

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Carlina Rivera, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
David M. Carr  
Shahana K. Hanif  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Lincoln Restler  
Alexa Avilés

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

Juanita Holmes  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Probation

Robert Maldonado  
Deputy Commissioner  
NYC Department of Probation

Kat Thompson  
Chief of Staff  
Department of Correction

Francis Torres  
Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Correction

Nell McCarty  
Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Correction

Valerie Greisokh  
Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Correction

Anna Calabrese  
Executive Director of Reentry Initiates  
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Jeanette Merrill  
Director  
Communications and Intergovtl Affairs  
Health+Hospitals Corr Health Svcs

Nadia Chait  
Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy  
CASES

Andre Ward  
Associate Vice President of Policy  
Fortune Society

Megan French-Marcelin  
Legal Action Center

Kingsley Rowe  
Senior Forensic Reentry Social Worker  
New York County Defender Services

Janelle Ferris  
Executive Director  
Brooklyn Community Services

Hubert Lila  
Program Director  
Brooklyn Community Services

Andy Collado  
Director of Economic Empowerment Programs  
Riseboro Community Partnership

Arnell Jackson  
Program Manager  
Polo Grounds Housing Complex in Harlem  
Next Steps

Zakya Warkeno  
Policy Advocate and Social Worker  
The Bronx Defenders

Veronia Vela  
Prisoners' Rights Project  
Legal Aid Society

Ahmed Rodriguez  
Director  
Community Media Services

Rebecca Kinsella  
Associate Director of Social Work  
Criminal Defense Practice  
Brooklyn Defender Services

LuAnne Blaauboer  
Vice President of Vocational Programs  
Good Shepherd Services

Zachary Katznelson  
Executive Director  
The Lippman Commission

Darren Mack  
Co-Director  
Freedom Agenda

Jennifer Parrish  
Urban Justice Center Mental Health  
Project

Julia Defina  
Senior Director of Justice Programs  
Community Mediation Services

Brad Cauthen  
Director  
Jail-Based Services and Workforce Devt

The Osborne Association

Peleya Patterson

Vice President

Community Based Justice and Mentoring  
Initiatives

Good Shepherd Services

Jessica Yager

Project Director

Red Hook Community Justice Center

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Getting ready to begin.

3 Good morning and welcome to the New York City  
4 Council hearing of the Committee on Criminal Justice.  
5 At this time, can everybody please silence your cell  
6 phones? If you wish to testify, please go up to the  
7 sergeant's desk to fill out a testimony slip.

8 Written testimony can be emailed to  
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is  
10 testimony@counsel.nyc.gov. At this time and going  
11 forward no one is to approach the dais. I repeat, no  
12 one is to approach the dais. Thank you for your  
13 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Good morning.  
15 I'm Councilmember Carlina Rivera, Chair of the  
16 council's Committee on Criminal Justice. I'd like to  
17 welcome everyone here today and those joining us  
18 remotely to discuss the Department of Correction and  
19 Department of Probation's programming and reentry  
20 services, as well as Introduction 1203 sponsored by  
21 Councilmember Riley, to require DOC to provide a  
22 letter of incarceration also known as jail release  
23 papers or discharge papers to every person that gets  
24 released from the department's custody.

2 I also want to recognize my colleagues who are  
3 here, Councilmembers Narcisse and Carr, and we've  
4 been joined by Councilmember Hanif virtually.

5 Programming has the power to transform the lives  
6 of individuals in our city's jails and those under  
7 probation supervision, and is a critical part of an  
8 effective approach to public safety. For  
9 incarcerated individuals, successful programming can  
10 address untreated trauma, improve decision-making  
11 skills, and provide academic and vocational training  
12 that will improve post-release employment  
13 opportunities.

14 For individuals on probation supervision  
15 particularly young people involved in the juvenile  
16 justice system, programs help spur the changes that  
17 empower individuals to stabilize and avoid further  
18 involvement in the criminal legal system. Despite  
19 the importance of programming in recent months, the  
20 Department of Correction and Department of Probation  
21 have both cut contracts with outside providers that  
22 have a long track record of serving individuals both  
23 in the jails, recently released, or under  
24 supervision, often without advance notice or clear  
25 rationale. The Department of Correction is required

2 by law to offer at least five hours of programming  
3 per day to incarcerated individuals with few  
4 exceptions.

5 Today, we want to learn more about how the  
6 department ensures this requirement is met and how  
7 they evaluate their offerings to ensure these  
8 programs are having a meaningful impact. We want an  
9 update on the tablets intended to provide enrichment  
10 and a lifeline to the outside for people in custody,  
11 but which we've learned have minimal functionality.  
12 We want to hear how the department manages its  
13 volunteer program when providers come to us with  
14 concerns surrounding clearance and training, as well  
15 as a lack of staff preventing them from offering  
16 their services. We are particularly interested in  
17 learning more about the department's work to insource  
18 the programs provided through \$17 million in  
19 contracts to nonprofits and community organizations,  
20 representing over 20% of the agency's total programs  
21 offered to incarcerated individuals.

22 The organizations impacted by the cuts had a long  
23 track record of working on Rikers Island and employed  
24 many individuals with lived experience. The programs  
25 that were cut fell within the crucial category of



2 transition services: Services that target  
3 individuals needs and assist with transition  
4 planning, whether back into the community or state  
5 custody. This includes programs that address work  
6 readiness, financial literacy, anger management,  
7 parenting, healthy relationships, reentry planning,  
8 life skills and stress management. We must examine  
9 the impact of this decision to insource programs that  
10 provide motivation, rehabilitation, connection, and  
11 hope, not to mention reduce violence and tension  
12 inside job facilities.

13 I also look forward to getting an update on the  
14 array of reentry planning and services provided by  
15 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and  
16 Correctional Health Services. How have the cuts  
17 affected operations? How does reentry planning  
18 channel into the new reentry service center near the  
19 MTA Q100 bus stop at the entrance of Rikers?

20 Program cuts are not isolated to the Department  
21 of Correction. I am concerned about reports from  
22 organizations that the Department of Probation is  
23 terminating their contracts with less than a week of  
24 notice. One of the programs impacted is the Next  
25 Steps Program, which provided mentoring to over 200

2 Young people in NYCHA developments across the city, a  
3 program that Commissioner Holmes touted as emblematic  
4 of what works in criminal justice in front of this  
5 committee in March.

6       How did the department select these contracts for  
7 termination? And why did they give these providers  
8 such little notice? We have a wide range of  
9 stakeholders here to help address these questions and  
10 more.

11       With the cuts to individualized transition  
12 services that help connects people leaving custody to  
13 the social safety net is important that DOC provide  
14 individuals with the paperwork they need to get their  
15 feet on the ground after their release. Federal law  
16 prohibits people from collecting from programs like  
17 Social Security and Medicaid while incarcerated. So  
18 they need to show proof that they're out, their  
19 discharge papers, to get their benefits back. That  
20 is why we are hearing Introduction 203 sponsored by  
21 Councilmember Riley, which would require the OSI to  
22 provide a letter of incarceration to every person  
23 that gets released from the department's custody.  
24 Instead of requiring individuals to proactively

2 request such a letter, issuing one would be the  
3 default.

4 To truly improve public safety and reduce levels  
5 of incarceration, the agencies before us today must  
6 build a collaborative reentry model that begins the  
7 minute someone enters the jail system and ensures  
8 there can be sustainable long-term success when they  
9 leave. I look forward to hearing all of your  
10 testimony on how we can get this done.

11 And with that, I will turn it over to committee  
12 counsel.

13 COUNSEL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll now  
14 swearing our panel of administrative administration  
15 witnesses.

16 With us today from the Department of Correction,  
17 we have Commissioner Juanita Holms and Deputy  
18 Commissioner-- I'm sorry, Department of Probation  
19 Commissioner Juanita Holmes, and Deputy Commissioner  
20 Robert Maldonado.

21 From the Department of Correction, we have Kat  
22 Thompson, Deputy Commissioner Francis Torres,  
23 Assistant Commissioner Nell McCarty, and Assistant  
24 Commissioner Valerie Greisokh. We also will be  
25 joined at some point by Correctional Health Services

2 and Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
3 representatives.

4 But for now, with all the administration  
5 witnesses present, please raise your right hands?

6 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
7 and nothing but the truth before this committee and  
8 respond honestly to Councilmember questions?

9 Noting for the record all witnesses answered in  
10 the affirmative. You can begin your testimony in  
11 whatever order you so choose.

12 MS. THOMPSON: Good morning. Good morning, Chair  
13 Rivera and members of the Committee on Criminal  
14 Justice. I am Kat Thompson, Chief of Staff and the  
15 New York City Department of Correction, DOC. I'm  
16 joined today by Deputy Commissioner of the Division  
17 of Programs and Community Partnerships, Francis  
18 Torres, and Assistant Commissioners Nell McCarty and  
19 Valerie Greisokh to provide an update on the  
20 department's programs and reentry services since  
21 insourcing large contract services as a part of the  
22 fiscal year 2024 adopted budget.

23 We believe that everyone benefits when  
24 individuals in custody are afforded the tools that  
25 they need to have less adverse contact with the

2 justice system in the future. To this end,  
3 individuals in the department's care can access an  
4 array of robust services and opportunities that  
5 support change and successful community  
6 reintegration. Most of these services are afforded  
7 by the department through program staff, including  
8 arts enhanced recreation, law library, chaplaincy,  
9 social services, and individual and group-based  
10 counseling. Staff assigned to the Division of  
11 programs and community partnerships also lead  
12 community engagement days, conduct family  
13 interventions and respond to some emergencies within  
14 the jails to assist in de-escalating or problem  
15 solving with people in custody.

