Editor at the Center for an Urban
14 Future, an independent think tank focused on creating
15 a stronger and more inclusive economy in New York.
16 Thank you to Chairs Avilés and Feliz and Members of
17 the Committees for the opportunity. I'm here to share
18 some proposed solutions based on our research that
19 address some of the challenges that we've been
20 discussing today. Over the past two decades, the
21 Center for an Urban Future has published many reports
22 on the vital role that immigrants play in New York
23 City's economy and what policymakers can do to help
24 the newest New Yorkers thrive. Most recently, in
25 September 2023, the Center published a report

1 entitled Preparing Today's Asylum Seekers to Become
2 Tomorrow's Workforce, which found long waiting lists
3 at most of the City's programs, offering English
4 classes and workforce training tailored to
5 immigrants. Even before the recent influx of
6 migrants, New York City was struggling to help many
7 of the city's 2.79 million working age foreign born
8 residents, including over 1.4 million with limited
9 English proficiency with job training, workplace
10 certifications, learning English, and connecting to
11 other services that lead to employment. Since then,
12 the stream of arrivals has continued, and
13 policymakers have taken some important steps to
14 provide assistance that goes beyond humanitarian aid,
15 including the creation of the City Council's new
16 Arrival Strategy Team in April 2024, but a lot more
17 is needed to help build the capacity of the city's
18 immigrant serving organizations and to support more
19 of the newest New Yorkers on the path to economic
20 self-sufficiency. One of the biggest takeaways from
21 our research is the striking inadequacy of funding
22 for English for speakers of other languages, which
23 has been raised today. Our report finds that fewer
24 than 4 percent of all adult New Yorkers who could
25

1 benefit from literacy education are able to take ESOL
2 classes each year. For instance, the Queens Public
3 Library alone has an ESOL waiting list of about 2,000
4 people. This morning, I got an email from the New
5 York Public Library, which explained that their wait
6 list only has 1,300 people on it because they don't
7 allow anyone else on the list because they don't want
8 to give people false hope. Just quickly, our
9 solutions that we propose are asking the City Council
10 to restore and baseline funding for adult literacy
11 programs in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, ensure that
12 new RFPs support joint ESOL job training programs run
13 by CUNY, the City's libraries, non-profit training
14 and literacy assistant organizations, which absorb
15 the bulk of the demand. In addition, just very
16 quickly, the City can step up in supporting ESOL and
17 certification programs for migrants who do not yet
18 have work authorization because there is not much
19 funding for them. Also, to ensure that the future
20 City contracts and RFPs allow providers greater
21 flexibility, including remote and hybrid options. We
22 heard that from many of the providers we spoke to,
23 and allowing City funding to integrate wraparound
24 services into existing programs. Thank you.
25

1
2 JADE VASQUEZ: Good afternoon, Chair
3 Avilés and Chair Feliz. Thank you and Committee
4 Members for the opportunity to testify. My name is
5 Jade Vasquez, and I'm the Director of Policy and
6 Research at WIN, the largest shelter and service
7 provider for families with children. We operate 16
8 shelters and 500 supportive housing units across the
9 five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call
10 WIN home, including 3,600 children. WIN has always
11 welcomed immigrants to our shelters and we are
12 committed to ensuring a safe and supportive space for
13 all unhoused families, regardless of their
14 immigration status. We estimate that one third of our
15 families are immigrants. Last year, to address the
16 critical gap in immigration legal services for our
17 shelter residents, WIN partnered with NYLAG to launch
18 a Pro Se Plus Clinic for our clients. Since launching
19 the program, our team has screened 371 families in
20 our care and helped 64 individuals apply for asylum
21 and work permits. Today, 58 percent of those
22 applicants have received work authorization.
23 Immigration legal services are key to helping
24 migrants and asylum seekers begin their new lives in
25 the United States. WIN is proud to support New York's