16 In addition to these core services, the  
17 Department of Education provides education in schools  
18 and volunteers afford all kinds of enrichment  
19 activities. The division of programs is comprised of  
20 a highly skilled and dedicated group of individuals  
21 who do tremendous work in the jails every day. All  
22 program staff are trained in evidence-based  
23 curriculum and best practices, and they continue to  
24 participate in ongoing training and development  
25 throughout their careers with the department. They

2 bring a wealth of diverse skills, experiences and  
3 perspectives to their work. On average division  
4 staff have worked for the Agency for seven years,  
5 with nearly 80%, holding higher education degrees  
6 ranging from associates to doctoral degrees. Many of  
7 the staff members started their careers with  
8 community-based organizations, and several, including  
9 senior staff members, have also lived experience  
10 within the justice system and with issues that can  
11 impact justice involvement. Their work is critical  
12 to the department's goals of building safe and humane  
13 jails, and preparing individuals in custody for a  
14 successful return to their community.

15 As this body is aware, in order to comply with  
16 the mayor's mandated 4% budget reduction in fiscal  
17 year 2024 adopted budget, the department terminated  
18 large contracts with external program providers and  
19 insourced the services they were providing. The  
20 primary role of external providers under these  
21 contracts was to afford group-based services to  
22 housing units in addition to the core services  
23 afforded by DOC program staff. The department has  
24 implemented several strategic measures over the last  
25 few months to ensure individuals in custody continue

2 to receive robust and meaningful programs and  
3 services in the absence of these contracts.

4       Since 2015, our counseling unit staff have been  
5 the primary staff leading group facilitation within  
6 certain housing areas, including our adolescent and  
7 emerging adult units, and most recently, our enhanced  
8 supervision housing units. Because of this, they  
9 were well positioned to assume the responsibilities  
10 department wide once the contracts ended.

11       Between May and June of this year, we engaged  
12 with labor union leadership to change the tasks and  
13 standards for associate correctional counselors  
14 within the counseling unit, so that they could  
15 provide group-based counseling services for the whole  
16 population. These changes required a shift in some  
17 of their other responsibilities. Prior to  
18 implementing any changes for our staff, we held  
19 internal meetings with staff to provide transparent  
20 information about these upcoming changes.

21 Individuals in custody were also informed of the  
22 transition of group facilitation, and one-to-one  
23 counseling by contracted providers to department  
24 counseling staff members. Staff were provided with  
25 refresher trainings on facilitation techniques,

2 evidence-based practices and curricula to ensure that  
3 they were prepared to assume these responsibilities.

4 Of course, we knew we could not simply ask our  
5 associate correctional counselors to take on more  
6 responsibilities without creating efficiencies and  
7 shifting responsibilities in other areas.

8 Previously, associate correctional counselors were  
9 providing most services in a one on one format.

10 Under the new model, associate correctional  
11 counselors provide people in custody with the same  
12 frequency of programming just now in a group format.

13 The goals of counseling sessions have not changed.

14 Rather, they're brought in to incorporate a group  
15 experience. Individuals still have access to one-on-  
16 one engagement through various other program staff  
17 and activities such as chaplaincy services, enhanced  
18 recreational services, and the Fine and Performing  
19 Arts team.

20 We've also shifted the way in which social  
21 services are accessed and supported. Social Service  
22 Requests can now be submitted through the tablets and  
23 we recently on boarded five supervising counselors  
24 who are supporting the provision of social services  
25 across each jail. These operational changes have



2 reduced the workload related to social service  
3 requests for the associate correctional counselors,  
4 allowing more time for the provision of group  
5 services. Furthermore, this month, the counseling  
6 unit welcomed a new deputy director to provide  
7 additional support and guidance to the team. A  
8 second deputy director will join the team in October.

9       Lastly, I would like to highlight that the New  
10 York City Health + Hospitals slash Correctional  
11 Health Services they remain a partner and the only  
12 provider of mental health therapy and counseling for  
13 those in custody. For issues that are beyond the  
14 scope of the division of programs, DOC continues to  
15 partner with DHS through referrals to mental health  
16 services. The department continues to partner with  
17 the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice MOCJ and  
18 contracted reentry providers to afford transition  
19 planning for individuals in our care. Transition  
20 coordinators meet with incarcerated individuals to  
21 assist with discharge planning and make referrals to  
22 community-based services including assistance with  
23 housing and employment. They also assist individuals  
24 who are transitioning to state prison by providing

2 them resources and information about the transfer  
3 process and the services available upstate.

4 On September 15, we launched a new tablet  
5 feature, enabling incarcerated individuals to connect  
6 directly with transition coordinators if they need  
7 assistance with transition planning. Our goal is to  
8 ensure that everyone has the resources and support  
9 they need to prepare for their next step. The  
10 department's reintegration services are designed to  
11 address individuals' specific needs, and we proudly  
12 partner with the US Department of Veterans Affairs  
13 and the New York City Department of Veterans Services  
14 to afford tailored services to veterans in our care.

15 We also partner with organizations such as the  
16 Women's Prison Association, and the Women's Community  
17 Justice Association to afford services designed  
18 specifically for women. And we work closely with  
19 Youth Justice Network and SCO Family Services to  
20 support emerging adults.

21 In addition, we continue to release eligible  
22 sentenced individuals through the Article 6A work  
23 release program. Since the beginning of this  
24 administration, we've released 67 individuals, 90% of  
25 which successfully completed the remainder of their

2 sentence in the community. Finally, I'll emphasize  
3 that the reentry services provided by contracted  
4 providers have not changed. These contracts are held  
5 by our partners at the Mayor's Office of Criminal  
6 Justice and were not impacted by the department's  
7 insourcing.

8 I would like to highlight that despite this shift  
9 in operations, individuals in custody continue to  
10 have access to a majority of programs and services in  
11 the same manner as they were previously afforded.

12 Not only have we continued to provide high-quality  
13 programs and services through this transition, we've  
14 also continued to expand certain program areas and  
15 implement new initiatives. We have strengthened and  
16 expanded substance abuse and addiction programming  
17 and housing areas, as well as faith-based services.

18 We also continue to strengthen visitation  
19 programs so that parents can maintain important  
20 family ties and meaningfully engage with their  
21 children. The department partners with the  
22 Children's Museum of Manhattan CMOM to facilitate  
23 family visits between incarcerated parents and their  
24 children in the community.

2       Recently, the department worked with CMOM to  
3 bring some of their exhibits to DOC visit houses to  
4 provide children and families with interactive  
5 activities and experiences for bonding in the visit  
6 areas. The department also launched a new  
7 partnership with the twinning project, which teaches  
8 soccer to incarcerated individuals to promote  
9 teamwork, physical activity and physical health.

10       This month, and next month, we will integrate  
11 other providers as part of our advancement and  
12 enrichment opportunities to include our robust menu  
13 of workforce development certificates and  
14 certifications. It is our goal to continue expanding  
15 and refining service offerings through conversations  
16 with people in custody and critical partnerships with  
17 community-based organizations.

18       Now, I will briefly turn to the proposed  
19 legislation Intro 1203. The bill would require the  
20 department to provide a letter of incarceration, also  
21 known as jail release papers or discharge papers to  
22 every person that gets released from the department's  
23 custody. The department recognizes that letters of  
24 incarceration can be helpful in obtaining  
25 identification or other services and benefits after

2 release into the community, and currently provides  
3 letters of incarceration to individuals upon request.

4 With current resources and operations, it may be  
5 challenging to provide letters of incarceration upon  
6 release for all people in custody. Nonetheless, the  
7 department appreciates the intent of this  
8 legislation, and looks forward to discussing the bill  
9 further with Council.

10 In conclusion, we recognize that this fiscal year  
11 brought about a major shift in the manner in which  
12 the department affords some programs and services.  
13 There were certainly challenges, which is to be  
14 expected with any major shift in operations.  
15 However, over the past 20 months, this department has  
16 demonstrated that we are willing and able to face  
17 challenges head on and come to thoughtful solutions  
18 did serve the people in our care. We owe much of our  
19 success to our amazing program staff and their  
20 dedication through this transition.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to share about the  
22 great work of our division of programs and community  
23 partnerships, and we are available to answer your  
24 questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you for your  
3 testimony. Commissioner, would you like to begin?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Good morning Chair Rivera,  
5 and members of the Criminal Justice Committee. I'm  
6 Juanita Holmes, Commissioner of the New York City  
7 Department of Probation. With me is Deputy  
8 Commissioner Robert Maldonado, newly hired to oversee  
9 programs and services within the Department of  
10 Probation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
11 before the council about our programming.

12 The Department of Probation helps build stronger  
13 and safer communities by working with and supervising  
14 people on probation, with the hopes of fostering  
15 positive change in their decision making and behavior  
16 through research-based practices, and by expanding  
17 opportunities for them to move out of the criminal  
18 justice system through meaningful education,  
19 employment, health services, family engagement, and  
20 civic participation.

21 Probation serves as the largest and most robust  
22 community corrections alternative to incarceration in  
23 New York State, and it's one of the largest probation  
24 agencies in the nation. Department of Probation is  
25 committed to ensuring that the people under its

2 supervision have access to the opportunities and  
3 services they need to not just avoid incarceration  
4 but to thrive.

5       Currently, the New York City Department of  
6 Probation supervises approximately 14,000 clients.  
7 Juvenile operations accounts approximately for 600  
8 clients, and adult operations for over 13,000  
9 clients. Six months ago, upon my appointment, the  
10 mayor gave me my marching orders, reduce recidivism,  
11 which resulted in my assessment of the agency's  
12 staffing needs, policies and procedures, client  
13 services and programs. Currently, the Department of  
14 Probation has 53 programs with approximately 27  
15 service providers, some of which are supported by our  
16 NeON spaces, which means we not only provide programs  
17 for our clients, but also offer programming to  
18 community members. Programming includes mentoring,  
19 work readiness, power support coaches, NeON arts,  
20 financial literacy and more.

21       My job as commissioner is to make sure we have  
22 robust programming and evaluating the effectiveness  
23 of outcomes. At the Department of Probation, we take  
24 that very seriously. It was determined that some of  
25 the service provider's key performance indicators do

2 not completely support successful outcomes.  
3 Department of Probation has begun revising  
4 performance indicators that will be required of  
5 current and future service providers moving forward.  
6 In addition to our supervision of clients, what is  
7 going to help reduce recidivism is literacy and  
8 employment. The Department of Probation has recently  
9 contracted with a CDL training provider as well as  
10 the Department of Transportation, who has provided  
11 job opportunities for our clients, particularly those  
12 over the age of 24, which accounts for a large  
13 percentage of our population. We are also seeking  
14 programming for our LGBTQIA+ clients and our clients  
15 with special needs.

16 The Department of Probation and the Department of  
17 Education is scheduled to meet on October 12, 2023,  
18 for the first time to discuss unaccredited clients  
19 and pathways forward. Also, we have reinstated our  
20 Bronx High School Equivalency program in addition to  
21 onboarding an educational tutoring program.

22 Moving forward, we remain steadfast and committed  
23 to using a combination of prevention and intervention  
24 along with community-based programming that actually



2 helps bring positive change to our clients and the  
3 community.

4 I would like to thank the City Council for their  
5 partnership and continued support and keeping our  
6 city safe. This now concludes my testimony. And I'm  
7 open for questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you very  
9 much. So just a few, sort of, broader questions. I  
10 guess we can start with the Department of Correction.  
11 You mentioned that anyone in the department's care  
12 can access an array of robust services and  
13 opportunities that support change and successful  
14 community reintegration. How would you say that has  
15 changed since July 1? And are you still consistently  
16 providing five hours to programming to every  
17 individual per the mandate?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Good morning, Chair  
19 Rivera and all of the board members. I thank you for  
20 that question. And last time we were here, May 19 of  
21 this year, I guess our urgency was to map out for  
22 this Council, what we had in place as we transition  
23 from jail-based contracted providers who concentrated  
24 in doing group facilitation and one-on-one to what  
25 became internally known as insourcing.

2           When we talk about insourcing (and it is my  
3 responsibility today to provide clarity on that) what  
4 we did was select a group of dedicated DC 37 civil  
5 servants in the title of Associate Correctional  
6 Counselors, levels one and two, that between 2015 and  
7 2018, had done group facilitation and one-on-one.  
8 And for that time of period, since we appeared in  
9 council last through the beginning-- actually through  
10 the end of June in preparation for July, our  
11 obligation was to retrain those staff members to have  
12 conversations with labor relations and their unions,  
13 to ensure that we change their task and standards to  
14 what they used to be prior to the jail-based targeted  
15 approach, in order for them to be able to once again  
16 go back to doing group facilitation and one-on-one  
17 services.

18           The rest of the provision of services, whether it  
19 is done by DOC led staff, by other providers and  
20 volunteers remained. We do continue to afford the  
21 five hours of programming. Thank you.

22           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So, you maintained the five  
23 hours because I know that you even the last time that  
24 we met there, there was just, you know, candor in  
25 terms of saying that there were some challenges in

2 meeting those five hours. So you're confident now  
3 that they're being met? Or there remain challenges?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: So I will be very  
5 honest with you, Chair Rivera. We're still working  
6 on ensuring that we enhance by adding additional  
7 services in the section of advance and enrichment.  
8 We've had hiccups, and I would like to be very  
9 transparent. I think it is always important not to  
10 only shed light on our positive achievements, but  
11 also to be transparent with the Council on what  
12 challenges we've experienced. When it came to  
13 insourcing, meeting that transition from jail-based  
14 targeted approach to our ACC1's and ACC2's, I'm happy  
15 to report to you today that we did not experience any  
16 delays. Where we did experience challenges was a  
17 memorandum of understanding that we have with the  
18 Department of Education, which allows us to actually  
19 continue services through at least 18 additional  
20 providers. That has since been rectified. I am  
21 happy to share with you that between this week and  
22 next week, we will go full course-- or full force  
23 ahead. Because those 18 In addition to targeting  
24 advancement and enrichment, actually target

2 certificates and certifications under our workforce  
3 development.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So what specific programs  
5 shifted from one-to-one to group facilitation, and  
6 how many individuals were affected?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Okay, Chair Rivera,  
8 since I was here last, we've worked digitally in  
9 ensuring that transition. If you look to my left  
10 today, I purposely brought in Assistant Commissioner  
11 Nell McCarty, who leads our efforts in counseling and  
12 supportive structure houses.

13 Also joining me today is Valerie Greisokh, who is  
14 our Assistant of Reintegration. I purposely chose  
15 these two members because as we phased insourcing,  
16 meaning the elimination of the contracts, Nell  
17 McCarty, as Assistant Commissioner of Counseling,  
18 received a challenge, which was to technically take  
19 us back and lead our associate correctionals levels  
20 one and two, into returning to the type of services  
21 that we had done in the past by ensuring very  
22 specific goals: Number one, have clear communication  
23 with our staff that would be assuming these  
24 responsibilities, by having communications with labor  
25 relations and the unions, by ensuring that a tight

2 refresher and training schedule was put together, as  
3 well as schedule in the housing areas.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Can-- Can either have them  
5 answer the question?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: That's exactly where  
7 I'm going. I'm going to ask Nell McCarty to please  
8 take you through that process.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: Thank you. Hello.  
10 So just to kind of add on where Deputy Commissioner  
11 Francis Torres left off. So our associate  
12 correctional counselors once we informed them, after  
13 speaking with their union and changing their tasks  
14 and standards to return back to doing group  
15 facilitation, and conducting these trainings, or  
16 refresher trainings, with staff on certain evidence  
17 based curriculums, we did end up making a six-month-  
18 long schedule of how we will implement these various  
19 15 core evidence-based curricula. We're specifically  
20 targeting 7 of those 15 over the 6-month period that  
21 we are implementing with people in custody, to make  
22 sure that there was no lapse in the group  
23 facilitation that was previously being conducted by  
24 the targeted Jail-based service providers.

2 In addition to that, we also have drafted ongoing  
3 training opportunities for our staff for continued  
4 refreshers throughout the six months. We onboarded,  
5 as mentioned, five supervising correctional  
6 counselors so that they were able to take on some of  
7 the changes with the one-on-one counseling. And I  
8 also shifted some of the responsibilities of our  
9 social workers and intervention specialists to pick  
10 up the pieces for were some of those one-on-ones that  
11 previously had been conducted by associate  
12 correctional counselors level one, were now being  
13 conducted or facilitated by our social workers.

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Which specific programs  
15 shifted from one-to-one to group facilitation? Which  
16 programs?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: Our associate  
18 correctional counselors, level one, were the primary  
19 providers of the one-on-one counseling on a regular  
20 cadence within the housing units. Now, those staff  
21 provide group facilitation on those same housing  
22 units in some cases, or their schedule may have  
23 shifted to adjust to the different movements within  
24 the jails. But those one-on-one assignments have now

2 shifted over to social workers and to intervention  
3 specialists.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: In those assignments, how  
5 many individuals were affected? I'm just asking the-  
6 - the same question trying to get actual numbers or,  
7 you know, details.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: When you say how  
9 many people were affected, do you mean people in  
10 custody or staff?

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Custody.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Chair, I would have  
13 to get you the specific number of how many were  
14 affected. If you allow us we can get back to you.  
15 In essence, when we transitioned our ACC-1's into  
16 group facilitation, we actually assumed the footprint  
17 previously held by our providers. But we can  
18 certainly get those numbers back to you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I think you're going to hear  
20 from many of them today, you know, after your own  
21 testimony, how many individuals they actually serve  
22 through their one-on-one and group facilitation, and  
23 really the benefits of one-to-one which I realize  
24 capacity wise, you're saying has had to go through a  
25 transition?

2           So the six-month-long schedule just to understand  
3 that when-- when does-- when does that happen? Is  
4 that currently on its way?

5           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: It's active right  
6 now. We implemented it the first month of July.

7           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Why six months?

8           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: So we conducted a  
9 six-month schedule, and then we're going to evaluate  
10 in November in December what curriculums we would  
11 like to move into for the following six months.

12           So we could have conducted it in a year. We  
13 could have made a three-month-long calendar. We  
14 chose to do six months so that it could be consistent  
15 and unified across every single facility. So at any  
16 given time, a correctional counselor in any of our  
17 facilities would be overseeing the same curriculum.  
18 So let's say someone moves from one facility to  
19 another, we would have a unified schedule between all  
20 of our staff.

21           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How many of the providers  
22 who previously really provided the services (I would  
23 say the not-for-profits specifically), how many of  
24 them and how often are they involved in this



2 transitional period, and even in establishing this  
3 new six-month schedule?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: First, I would like  
5 to just highlight that the core curriculum that the  
6 contractor jail-based providers were using was a  
7 curriculum selected by the Department of Correction.  
8 I happen to have sat on the committee that selected  
9 those curriculums and even conducted some of the  
10 trainings with the providers.