1 Access to Representation Act and urge our local and
2 state governments to appropriate at least 150 million
3 dollars towards immigration legal services. WIN is
4 also calling for improved coordination and
5 collaboration between the City and New York's
6 immigration courts, as our clients have reported
7 having their immigration cases paused by a federal
8 judge if they claim they do not have a lawyer. By
9 pausing the clock, judges are delaying new asylum
10 seekers' ability to obtain work authorization. At
11 WIN, we are confident that the city's newest arrivals
12 can help fill our current labor shortages and
13 strengthen our economy. WIN's Income Building Program
14 has been instrumental in preparing new arrivals for
15 the workforce. Our team of specialists have already
16 helped one-third of migrants with work authorization
17 secure employment. We believe that WIN's legal and
18 income building initiatives, which are mostly funded
19 by philanthropic dollars, can serve as a model for
20 the City and other shelter providers, and we're eager
21 to work alongside the Administration and City Council
22 to implement long-term, sustainable solutions that
23 allow migrant families to exit homeless shelters and
24 build a future in New York. Thank you.
25

1
2 ANDREW SANTA ANA: Thank you, Chair Avilés
3 and Chair Feliz, for holding this hearing. My name is
4 Andrew Santa Ana, Deputy Director of Research and
5 Policy at the Asian American Federation, where we
6 proudly serve the collective voice of over 70 member
7 non-profits, serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. I
8 just want to start by saying I was welcomed into this
9 building by a trio of Pride flags that were inclusive
10 of BIPOC and trans communities, whose experiences of
11 the world were also often not met by responsive
12 governments and laws and, with that in mind, I wanted
13 to talk about AAPI New Yorkers, because the majority
14 of AAPI New Yorkers are immigrants. Some of them are
15 LGBTQ, but two-thirds of us are foreign-born. 47
16 percent of Asian New Yorkers have arrived to the city
17 after 2010, and 13 percent of our community are
18 undocumented. Regarding Intro. 216, it is obvious
19 that without a valid form of identification, many
20 immigrants find it difficult to find jobs, open bank
21 accounts, access additional City benefits available
22 to them. One of our member organizations in South
23 Brooklyn noted that the backlog for NYC IDs was as
24 long as two or three months out. We know this through
25 our partner member agencies and through the work of

1
2 our small business team that understands the vital
3 role valid identification has in improving the lives
4 of quality of small business owners and service
5 industry workers, providing in-person appointments
6 that meet the ever-increasing demand for NYC IDs and
7 allowing same-day and walk-in appointments would
8 especially benefit immigrants who have limited
9 flexibility and predictability in the work schedule
10 so we support that initiative and, truly, who knows
11 when someone actually becomes a real New Yorker, but
12 when someone has a picture with their name on it that
13 has information that can help them get IDs or work
14 authorization or jobs, all of those things are
15 helpful. Regarding the resolutions for work
16 employment authorization and humanitarian parole,
17 these are also no-brainers. As a former immigration
18 and family law attorney and, Chair Avilés, I
19 appreciate your rep on supporting that. Without work
20 authorization, immigrants must turn to informal off-
21 the-books employment, leaving them susceptible to
22 wage theft and work exploitation, including things
23 like trafficking. For many immigrants, work
24 authorization is as important as getting custody of
25 your children, getting an order of protection, or

1 getting child support. With 13 percent of AAPI
2 immigrants in New York City being undocumented and
3 15.5 percent of Asian immigrants living in poverty,
4 clearing this backlog of I-765 applications will
5 create safer economic opportunities for immigrants
6 and help address the high poverty rates amongst our
7 communities. I just wanted to drop that because SBS
8 mentioned some of the work of the Asian American
9 Federation, and we appreciate uplifting our important
10 small business work and, with that in mind, that work
11 needs to be funded. With the increase of migrants and
12 immigrants in our communities that are funneled into
13 ethnic corridors and neighborhoods, programs through
14 SBS that have uplifted commercial corridor
15 revitalization have been important, and these
16 programs need to continue because through small
17 businesses, they create job opportunities for new
18 migrants and for other people who are trying to come
19 out of the shadows, want identification, want to put
20 food on their table, and relieve the burden on the
21 city and state and the federal government. Thank you
22 very much.