11 So, at the time that we were conducting or making  
12 this six-month-long schedule, we did an internal  
13 evaluation of some of the top programs people may  
14 need, such as anger management, cognitive behavioral  
15 therapy techniques, along with reentry workshops,  
16 financial literacy, work readiness. And those were  
17 the curriculums that we ended up selecting for this  
18 six months.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How many associate  
20 correctional counselors are there? The ones that  
21 went through the refresher training?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: There are 41  
23 associate correctional counselors, but in total,  
24 there are 76 direct service workers that work in the  
25 Counseling Services Unit, and they may hold other

2 titles, again, like program counselor, social worker  
3 and intervention specialist.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, I'm sure, again,  
5 you're going to hear from not-for-profits. You know,  
6 there are certain not-for-profits that had as many as  
7 40 staff members, you know, working inside, whether  
8 they're in the-- community-based or inside the  
9 facilities, these are credible messengers. And I  
10 know you mentioned that you have people with lived  
11 experience on staff. I think that's absolutely  
12 critical in terms of doing this work.

13 So, you did negotiate with the labor unions in  
14 terms of any job title changes and anything subject  
15 to collective bargaining? You did that with DC 37?  
16 Great.

17 So let me just ask about the division of programs  
18 and community partnerships. You had -- As of July  
19 2023, you had 243 staff members, including 208  
20 nonuniformed staff. How many uniformed and  
21 nonuniformed staff are currently employed by the  
22 division?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Chair with thank you  
24 so much for that question. When we take a look at  
25 our officers, I need to establish-- or uniform

2 members, may I please establish a difference? There  
3 are 32 uniformed members as officers who are assigned  
4 to our division as headquarter officers. Early this  
5 year, as part of an internal shift on the  
6 redefinition of programs, we actually changed and  
7 inherited 72 uniform members who are actively engage  
8 in services or provision of escorting for services  
9 within each of our facilities. The rest, which are  
10 approximately 208 active staff members are  
11 nonuniformed members assigned to our division.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How many are assigned to  
13 work with people in custody as opposed to being in  
14 administrative roles?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: In terms of which  
16 ones? Uniform or nonuniform?

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Both.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: All right. So I  
19 would have to give you that specific breakdown  
20 because it's very detailed when it comes to our staff  
21 members providing direct services. I have very  
22 specific groups. Let me list them for you. And then  
23 I can follow up with specific data. I have DOC led  
24 nonuniformed members who are part of our counseling  
25 teams, who actually are in the housing areas, in the

2 facilities at least five days a week providing direct  
3 services to the population. We also have Fine and  
4 Performing Arts, recreation, chaplaincy, and even  
5 program operations such as Paws and other program  
6 coordinators. I'll be more than happy to forward  
7 that information to Council.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay, and also the-- the  
9 numbers. Please don't forget about the number of  
10 individuals that were affected by one on-- one-to-one  
11 to group.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So I'm going to turn it over  
14 to my colleague-- colleague in one second.

15 I just wanted to ask about the tablet services.  
16 You have the contract with Securus for phone and  
17 tablet services. And according to testimony provided  
18 to the Board Of Correction, there were over 5300  
19 tablets in circulation at Rikers as of this summer.  
20 What is the current number for how many tablets have  
21 been distributed to people in custody? And what is  
22 the functionality of the tablets that have been  
23 distributed? In addition to having the ability to  
24 make phone calls, do these tablets give people access

2 to educational courses, podcasts, e-books? Do the  
3 tablets provide access to a digital Law Library.

4 Specifically about the library, I've heard that  
5 sometimes because of staffing shortages, it's open  
6 during a time where individuals might be outside or  
7 they might not be available. So if you could just  
8 also talk a little bit in terms of the tablet  
9 offerings, and a little bit more about the law  
10 library, but let's focus on the on the digital access  
11 and the contract for now.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank you. Um, the  
13 numbers that were given during testimony at our Board  
14 of Correction do vary. The actual number of tablets  
15 as of yesterday who have-- that have been distributed  
16 to persons in custody is actually 5088. Those  
17 tablets, aside from those services that you have  
18 already described, Chair, we do have an interactive  
19 educational programming via the KATE Light  
20 application. And that KATE Light is a self-paced  
21 program that consists of math, science, economics,  
22 finance, arts, humanities, all the way through  
23 college careers and more. Persons in custody are  
24 using this tab-- this component. And I'm happy to

2 respond to any other questions relevant to the  
3 tablets.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What is the procurement--  
5 procurement processes the department follows for  
6 contracting with Securus for the tablets? Was there  
7 anything like in RFP were multiple bids received?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: To be quite honest,  
9 I'm not the best person to actually answer that  
10 question. Would you mind if we were to give you that  
11 information?

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Sure. I look forward to it.

13 Are there any costs for people in custody to send  
14 text messages using their tablets? And does the  
15 contract with security give the DOC the ability to  
16 review text messages, e-mails, or obtain  
17 transcriptions of phone calls that are made on  
18 Securus as tablets? And if so how are those methods  
19 of communication monitored by the department?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Thank you so much  
21 for that question. A couple of things. Personally,  
22 there is no cost to our persons in custody associated  
23 to the use of the tablets. There are ongoing  
24 conversations relevant to premium content, which will  
25 include that e-messaging. When it comes to that

2 we're still evaluating what the cost would be to  
3 persons in custody as well as their families. But as  
4 of today, there is no cost. The tablets are issued  
5 to the persons in custody, and the funding comes out  
6 of our division's budget.

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Can they send  
8 communications, text messages, emails?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Not yet, ma'am.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Not yet?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: But we're working on  
12 it.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So it really is educational?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Educational, in  
15 addition to access to like you mentioned, the Law  
16 Library, LexisNexis, which is the application used.  
17 They are making their telephone phone calls from the  
18 tablet. They also continue to have access to the  
19 telephones that are in the housing areas.

20 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So they can use the  
21 telephone?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Yes. Mm-hmm.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Are those phone calls  
24 monitored? Are there transcriptions? How is it  
25 monitored by the department?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: So when it comes to  
3 telephone calls in general, we continue to adhere to  
4 all of the protocol established. I will be more than  
5 happy to get you more information on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What is the protocol?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: I'm sorry?

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What is the protocol that  
9 you adhere to?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: So I know that when  
11 it comes to telephone calls, there are specific  
12 guidelines. I'm not the best one to speak about it.  
13 That falls under the purview of security.

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Understood. I look forward  
15 to hearing-- just in particular, because we have-- in  
16 terms of guidelines and policies, you know, one of my  
17 questions in terms of volunteers is many of these  
18 nonprofit organizations that provide some incredible  
19 programming-- And I just read an article this  
20 morning about Rikers, the bait project, you know,  
21 getting volunteers to the island itself, they felt  
22 there was a policy change in terms of training.  
23 Training is always required to set foot on the  
24 island. However, not having remote access, having to  
25 go to the Bulova Center, having to complete those



2 first, instead of being able to do it while you're in  
3 the midst of volunteering, has created some  
4 challenges as to recruitment and retention.

5 And so in terms of policy changes, we just always  
6 want it on the record, and very, very clear.

7 Can you tell us about the volunteer requirement  
8 to-- to be on Rikers and engage in programming with  
9 people that are in custody?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Sure. Thank you so  
11 much. When it comes to our Volunteer Services Unit,  
12 it is a unit that we continue to evaluate on an  
13 annual basis, there is an application issued to not  
14 just volunteers, but any service provider that is to  
15 come on to the island.

16 Upon completion of that application, we receive  
17 the application, we include the schedule that the  
18 service provider or the volunteer is going to be  
19 accessing our jails. For those who do not have any  
20 previous criminal justice involvement, the process  
21 can take two to three weeks. For those that have had  
22 previous criminal justice involvement. The process  
23 can take 3 to 60 days, depending on how quickly we--  
24 we receive certain documentation.

2 I do have to share that for the last year, there  
3 are certain improvements that we've made to our  
4 volunteer services area. I'll give you a couple of  
5 examples. Before, we would actually take a long time  
6 to onboard our service providers, because of the  
7 number of staff members that we had. We have changed  
8 that and presently have three staff members. We used  
9 to process volunteers or service providers, only  
10 twice a week. We have increased the number of days  
11 that we process them. There are very specific  
12 training sessions and we're still in conversations on  
13 how best to actually be able to have them access, you  
14 know remotely, but do know that we have made strides  
15 and there's some of those training sessions that  
16 anyone who is applying can do remotely.

17 In addition to that, Chair, something that we  
18 didn't do before was we changed how we issued IDs to  
19 our volunteers and service providers. For an  
20 example, now we issue anyone who is new to coming on  
21 to Rikers Island, we will issue an ID for 30 days,  
22 stating as is required, because we need to onboard  
23 them and make sure they know where they're going, how  
24 they're coming out, what are the security measures in  
25 terms of access to housing areas, or the areas where

2 they are providing services is. And so for that  
3 reason, we give them that type of ID, and we provide  
4 the escorts. We've even changed who can escort our  
5 volunteers. Before this change. Only uniformed  
6 members could provide escorts to any service  
7 providers or volunteers. That is not the case any  
8 longer. Any of our nonuniformed members who are on  
9 post or who are assigned to our facilities can  
10 actually provide the escort. After the 30 days, we  
11 turn around and change their IDs to non-escort  
12 required, which allow them to-- which allows them to  
13 actually go through our security front gate, and then  
14 report to their areas to conduct those services.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, thank you for that. I  
16 just want to be sure that, you know, this is such a--  
17 a welcome thing to see people volunteering on Rikers  
18 Island. And I'd like to remove any barriers in order  
19 to get them there. And I understand there is  
20 protocol, and you went through some of it. But I  
21 just want to be sure in terms of just volunteer  
22 recruitment and retention that we're all working  
23 together.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TORRES: Chair, if I may.  
25 When it comes to volunteers, and even service

2 providers internally in our division, anyone  
3 volunteering-- and I'll use a random example. If we  
4 have any religious organization that is volunteering,  
5 we will automatically assign the deputy director of  
6 chaplaincy to be that DOC liaison. So when it comes  
7 to volunteer applications and service providers  
8 relevant to faith based and religion, that person  
9 will be the one handling. Feel free to direct any  
10 concerns to our office. And we will manage  
11 internally to make sure that we are on top of  
12 accelerating their access.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you, and I  
14 do have questions for you, Commissioner. But I'm  
15 going to allow Councilmember Narcisse because I can  
16 only imagine what it would be like to get back to  
17 where she lives. So I want her to be able to ask  
18 questions, which she always does, and I appreciate  
19 you for that. So Councilmember Narcisse?

20 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning, everyone.  
21 It's still morning. Good morning, Chair. And thank  
22 you for giving me the opportunity to ask some-- a few  
23 questions. I have so many questions. I wish I can  
24 stay here all morning or all afternoon with you.

2 But thank you, thank you for the work you're  
3 doing. You know, it takes all of us to contribute to  
4 the city of New York, knowing the challenging--  
5 challenges that we're facing every day. The  
6 challenging is just like, it's so much I don't even  
7 know where to start.

8 And one of the things that I'm always specific  
9 about, it's about the crime issue. Crime don't  
10 actually occurs in a silo. It is a culmination of  
11 different issues that happening in our city, our  
12 communities, that making so many young folks end up  
13 in the wrong place. So, one of the things I'm not  
14 very proud of is New York City Department of  
15 Probation services approximately 14,000 clients,  
16 juvenile operations accounted for approximately 600  
17 clients, and adults operation accounted for over  
18 13,000 clients. Can you break down that for me in  
19 race and gender?

20 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes. So in race, it's  
21 predominantly 82% African American males ages 22 to  
22 24 accounts for the majority of them. Juveniles,  
23 same. The juvenile gender as far as young ladies are  
24 concerned, I believe we only have about 14, if I'm  
25 not mistaken. So it's a small amount of women.

2 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: You know, that breaks my  
3 heart, as a mother of 4.

4 Housing: Housing for formerly incarcerated  
5 folks. I'm always interested in that. How many  
6 formerly incarcerated individuals in our city  
7 currently face housing insecurity or homelessness  
8 within the first year of release?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: And I do have those  
10 numbers.

11 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I was interested myself.  
13 So--

14 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: First year of release.

15 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: --homelessness, when we  
16 look at the adult population, currently we have 36  
17 that are homeless, 212 in shelters. So that's a  
18 total of 248 in our adult population. When we look  
19 at the juvenile population, I have one homeless and  
20 the 18 that are in shelters currently. So that  
21 accounts for 19.

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: What percentage of them  
23 end up back in the correctional system due to a lack  
24 of stable housing?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: That answer I don't have  
3 for you, but I will get it for you. Because that was  
4 something I didn't think of.

5 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. How is the  
6 city addressing the stigma that landlords or housing  
7 providers might have towards renting to formerly  
8 incarcerated folks?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: How is-- I wouldn't be able  
10 to answer that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Are there any  
12 incentives in place that you know of for landlords  
13 who provide housing to those demographics?

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: No, Councilmember. I  
15 wouldn't have that response.

16 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. How does  
17 probation status influence an individual's ability to  
18 secure housing?

19 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I wouldn't have that  
20 status-- I wouldn't have that response, either. My  
21 apologies. It's something I'll look into.

22 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: How does the Department  
23 monitor and assist probationers who are at risk of  
24 homelessness? Are there specific strategies and

2 collaborations in place to prevent them from ending  
3 up back in the same place?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: You're absolutely right.  
5 So I thank you for that question.

6 When I took office six months ago, my agenda was  
7 to reduce recidivism. And naturally in doing so you  
8 need the proper programs and services. In addition  
9 to that, I need to be able to see metrics supporting  
10 success: Literacy, employment, we know is key when  
11 it comes to reducing recidivism. So those are some  
12 of the key factors that I'm using. And I know, we  
13 spoke about a couple of cuts with programs. But one  
14 particular program, IMPACT, that program began in  
15 January 2023, but it never commenced. So you know,  
16 as a result of such, we took a deeper look and  
17 realized the same vendor currently has the same  
18 program with us as we speak. So, as a result of  
19 such-- that's why we decided to pull that particular  
20 contract. Same exact vendor, IMPACT, same exact  
21 program that that program was supposed to account  
22 for. And if you talk about next steps, 17 different  
23 providers in next steps. I am aware of the short  
24 notice. My Deputy Commissioner here was on boarded  
25 August 7th. Naturally, me drilling down into



2 programs wanting to make sure they marry up to our  
3 clients, that they are, you know, ensuring that  
4 they're leaving these programs with something in  
5 place to thrive, whether they were under-credited,  
6 and now they are in a GED program, or under-grade and  
7 now they're in their current grade, or even  
8 employment. If you look at our adult population,  
9 over 40% are unemployed. So that's something I take  
10 into consideration. If you look at the juvenile  
11 population, probably 40% are under-credited. So  
12 that's a-- you know, the Department of Probation  
13 right now is focused on ensuring that we put some  
14 literacy programs in place as well as employment.  
15 And that's why recently, we've reestablished the  
16 Bronx High School Equivalency program. We're looking  
17 to do that in every borough. In addition to that we  
18 are onboarding another tutorial program that's very  
19 successful. I think that's going to help.

20 For the older population, we're looking at  
21 welding. We're now collaborating with someone that  
22 provides that welding training, we partnered with a  
23 CDL contractor that actually teaches them how to  
24 drive trucks and buses. But even with that, you need  
25 to know how to read the CDL application to take the

2 exam. Some of our clients don't even read or write  
3 7th grade level, which is required to even enter a  
4 GED program. So that's something that I'm really  
5 honing in on, is making sure that our clients have  
6 what they need to thrive.

7 I see the recidivism here. I see some programs  
8 that are housed in the Department of Probation. And  
9 I really can't honestly sit here and say if it  
10 reduces recidivism. We recently redesigned what's  
11 called our DOP Connect. That's a repository for the  
12 service providers to enter their particular metrics  
13 in. And so I'm building that out to see that there's  
14 a goal at the end, right? That there's some sort of  
15 outcome, "You took this client in, now this client is  
16 at grade level. Now this client may have housing.  
17 Now this client is employed." There has to be  
18 positive outcomes supporting the expenditures that  
19 we're paying. I'm not looking to save money in  
20 probation. I can tell you that. And I tell anybody  
21 that. I'm definitely not looking to cut funding  
22 here. We need the money, but the money has to be  
23 spent correctly. It is a huge undertaking.  
24 Naturally, you can imagine me coming in from the  
25 outside, unraveling some of this. So as a result of

2 such, my Deputy Commissioner was on board, and took a  
3 deeper dive into all of the programs.

4       Unfortunately, Next Steps was cut because they  
5 couldn't support the metrics I was looking for. I  
6 actually had a call with all the service providers,  
7 Councilwoman Diana Ayala was also on the particular  
8 call. And we have to hold service providers  
9 accountable for what it is that they say they are  
10 going to do. And unfortunately, the last nine years  
11 that Next Steps has been with us, it's almost been a  
12 check-the-box renewal process. So how do we measure  
13 for IMPACT, right? The evaluation. Some of the  
14 programs we have AIM, which is a court mandate. The  
15 last evaluation and compass 2016 and 2017 as far as  
16 the impact that it's having on our client.

17       So that's what I'm in the midst of doing. Moving  
18 forward, I don't intend on cutting any more programs.  
19 I intend on enhancing them. And that's why we're  
20 building our DOP Connect, and it's going to encounter  
21 the key performance indicators that we think we need  
22 to support success. It is uncanny to see almost 40%  
23 of my-- over 40% of my dealt population unemployed,  
24 under-credited.

2 In addition to that we're working with all city  
3 agencies, because one thing I realize: These clients  
4 still have to go home. We can give them all the  
5 services, all the behavioral health services that  
6 they need, but when they go into some of these  
7 underserved communities it is despairing to say the  
8 least.

9 So I can assure you the mayor's office is working  
10 with all the city agencies. It's something that's  
11 dear to me, that we're going to be kind of getting  
12 together and kind of spearheading and coming up with  
13 a one-neighborhood-at-a-time process. And beginning  
14 with Brownsville. You know what they say about  
15 Brownsville. I've been here 36 years in city  
16 government, and you see a little change, but it's  
17 never fully changed. And I don't care what anyone  
18 says. The quality of life and a community affects  
19 the quality of a person.

20 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: That's right. That's  
21 right.

22 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: And so that that's dear to  
23 me. But on this side, reeling in it a little bit,  
24 the Department of Probation is committed to programs  
25 and services. The 17 service providers that were

2 cut, they are our service providers. Our other  
3 programs that we have those who are service  
4 providers. So, you know, we're using the same  
5 service providers. We have 27 with 53 programs, and  
6 a lot of them have multiple programs. The 210 young  
7 people that were affected by the cut of this program,  
8 have been placed in other mentorship programs, 24 as  
9 a result of enrolling in school and employment  
10 wasn't. And I believe I have 16 that were referred to  
11 DYCD, and the office of neighborhood safety for a  
12 mentorship program of their choice.