23
24 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you to this
25 whole panel. Thank you for the work that you're

1 doing. I, of course, want to ask you a ton of
2 questions, but I think we'll have to do that off the
3 record. If you could answer just a quick yes or no.
4 Have you received commensurate funding from the City
5 for the programs that you're running to meet the
6 demand currently?
7

8 ANDREW SANTA ANA: Absolutely not.

9 JADE VASQUEZ: Our legal aid and income
10 building are run by philanthropic dollars.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Was that a yes or
12 no or mixed?

13 JADE VASQUEZ: We receive funding for
14 shelter services, but our initiatives are
15 philanthropically funded.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Your testimony
17 notes that WIN digs into its unrestricted funding to
18 be able to meet the client's needs, which is truly
19 commendable, and I thank you.

20 DORIAN BLOCK: As an independent think
21 tank, we don't receive funding from the City.

22 EETHIA THOMOPOULOS: Yes, we could always
23 use more. We receive some but, in order to sort of
24 particularly meet our budget needs for this program,
25 we do have a funding gap we're looking to meet.

1
2 DARLY CORNIEL: We have not received
3 additional funding. We are asking for it. However,
4 not receiving additional funding, we did provide
5 additional funds for the small partners who demand
6 for service increase on this year.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you all.
8 We're going to turn to the Zoom. Fatoumata Batouly
9 Diallo on Zoom.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has started.

11 MAIMOUNA DIEYE: My name is Maimouna Dieye
12 from African Communities Together. Fatoumata would
13 need a French interpreter in order to testify. She'll
14 be doing her testimony in French.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great, we have
16 interpretation available.

17 FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
18 FRENCH)

19 INTERPRETER: I'm to do the interpreting.
20 Is that correct?

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yes.

22 INTERPRETER: She doesn't have an
23 interpreter? Okay. I just need to break it down
24 because she's going very fast.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. If you want
4 to tell her to pause.

5 INTERPRETER: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

6 FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
7 FRENCH)

8 INTERPRETER: Hello. I would like to thank
9 all the Members of the Immigration and Small Business
10 Commission here today. I represent African
11 Communities Together, and I would like to speak to
12 the difficulties being faced by the members of this
13 community. We work with the City of New York and SBS
14 on various programs. One of the issues that I'd like
15 to raise is the fact that... (SPEAKING FRENCH) So, we
16 have to make certain demands 150 days in advance and,
17 logistically, this is something very complicated
18 faced by the members of our community. Fatoumata?

19 FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
20 FRENCH)

21 INTERPRETER: Basically, as you know,
22 there's the 150-day rule. Asylum seekers have to wait
23 150 days after demanding asylum in order to seek work
24 authorization. This is a very heavy burden on that
25 community.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: And we know that SBS has no
authorization beyond reaching to the federal level.
All it can do is basically be there as a support to
the immigrants in the interim period while they're
waiting.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: So newly arrived immigrants
need some very essential services that are very
important for them. Preparing them, for example, to
enter the workforce.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: And also a couple of other
services, of course, how to write their resumes, how
to write an application for work. Also, workshops on
how to conduct themselves during an interview, and
what would be very useful is digital literacy to help
them have the means to do all of the above.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING
FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: But the main obstacle to finding a job is the work authorization.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: And in addition to that, language access, specifically English.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: And, in fact, what I wanted to say was that even if you do have a work authorization, there still remains English as the main barrier to being able to enter the workforce. That is one of the most difficult points.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: It's a well-known fact that immigrants who do not speak either English or Spanish are very much behind when it comes to accessing jobs or accessing services.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: And a lot of the migrants coming from Africa are mainly from Guinea, from

Mauritania, from Mali or Senegal. Their language is often French.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: Or Arabic.

FATOUMATA BATOULY DIALLO: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

INTERPRETER: What we're asking for is training in French and Arabic that is suited to these newly arrived immigrants.

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much for your testimony. Please feel free to submit additional testimony.

INTERPRETER: (SPEAKING FRENCH)

CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Next, we'll have Dinah Foley, Elizabeth Bird, Karina Kaufman-Gutierrez, Dmitri Daniel Glinsky, Dinick Martinez, and Sharon Brown.