13 I take a deep look at mentorship programs  
14 citywide, not just Probation, NYPD, all of these  
15 other programs we have with the DA's office, and you  
16 can see the redundancy. And that's why we have such  
17 small groups of children attending-- or clients  
18 attending different programs. So, as a result of  
19 such we're doing this cross collaboration. I'm  
20 looking at certain zip codes, what's there, that  
21 mirrors some of the programs that we already have, so  
22 we can have better use for our budget as far as  
23 programs are concerned. We need computers in our  
24 NeON centers. Our NeON centers house a lot of our  
25 programs. I love NeON. It is a safe space. It's--

2 It allows for our clients to stay home for lack of a  
3 better term. You know, when they're reporting to  
4 their probation officers, it's convenient. We're  
5 providing services. But I want to see real services.  
6 I don't want to just see SNAP. I don't want to see,  
7 you know, all of these other services-- they're  
8 important so you can eat, right? But that is not the  
9 real contribution to reducing recidivism. And that's  
10 what we're taking a deep dive and looking at. But  
11 unfortunately, we were met with Next Steps being cut.  
12 When I took a look at it, and after I had the call  
13 with the entire group of service providers, they also  
14 have some work to do. Some admitted to-- they knew  
15 they were supposed to have case managers and program  
16 managers which weren't in place. Probation doesn't  
17 have true program evaluators. So, it's a difference  
18 between a program manager and evaluator. So we're  
19 putting a team of evaluators together and probation,  
20 to make sure that we're prioritizing, taking a look  
21 at our clients, whose more high-risk to reoffend, you  
22 know, especially when it comes to the guns. You  
23 know, when you have a client arrested for a firearm,  
24 and a week later, re-arrested for firearm, you know,

2 we have to take a step back and kind of look at that.  
3 What are we doing?

4 So those are some of the challenges that were met  
5 with, those are some of the things that we're putting  
6 in place. But I can assure you my best interest is  
7 with every client that's on probation,

8 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: I-- I appreciate you.  
9 And I want you to continue. And I'm going to follow  
10 up all the statistics that we know-- The reason I'm  
11 asking for the-- all the statistics, the numbers,  
12 because numbers don't lie to you. And right now, I'm  
13 hoping that reparation that they are talking about,  
14 that go invest back in those kinds of life that we're  
15 talking about, those folks that we tend to forget,  
16 that's part of our community.

17 So that's kind of things that-- that's the kind  
18 of work that I'm looking for.

19 By the way, as a registered nurse, I wanted to  
20 understand it so much that I went to work for a  
21 reentry program, because I wanted to see what's going  
22 on. And don't forget our kids, like you said, cannot  
23 read. Dyslexia is a problem. Mental illness is a  
24 big problem. And like you said, the environment  
25 where those children are coming from, that's years

2 decades old. The investment. So now we need some  
3 investment done. So all the problems that we talking  
4 about, we can come to a new day.

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes. I'd also like to  
6 mention that we started with a medical program. I  
7 was doing it for Father's Day. We know a lot of men  
8 don't go to the doctor and get a checkup. So we  
9 partnered with a medical provider that has properties  
10 in-- you know, has an office in all five boroughs.  
11 And we got vouchers from him to give to them for a  
12 full checkup. I mean, EKG, blood work everything.  
13 So that's, that's moving along successfully, we  
14 identified clients that were in need of that. And,  
15 uh--

16 COUNCILMEMBER NARCISSE: And we don't want to go  
17 into a new line, because my Chair have to get the  
18 mic, and I have to get to-- back to Brooklyn. And  
19 one of the things that we said is a trust. When you  
20 come to medical, a lot of my clients that used to  
21 come to see me when I was doing the Reentry Program,  
22 even though some medical was available to them, but  
23 they are still, afraid they're still scared, they  
24 still mentally been traumatized, unfortunately. So  
25 it's a lot of education we have to keep on doing.



2 So thank you, Chair. And thank you, everyone.  
3 And I had so many questions to ask you, but I don't  
4 have time. Thank you so much. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Councilmember.

6 Commissioner, the program mentored 240 people to  
7 prevent violence. And if this program prevented even  
8 one person from getting shot and killed, do you not  
9 think that the program pays for itself?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes, I do. But we have  
11 other programs. We have Arches, in the same  
12 vicinity. These are all map locations. And, you  
13 know, I was over Queensbridge Houses. So, I know  
14 very well it was the largest that we had, and we had  
15 Kay Bane, I think was a credible messenger and may be  
16 still there.

17 But with that being said, they also have  
18 mentorship programs. Every police precinct where I  
19 started these programs, Girl Talk and Blue Chips,  
20 that these kids come together from all precincts. I  
21 know sometimes we tend to have these silos. "This  
22 this group doesn't get along with that group." You  
23 can't function in life like that. As a result of  
24 such, every precinct has what's called Blue Chip.  
25 Over 3000 young men have come through that. The

2 Yankees recognize them during hope week. It's a  
3 program that we have probationers are now involved  
4 in, two groups of probation teams that we put  
5 together to cross-collaborate with them. With Girl  
6 Talk, the same young ladies that we have in probation  
7 cross-collaboration with PD, mentorship groups,  
8 tremendous, tremendous outcomes with these young  
9 people. And just building relationships with law  
10 enforcement in itself tends to help reduce some of  
11 that.

12 So it is critical. And I agree with you. But I  
13 know that the other programs that our same service  
14 providers are part of, and they have rolled some of  
15 these young people into those programs. I'm  
16 confident-- more than confident that they're going to  
17 receive the support that they need.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I do hope you're right. I  
19 know you were in charge of the 7th precinct for a  
20 little while?

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Is that correct?

23 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes. I was Chief of Patrol  
24 over all 77 precincts, so...

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah. I remember. I  
3 remember I saw you in the-- in the LES in the Lower  
4 East Side. And I will tell you in that-- in that  
5 particular part, you know, we have youth violence, we  
6 have many issues, particularly in public housing.

7 And if I can get 240 people mentored there, 40  
8 people mentored, 2 people mentored there, I would  
9 take it in a heartbeat, you know?

10 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And let me just ask you  
12 about a particular neighborhood. And unfortunately,  
13 she's not allowed to ask questions because of a  
14 quorum issue, and that's an in-person thing, and  
15 those are the rules.

16 But in Red Hook, Councilmember Avilés says she  
17 sees no evidence of redundant service in Red Hook.  
18 So how do you justify this defunding? And how and  
19 where should these young people go to get the  
20 services they were offered?

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So there are mentorship  
22 programs in Red Hook that Paul can speak to. But  
23 DYCD has over 900 contracts, and I can't begin to  
24 mention how many mentorship programs. But also, as I  
25 spoke about, you still have Blue Chips, Girl Talk,

2 very strong mentorship programs, with NYPD in that  
3 particular area. And then we have Arches in every  
4 borough for mentorship.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How exactly are our Arches  
6 and Girls Talk? How are these-- those programs are  
7 going to serve the former Next Steps participants who  
8 are not under probation supervision,

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right. So they-- These  
10 young people are not under probation either. There  
11 are some individuals in Girl Talk and Blue Chips,  
12 that-- and Arches. Arches is for anybody in the  
13 community. Everyone's not under probation  
14 supervision, which is great, but they serve them  
15 because they are exactly like a mentorship program.  
16 You have someone that you're intimate with, speaking  
17 with a particular officer, you have their cell phone  
18 number. They participate in community cleanups.  
19 They have to give back. They compete, whether it's  
20 dance, whether it's basketball, chess, flag football.  
21 And then amongst all of that, they still have-- Oh,  
22 and golf. I mean, don't forget golf. They just  
23 recently started a golf program, which I thought was  
24 good. But anything going on that we could plug them  
25 into. Laura Stiles just did a big program called

2 Envisioned maybe about a month ago. And all the  
3 girls were so excited. It was a huge turnout. So  
4 probation, as well as Girl Talk, just members from  
5 the community were there as well. But it's-- it's a  
6 strong program, and it's currently falls under  
7 Commissioner Mark Stewart, who's now the Deputy--  
8 I'm sorry, Deputy Commissioner of Community Affairs.  
9 But it's available. And we will definitely plug them  
10 in and ensure that each and every one of these  
11 individuals have what they-- have what they need, and  
12 the decision is theirs. There's several decisions.  
13 We just kind of point it out to them, and they can  
14 make the decision on their own which one they think  
15 that will really support their needs.

16 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, you mentioned all  
17 those DYCD contracts. So particularly for  
18 Councilmember Avilés, if you could let her know where  
19 those contracts are.

20 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Absolutely.

21 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Because there has to be, you  
22 know, a real push in terms of encouraging people to  
23 take advantage of that. This has been, I feel, you  
24 know, it's been devastating for our community. And  
25 you know, when you see a program like Impact, which I

2 think you mentioned very, very briefly, but Impact  
3 was actually a program that was cancelled before it  
4 got even the ground-- off the ground, right? It was  
5 supposed to serve 175 people across five boroughs who  
6 would have otherwise been in a residential placement  
7 or incarcerated. Is there going to be something that  
8 replaces that? Or what happened?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: We have-- We have the same  
10 program in place with the same provider. That's what  
11 happened. We saw that that was a redundancy. We  
12 actually have what's called APT, Analyst and Portable  
13 Therapy. That's-- Impact has that contract. They've  
14 been in place with us since-- [TO OTHERS:] for how  
15 long now? How many years. [TO COUNCIL:] for several  
16 years. And very positive feedback on that particular  
17 program. They were up for renewal as well, very well  
18 supported, accomplishes all that they need to  
19 accomplish, helping families. Anytime there's a  
20 child that may be a little incorrigible, as far as  
21 the parents are concerned, they respond there and,  
22 you know, stay with the family as long as they need  
23 to.

24 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So when you evaluated the  
25 programs, and I'd love to hear a little bit more

2 about the evaluation process, and you determined that  
3 there were quote, unquote, "redundancies", what were  
4 the-- the metrics? You-- You said you had a meeting  
5 with providers, with Councilmember Ayala, but did you  
6 discuss with each provider unique circumstances, sort  
7 of understand their own local ecosystems? How did  
8 you decide what the metrics were that you are  
9 seeking? Or that actually weren't present, according  
10 to your testimony?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes. So there weren't any.  
12 The only metrics that were being used were  
13 attendance, how many people they touched. That was  
14 the-- That was the only metric I was able to get. So  
15 there weren't any true outcomes. If I touch this  
16 person, and they were part of a game, did I keep them  
17 out of a game? If they were under-credited, did I  
18 point them in the right direction to a remedial  
19 course, to tutoring, or high school equivalency?  
20 These are real outcomes. And they're meaningful  
21 outcomes, because they definitely contribute to the  
22 reduction of recidivism. The only metric that I was  
23 provided with that we had were "10 people attended."  
24 Just simply attendance.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So in terms of have that  
3 Impact program, having something else in place  
4 alternative to placement program, I just don't know  
5 what other alternative replacement program that is,  
6 or any other city-wide program that was served that  
7 sort of purpose.

8 So can you just talk a little bit about what  
9 exactly you mean? Because from what I'm hearing, you  
10 know, none of the youth and Next Steps have been  
11 connected to other programs. And so we do have some  
12 that, according to providers have gained employment  
13 through Next Steps, but not since then. And no  
14 providers really-- There just doesn't seem to be a  
15 transition or a conversation happening.

16 So we had-- out of the total enrollment during  
17 the close up period of 210, 117 enrolled in DOP  
18 Arches mentoring program, 24, completed early due to  
19 enrollment and employment opportunity 16, referred to  
20 DOP NeON's works program. Next Step Program Manager  
21 continues weekly meetings with DYC, which is the  
22 person that sits behind me here, Paul Richardson.

23 And these children mean just as much to us as  
24 they do to their mentors. So over half, more than  
25 half, of them were already enrolled in other



2 mentorship programs. And the small amount that  
3 wasn't, they actually were just informed of what  
4 currently exists.

5       We're going to do better jobs at marketing.  
6 Before I even took over probation, I never heard of a  
7 NeON. I was with the police department 36 years, and  
8 I didn't know a NeON existed, which is a reason why I  
9 started the mentorship groups that I did. But with  
10 that being said, there is a marketing campaign that  
11 we're going to start depending on the funding that we  
12 have, but I know I can get it on some of the more  
13 popular radio stations, we're getting some variable  
14 signs to just, you know, advertise what's here as far  
15 as mentorship programs. You know, we have the food  
16 pantries there, I don't particularly like seeing  
17 lines. It bothers me to see that in underserved  
18 communities. So we're going to do something  
19 structured where seniors will have these two days at  
20 these hours and come, and you know, make it more  
21 structured in nature, so we don't have these long  
22 lines, or with seniors, you know, standing out there  
23 for a period of time.

24       So we have a lot of things that we're looking at,  
25 a lot of moving parts. But you know, just for the

2 better-- as far as the operation of Department of  
3 Probation is concerned, but more importantly for our  
4 clients.

5       Yeah, and I think the issue is that APT is a good  
6 program. It's just not the same program. And this  
7 kind of goes to Arches. Arches serves young people  
8 who are under a probation mandate. And while Next  
9 Steps also was a volunteer program-- voluntary  
10 program, I should say.

11       COMMISSIONER HOLMES: But Arches, I believe, and  
12 correct me if I'm wrong, it serves the community as  
13 well, correct? Yes. So it's not just only under  
14 Probation. It's community members.

15       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And in terms of Girls Talk,  
16 I just want to be sure that in the-- in the Next  
17 Steps Program, there weren't girls enrolled in that  
18 program, right?

19       COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes.

20       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: All right. I will tell you  
21 that, for example-- and you're going to hear from  
22 these providers. I'm very much looking forward to  
23 hearing from them because I know, they will probably  
24 have some differences in opinions as to what you're

2 saying in terms of metrics. They've been doing this  
3 a long time.

4 So I really do encourage you and your team to  
5 listen to them because from what I've heard, and even  
6 from other Councilmembers, these programs were  
7 absolutely critical in their communities. I know  
8 you're saying there's a transition, and that-- that  
9 you will, you will treat them with the dignity, the  
10 respect, the care, and the services that they need.  
11 It's just these-- these not-for-profit providers have  
12 been doing this a long time, and in the metrics, I'm  
13 not quite sure what you're looking for. You're  
14 looking for recidivism numbers in the future? Like,  
15 so how are you going to determine how successful your  
16 replacement programs are?

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right. So what we're  
18 looking at actually is if a client comes to you,  
19 there should be an assessment, you know?, whether  
20 they need education, whether GED, whatever it is,  
21 that's going to keep them out of the criminal justice  
22 system. I would like to see that. I-- Even if it's  
23 anger management, and they say, you know, we referred  
24 them to something and, you know, to a particular  
25 program for behavioral health, and there's positive

2 outcomes. He's now gainfully employed, or she's now  
3 gainfully employed.

4 But one point I want to make, we're not out of  
5 business with these contractors. They are my service  
6 providers. They are my service providers. If they  
7 are my service providers as it stands, and it doesn't  
8 mean that they won't be service providers moving  
9 forward, and some of these other, you know,  
10 mentorship groups that are really educational  
11 components, literacy components that we're looking to  
12 put in place. So that I want to make perfectly  
13 clear. They are currently-- all 17 of those  
14 providers are still part of DOP's programs, and  
15 services. And it doesn't mean that maybe we may look  
16 to implement this with going back and creating a  
17 different contract or adding key performance  
18 indicators that I think would be -- not just I-- I  
19 think would be suitable, right?, to my executive  
20 staff. But more importantly, to the clients.

21 I've got to say, I am, like, just, you know,  
22 adamant about education, and, and working, and  
23 ensuring that for the time being, they have these  
24 public assistance services that they need. But I  
25 don't want them dependent on it. And I don't want

2 them growing this mindset of "something for nothing",  
3 you know. That's perpetuated a lot of these  
4 underserved communities. And I'm going to try my  
5 best to get away from it. But-- So that's why I  
6 really want stronger outcomes. Even with my  
7 probation officers case management technology system,  
8 it's not giving us what we need. So we're changing  
9 that. I just hired a Chief Information Security  
10 Officer. So there-- there's a lot of turnover here,  
11 but it's going to be for the better of-- of our  
12 clients.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And I just want to say the  
14 social services piece is important.

15 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: It is important.  
16 Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: That's why we're hearing  
18 Intro 1203 today, because being proactive about, you  
19 know, getting your paperwork is all well and good,  
20 but I can't even imagine the mindset of really trying  
21 to reenter your community as a returning citizen, and  
22 then, you know, having as much as you can, right  
23 when-- when you walk out of there. I mean, again,  
24 and there's also, you know, seeing the uniform

2 sometimes. It's not always-- It's not always the  
3 most welcome sight.

4       COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I agree. And I and I know  
5 that. You know, but what I think is key, even with  
6 the NeONs, we're adding an HRA component, and not  
7 just to check the box and refer the client or refer  
8 anybody from the community, but to actually process  
9 them right there. So, they help them in a system  
10 with the paperwork. And this is an HR person that's  
11 not in uniform, very soft environment, and very  
12 welcoming. I mean, the NeON is very successful, as  
13 far as people coming there, attending it. Even our  
14 clients feel-- you know, feel a lot better going here  
15 the check in instead of having to go to a courthouse  
16 or somewhere outside of their neighborhood. Not to  
17 mention the stakeholders we have. So, there are a  
18 lot of grassroot people that are part of running--  
19 helping us run the NeONs.

20       And we also have-- I think we forget about AIM  
21 and Echoes. Those are two alternative-to-placement  
22 programs that have been with us for quite some time.  
23 AIM is definitely a court mandate. Echoes is a court  
24 mandate. But also I'm still looking at that.  
25 Because even though it's a court mandate, I want to

2 see the impact that it's having, you know, on our  
3 clients.

4 The goal here is to make sure they never ever  
5 revisit the criminal justice system. It is  
6 traumatizing itself, and let's face it, we are still  
7 going to have that small population that, they're  
8 just going to commit crime, I'm resigned to that.

9 But those that we can save by identifying them,  
10 having structure, and definitely creating this action  
11 plan where we marry them up with exactly what they  
12 need. I want to see them stay out of incarceration,  
13 but I want to see them buy a home, I want to see them  
14 take the children on vacation. I want to see people  
15 have a normal-- that's a normal life. And for a lot  
16 of our clients, that's not normal. So, you know, I  
17 can tell you that we're definitely working diligently  
18 here to make sure that we have the right program in  
19 place.

20 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yeah. And sometimes that's  
21 a long road.

22 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Yes it is.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So it's not going to happen  
24 in you know, two weeks, two years even.

25 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: That's right.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: and that's why I want to be  
3 just be sure that the groups here really did play a  
4 great, great role in this. And why-- why the sudden  
5 cancellation of the contracts?

6 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Well, what happened was  
7 when they-- when we were doing this overhaul and  
8 taking a look at it. This contract, it was upon us  
9 in a short period of time. So Deputy Commissioner  
10 Maldonado was onboarded December 7th. I was already  
11 looking at contracts. This was due to expire August  
12 31st. The people in place on the contracts in  
13 Probation didn't bring this to my attention until  
14 three weeks out. So, which is now a process in  
15 place. That's never going to happen again. It's  
16 four to five months in advance before contracts due  
17 to cancel, so we can evaluate it. And that way we  
18 can tell the particular service providers, "Listen,  
19 here's what we're looking for," give them some  
20 correction-- you know, correctionable actions, to--  
21 to comply with, and then, you know, hopefully, it  
22 irons itself out.