DINAH FOLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Dinah Foley. I'm a Social Worker in the Immigration Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services, and I wanted to thank the Committees on Immigration and Small Businesses and Chair Avilés and Chair Feliz for allowing us to testify here today. Brooklyn Defender

1 Services immigration practice protects the rights of
2 immigrants New Yorkers by defending against ICE
3 detention and deportation, minimizing the immigration
4 consequences of criminal and family charges for non-
5 citizens and providing representation in immigration
6 relief applications, and we're really grateful to the
7 Council for its investment in providing legal
8 representation in complex cases for our immigrant
9 communities through (INAUDIBLE) and the Immigrant
10 Opportunities Initiative. The people we serve often
11 face significant and numerous barriers to economic
12 survival, and enhancing access to IDNYC presents our
13 City with an opportunity to remove one of these
14 barriers. ID is vital for New Yorkers in seeking
15 access to City benefits, employment, healthcare, and
16 opening bank accounts and applying for immigration
17 applications and just the ability to travel the city
18 safely without fear of being penalized by law
19 enforcement for lacking ID. For asylum seekers, some
20 form of photo ID is necessary for an application for
21 an employment authorization document, and photo ID is
22 also needed to attend the biometrics appointment
23 that's required for an EAD to be issued. We've seen
24 instances of the ability to work delayed due to
25

1 issues accessing ID NYC, and the consequences of
2 delaying access to work are expansive, deepening food
3 insecurity and housing instability, preventing access
4 to healthcare and basic hygiene items, and making it
5 harder for people to leave relationships that are
6 harmful to them. BDS strongly supports Intro. 216,
7 which would require the City to provide walk-in
8 appointments, additional training for staff, and an
9 appeal of a denial at the time of application. Like
10 Council Member Hanif mentioned earlier, I also went
11 on the website yesterday and today and found that
12 there were no appointments available so right now it
13 is not possible to schedule an appointment for an ID
14 NYC and, as we detail further in our written
15 testimony, the ability to appeal an application or a
16 document denial on site is also critical. ID NYC was
17 created to ensure that those members of our community
18 who most urgently need ID are able to obtain one, and
19 we're grateful to the Council and the Committees for
20 your continued efforts to try to make this program
21 more accessible. Thank you.

22
23 ELIZABETH BIRD. Thank you, Chairs and
24 Members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth Bird.
25 I am Director of Public Policy at Ed Alliance.

1 Educational Alliance was one of the first settlement
2 houses in New York City, founded 130 years ago in
3 response to Jewish immigrants fleeing Eastern Europe
4 at the time. Our history is relevant today as we work
5 to integrate a new wave of asylum seekers into the
6 city. Today, I want to speak a little bit about our
7 efforts to help asylum seekers with work
8 authorization and employment opportunities through
9 partnerships with the City. In February, we launched
10 a Work Authorization Clinic through a pilot
11 partnership with the Mayor's Office of Asylum Seeker
12 Operations. We appreciate the Administration's
13 willingness to collaborate with us on it. Our
14 intention was our intention was to reproduce the
15 structures in place at the City's asylum application
16 help center on a smaller scale while connecting
17 clients with coordinated supports to help them gain
18 stability in their lives. By leveraging our network
19 of volunteers to staff the clinic, we designed a
20 cost-effective pilot to complete work authorization
21 applications and add capacity into the system. In our
22 clinic, we strive to replicate the model of the
23 City's larger help center. Clients are seen by
24 appointment. All volunteers complete a thorough
25

1 training, and a supervising attorney provided by OASO
2 reviews each application before it is submitted.

3 There are also key differences from the City's help
4 center. Our clinic operates on a smaller scale and
5 only serves individuals filing for work authorization
6 on the basis of pending asylum. In addition, we offer
7 coordinated supports during the clinic.

8 Representatives from SBS and Workforce One are on
9 site to connect clients with employment workshops,
10 training opportunities, and job listings across the
11 five boroughs. Individuals at our clinic also have
12 immediate access to the wraparound services we offer,
13 including English classes, free clothing, and case
14 management. Volunteer recruitment has been extremely
15 effective and we've had an outpouring of interest
16 from people looking for opportunities to help. For
17 asylum seekers, a critical step toward independence
18 is applying for work authorization and, because of
19 our partnership with the City, we have increased the
20 number of individuals who are able to legally work
21 today. Thank you for the opportunity.

22
23 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you, and
24 before we have our next public testimony, just want
25 to recognize, I guess, the New York Times group in

the balcony from Council Member Marte's District.

Thank you and welcome.

Next, Mr. Dmitri.

DMITRI DANIEL GLINKSI: All right. Thank you, Chair and the Committee for the opportunity to support this important legislation. Our Russian-speaking Community Council is the oldest active non-profit of the community of 21st century refugees and exiles from ex-Soviet autocracies. We are providing newcomers with culturally competent services, including organizing and advocacy and, to preempt the question, I must say that for most of 12 years of our history, have been doing this on an entirely volunteer basis. In the past three years, over 70,000 of Russians went through our southern border seeking refuge. This means close to 20 percent increase in the size of the total Russian diaspora in the U.S. Granting parole to those seeking asylum would bring more uniformity and equity to these decisions and to the waiting time for employment authorizations. Clearing the backlog on them is also timely and necessary, and so is the New York State bill removing immigration-related barriers to licensing and certifications, but these much-needed solutions would

1 not be enough to address the disadvantages and the
2 soft forms of exclusion from certain areas of work
3 faced by some of our refugee diasporas and the
4 subgroups within them. The latest influx of asylum
5 seekers from Russia has brought many of those who
6 worked in public life on the side of human rights and
7 democracy. Some of them had to flee from their
8 country in the middle of their careers because of
9 speaking out against the war of aggression. Their
10 experience in their country's struggles brings value
11 to the U.S. and New York as our own democracy is
12 being threatened directly and indirectly by the same
13 or related actors, some of whose collaborators have
14 had significantly more clout and opportunities in our
15 city than those fleeing from them. We at RCC are
16 meeting asylum seekers who in better times worked as
17 community organizers or pro-democracy campaign
18 managers. Here, after gaining their EADs, they are
19 lucky to get entry-level jobs and staples at Target.
20 Great companies, but not always the most efficient
21 use for these people's talents and passions. Alas,
22 let me put it bluntly, most of our international non-
23 profits, research centers and related agencies,
24 including City-funded like CUNY and others, are yet
25

1 to acknowledge the activists and professionals in
2 exile from autocracies and the skills and experience
3 they bring as can be attested by those of us from the
4 previous waves who came here from backgrounds in
5 human rights and democracy movements. I urge our
6 esteemed City Council to set up or encourage the
7 creation of a fellowship-type incubator for public
8 service professionals fleeing from autocracies to
9 facilitate their entry to non-profits, research
10 centers, perhaps even City agencies so that our city
11 can benefit from the experience and transferable
12 skills gained in fighting against the forces that
13 threaten our own future, and we encourage the
14 recently created New Arrival Strategy Team to meet
15 with some of our refugees and exiles and include
16 their CBOs in its cohorts. Thank you.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Next.
19 Pull it closer to you. There you go.

20 SHARON BROWN: Hello, my name is Sharon
21 Brown, and I'm from Rose of Sharon Enterprises. The
22 funding, I believe, should be for those who have a
23 status where we know who they are and that they are
24 not a threat to the nation. We do not want to fund
25 people who are here that may be sending money back to

1 certain places like ISIS or Hezbollah or other things
2 like that. We have people that are coming across the
3 border who also may be Jewish from Russia and they
4 spoke about Jewish from Russia. People coming from
5 there, it may not be well known. There are a lot of
6 Russian Jews. So when people are coming across the
7 border, there may be people who we can verify and
8 others we can't verify so, when they're trying to
9 find out who can work, the process is going to be
10 stalled. 150 days, it sounds like a lot, but in
11 certain situations, they have to do 150 days or more
12 and, when they say they can't work, it sounds like
13 it's so horrible, but they find other ways to fund
14 them when they're not able to work so they're not
15 just out, you know, on the street and they can't do
16 anything. They can go to some kind of place and stay
17 and there's some way that they're funded that they
18 will be able to eat, have a roof over their head. It
19 might not be the circumstance that they want, but
20 there is funding available for people who we can't
21 verify. They take them into certain places and then
22 they have to leave after a certain amount of time,
23 but the working is so they can put a roof over their
24 head, have clothing, things like that and they're
25

1 getting what they need, but they can't work unless we
2 can verify who they are. Some people have been
3 trafficked. This is the last thing I want to say.
4 Some people coming across the border may be returning
5 to America from having been trafficked from America,
6 and they were either trafficked when they were little
7 and they're coming back and they may have had trouble
8 in those countries and they fled so we need to be
9 sensitive about who we are dealing with. And they may
10 not look like just the ordinary American, but it's a
11 melting pot so the person from Africa could be
12 American born and could have citizen parents and be
13 returning because they were trafficked so trafficking
14 is a big issue.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much
17 for your testimony. Dinick.

18 DINICK MARTINEZ: Hi. I kind of agree with
19 some stuff that she said, not in everything, but some
20 stuff. My name is Dinick, D-I-N-I-C-K Martinez with a
21 Z at the end. I have a YouTube channel, and I'm going
22 to tell you why at the beginning. New York City, New
23 York State, and the United States government does
24 not, I'm going to repeat that again, does not have
25 unlimited resources. Resources can be limited,

1 they're limited. They will expire at some point
2 because they collect taxes. So for example, one
3 example, like most of the migrants are not asylum
4 seekers, they're economic migrants. I got this
5 information from firsthand. In Long Island City, for
6 example, there are so many hotel shelters, and the
7 hotels regularly charge, just an example, 150.9 per
8 guest. When they have a migrant hotel, they charge
9 the City double, 300, just an example. (INAUDIBLE)
10 amount. That's ridiculous, but they don't provide the
11 same services. Okay, in Long Island City, there is
12 one of the asylum shelters. I see a lot of food being
13 wasted and the food that these migrants get is better
14 than a regular shelter, better. I have a YouTube
15 video that is in YouTube. It has 41,000 views. I was
16 like shocked. My views always get between 5 and 20
17 views, but that one went like, wow, all over the
18 country, how wasteful this migrants' food is. And
19 milk, on June 2nd, I took another video, but I
20 haven't uploaded. It's 10 days to be expired on the
21 garbage. Taxpayers' money wasted at work. So sounds
22 like that's all I'm gonna say. All, basically, all
23 these asylum shelters and regular shelters needs to
24 be fiscally, physics, my English, fiscally inspected
25

1 deeply because they waste a lot of money from the
2 City. Thank you.

3
4 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Thank
5 you so much. Thank you to the panelists and your
6 patience. Thank you, and next, we're gonna turn to..

7 DINICK MARTINEZ: I wanna say more, but
8 anyway.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Our public
10 testimony on Zoom. Next, we will have Gregory Morris.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has started.

12 GREGORY MORRIS: Good afternoon. I want to
13 thank Council Member Avilés, Council Member Feliz.
14 Thank you for making this time, this joint hearing. I
15 was with you in person briefly, but needed to run
16 uptown to work with some of the different workforce
17 development training organizations that have been
18 active in support of migrants and new arrivals and
19 refugees throughout the course of their history, but
20 in particular, digging in honestly and thoroughly and
21 oftentimes on their own over the last two years, and
22 I say on their own partially because as was pointed
23 out during the course of this hearing, there has been
24 an absence of coordination, I think, between what the
25 City and the State are seeking to accomplish and the

1 folks who are on the ground doing the work. In
2 addition, as was noted during this hearing, the
3 absence of resource and commitment to funding
4 opportunities so providers who have been sleeves
5 rolled up, working hard diligently and in focused
6 capacity have had to seek additional resources,
7 oftentimes drawing upon their own lines of credit
8 and/or seeking philanthropic support to continue
9 doing the critical work that it takes to help
10 someone, a new arrival, find a pathway into a
11 training opportunity. I represent the New York City
12 Employment and Training Coalition, 220 member
13 organizations, 6,000 professionals located in every
14 borough, connected to every industry, all focused on
15 trying to create pathways to opportunity. When you
16 analyze the data, our providers are essentially
17 working and meeting the needs of more than 200,000
18 New Yorkers every year, but we have always had a
19 history of working with immigrant, refugee, migrant
20 communities and sought to support their success over
21 time, and it's our providers that have doubled down.
22 Many of them who testified during the course of this
23 hearing to share with you what you already knew,
24 which you already highlighted during the course of
25

3 this hearing, and that is an absence of coordination
4 and absence of resource, the need for contextualized
5 learning opportunities, the need for workforce
6 development, the continued commitment between
7 workforce development and economic development..

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

9 Thank you.

10 GREGORY MORRIS: To ensure better
11 pathways. Finally, just to note, restore the cuts in
12 libraries. We need to make sure that there are
13 literacy resources, digital literacy resources, no
14 cuts to contract services to make sure your non-
15 profit providers are doing well. I thank you for
16 making this time. I look forward to seeing folks on
17 Thursday as well for the workforce development,
18 economic development related hearing. We support
19 every aspect of what you've put forward in your
20 resolutions and all the items that have been put
21 forth, and we seek to serve as a resource in making
22 future connections and continuing..

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you.

24 GREGORY MORRIS: To champion the needs and
25 interests of our providers. Thank you so much.

CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
you so much for your testimony.

Next, we'll hear from Hildalyn Colon
Hernandez.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has started.

HILDALYN COLON HERNANDEZ: Hi, everybody.

My name is Hildalyn Colon, and I'm the Executive
Director of NICE, which is one of the organizations
that was mentioned during this hearing. I think today
is a reflection of what in NICE we have been talking
about for a long time, that workforce development for
immigrant community takes more than just putting
people to work. It takes about of immigration. It
takes about ESL. It's a whole component. And in our
conversations, we have developed a new program of
apprenticeship for life and work, which tackles that,
and it takes one of the things that I think is also
not mentioned today, but I think we should think
about the employers. We actually right now, I'm right
here in a restaurant that we're trying to build a
partnership around this issue. I think today what was
raised was very important and highlighted that we are
still in the process of trying to put together what
it looks like. I think it's being (INAUDIBLE) for

1
2 sure to continue the efforts, but it has to be more
3 strategic across the board with all agencies and all
4 community groups are very clear what workforce
5 development is and what are the components needed in
6 order to make sure that people succeed. I think the
7 other part that also was reflected today, and this is
8 what we're trying to bring to the table, is that
9 having a job, having a work authorization is not
10 enough. You can have the work authorization but, if
11 you don't have the training and the skills to get
12 hired, is the same issue. As we have experienced, and
13 I've been mentioned this across the board, as we do
14 it in some of the programs that I've mentioned, I
15 have a conversation with somebody that said I've been
16 here for two years, I've never experienced being
17 interviewed by someone. That's the part of process
18 that we need to start rethinking about what is this
19 workforce development looks for our communities,
20 right, because they're dealing with other challenges.
21 They're even dealing with other issues, and we have
22 to put all the pieces together. The funding
23 definitely is needed, especially as the volume that
24 we're seeing has increased, but also as the
25 requirements of how these programs are needed and the

3 robust part of what all the pieces that are needed
4 definitely is there. It is a step forward. We need to
5 move forward and we also need to bring all the
6 parties together to actually have one language around
7 this issue. Thank you.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank
9 you so much for your testimony. Great seeing you,
10 Hildalyn.

11 We have now heard from everyone who has
12 signed up to testify. If we inadvertently missed
13 anyone who would like to testify in person, visit the
14 Sergeant's table and complete a witness slip now. If
15 we inadvertently missed anyone who would like to
16 testify virtually, please use the raise hand function
17 in Zoom and a Member of our Staff will call you in
18 the order of hands raised.

19 We also have two members who registered
20 but weren't here when they were called, Adama Bah and
21 Karina Kaufman Gutierrez. Are you with us in person
22 or via Zoom?

23 All right. Seeing no one else, I would
24 like to note again that written testimony, which will
25 be reviewed in full by Committee Staff, may be
submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the

3 close of this hearing by emailing it to
4 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you so much.

5 This hearing is hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 7, 2024