23 But to be quite honest, that's what happened. It  
24 was just thrust, you know, in my face, this is  
25 expiring when. And then I'm saying, "Okay. Show me



2 the outcomes. How does it offset the expenditures?  
3 Or how does it marry up to it?"

4 And as a result of such I extended it three weeks  
5 longer, just to have a proper meeting with the  
6 vendors, because I've never met with them. And only  
7 to hear that that's the first time they've ever had  
8 such a meeting in nine years.

9 So, you know, there's a lot of things that is  
10 being done differently and DOP, you know, and I think  
11 it's going to have some real serious positive  
12 outcomes. And truthfully, yes, I'm not saying  
13 overnight, but at least moving us in the right  
14 direction.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I think that the-- You know,  
16 you had mentioned, at some point, I believe in front  
17 of this very Committee that the, for example, Next  
18 Steps was a successful program that is emblematic of  
19 what works. I guess, between, you know, that  
20 hearing, and now you've sort of changed your opinion.  
21 But-- But let me just ask about the credible  
22 messenger piece of the nonprofit that I think is so  
23 important. Because I will tell you, I worked very  
24 few years before I became a Councilwoman in social  
25 services. A lot of eviction prevention. I wasn't an

2 attorney, but I cannot tell you how many people just  
3 wanted me to be there with them in court, because  
4 it's hard to trust a system that has continuously  
5 disenfranchised you over and over and over again.

6       So when you have people that are in uniform, from  
7 what I've heard, is it-- is it-- please correct me if  
8 I'm wrong, we understand that you issued a directive  
9 that probation officers must now wear uniforms and  
10 carry loaded firearms at all times.

11       COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So it's-- What happened  
12 was-- That's not for all probation officers. That's  
13 for supervising probation officers. They go out in  
14 the field. They do conditional searches. They're  
15 recovering firearms. Year to date, I believe we  
16 recovered 15 or 16 firearms. They've recovered  
17 numerous amounts of drugs. So as a result of such,  
18 it is a safety issue. We've implemented active  
19 shooter training. So naturally, if we enter a  
20 location where the probation officer needs to be  
21 discerning, who's the probation officer who's not.

22       So a lot of a lot of thought went into that. But  
23 it's really for their safety. That's the only reason  
24 for the mandate. And it's only someone that's  
25 supervising that goes out into the field.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So do all probation officers  
3 now wear uniforms?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: They wear soft-- not all  
5 probation officers, no. All probation officers does  
6 not, only supervising. If-- To my knowledge  
7 supervising officers wore-- let me let me stand  
8 corrected, because I'm transparent. [TO OTHERS:] Is  
9 it all probation officers? [TO COUNCIL:] So it is  
10 all probation officers that wear uniforms, but all  
11 probation officers are not armed. It's only the  
12 supervising officers that go out into the field and  
13 do conditional searches that's armed. And they wear  
14 a soft tennis shirt-- a polo shirt, I guess you would  
15 call it with a patch on it, just so it's easily  
16 discerning who the probation officer is.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So we understand that, from  
18 what you're saying, that there are individuals,  
19 probation officers in uniform carrying loaded weapons  
20 inside, probation officers and out in the field, even  
21 when they're conducting standard home visits, and  
22 also when entering the premises of service providers.  
23 And you're saying they're now required to carry  
24 loaded guns for safety?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: If they-- If they are a  
3 supervising officer that has to go out in the field,  
4 it is for their safety.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So-- All right, if you're  
6 saying this is to protect-- protect the probation  
7 officers, can you tell us a little bit more about  
8 why? Can you point us any specific incidents since  
9 you became Commissioner or uptick in violent  
10 incidents against probation officers that would  
11 require them to have guns at the ready?

12 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So the-- the reason for it  
13 is because they're going into a precarious situation,  
14 especially when we've recovered firearms and drugs at  
15 locations during conditional searches. God forbid if  
16 the probationer got ahold of the gun, and they're not  
17 armed, and it would be where you have one person  
18 armed and someone wasn't armed. And as a result of  
19 such, if any sort of an adversarial incident  
20 occurred, you would have probationers jumping behind  
21 the other probation officer that's armed.

22 In addition to that, the Bronx has really been a  
23 precarious situation for us. So we recently met with  
24 the DA's office there. You've got a lot of gang  
25 violence. When they go into court, we recently had a

2 probation officer's vehicle shot up when they were  
3 coming outside of the facility. And it was some sort  
4 of adversarial situation taking place. So as a  
5 result of such, if they are in the field, and they  
6 have to make home visit, where they are recovering  
7 firearms, they have to be armed.

8 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So why-- Why are they  
9 wearing them when they're going into the service  
10 providers offices?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I don't-- I don't  
12 understand what you mean by service providers  
13 offices. By the NeONs and things of that respect?

14 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Are you saying that the only  
15 place that they're carrying--

16 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: They can secure their  
17 firearms. As a matter of fact, we are building out  
18 spaces for them to secure their firearms inside the  
19 NeONs, inside the probations office, where there will  
20 be an individual locker with an individual key for  
21 their firearms as well as their radios. That's  
22 currently being built out. So, they don't have to  
23 wear their firearms when they are inside, you know  
24 where they're providing service. But when you're  
25 going out in the field, you should have a firearm.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Is it a mandate, or is it an  
3 option?

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: It's mandated for the  
5 field.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Even if they're not  
7 necessarily going into a home that you previously  
8 recovered drugs or weapons?

9 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: If they're going into a  
10 home for a conditional search, that's the reason for  
11 the mandate for conditional search. Usually, it's  
12 associated with some sort of violence or drugs.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So do you have any incidents  
14 or since you became Commissioner or sudden uptick as  
15 to why? Why was this directive issued? Why is it  
16 that all officers now wear uniforms? Why are they  
17 now required to carry the firearm?

18 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: All officers are wearing  
19 uniforms because I recently said I gave active  
20 shooter training. If we go into a facility, we need  
21 to be-- it needs to be discerning who the officer is.  
22 And then who are members of the community, or the  
23 population of our clients. It's the reasons for the  
24 uniforms.

2 As far as the mandate for the firearms and the  
3 uniforms outside when you're doing conditional  
4 searches, it's for safety reasons.

5 I try to be proactive. I don't want to wait for  
6 something to happen. You know, with my experience in  
7 law enforcement, I know the possibility of things  
8 happening. We're very fortunate here in Probation,  
9 thank God. But with that being said, you know, I  
10 like to be I like to be more proactive. So, as a  
11 result of such I just think about what could happen  
12 and try and offset that.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I understand. I just think  
14 that violence begets violence, you know? And I just  
15 feel like there is an opportunity here to really  
16 value people that are approaching this not from you  
17 know, the officer's standpoint, and I stand by that.

18 But I hear your reasoning and the analysis of the  
19 evaluation, you have metrics that you've set that  
20 you're hoping to adhere to. I look forward to that  
21 information as soon as six months, and it seems like  
22 six months seems an appropriate correctional--  
23 criminal legal system evaluation.

24

25

2 I do want to ask Correctional Health Services in  
3 MOCJ, if we could swear them in. I believe they've  
4 joined us virtually?

5 COUNSEL: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Oh, I'm so sorry. Thank you  
7 for coming. Oh, my. I was like, I figured, you all  
8 lived in Brooklyn, and it was like impossible.  
9 Right? Okay. Not everybody lives in Brooklyn, but.  
10 Okay, so...

11 COUNSEL: Uh, from Correctional Health Services,  
12 we have Nora Daniel, Chief of Staff. Oh, I'm sorry.  
13 That's for MOCJ, Nora Daniel and Correctional Health  
14 Services, Jeanette Morrell. If you can raise your  
15 right hands.

16 MS. CALABRESE: Actually, I'm sorry. It's not  
17 Nora Daniel. It's Anna Calabrese from MOCJ.

18 COUNSEL: Sorry, I apologize Anna.

19 Anna Calabrese and Jeanette Merrill, can you  
20 raise your right hands?

21 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth  
22 and nothing but the truth before this committee and  
23 respond honestly to Councilmember questions?

24 BOTH: I do.

25 COUNSEL: Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you to  
3 everyone so far-- for being here and for your time  
4 and for making it in person. And to everyone who has  
5 been waiting patiently, I want to thank you as well.

6 So let me start with Correctional Health  
7 Services. How is Correctional Health Services  
8 involved with discharge planning specifically for  
9 those in custody with a substance abuse disorder?

10 MS. CALABRESE: Sure. So I guess to start, I can  
11 talk about the reentry services that are available to  
12 everybody in custody. So those core services include  
13 helping patients apply for Medicaid, sharing  
14 information about our jail-based and community-based  
15 reentry services, asking information about pharmacy,  
16 local pharmacies. And then for patients who have  
17 mental health needs or specific clinical  
18 vulnerabilities, we do offer individualized discharge  
19 planning services. So that helps patients apply for  
20 housing, including transitional housing or supportive  
21 housing. And then patients who are in the mental  
22 health service also, upon release, get a seven-day  
23 supply of medication, as well as a 21-day script.  
24 And then we also provide a medication assistance card  
25 for people to afford medication, because it takes

2 generally two to three business days for Medicaid to  
3 become active again.

4       So in terms of substance use services, so of  
5 course many of our patients who are receiving  
6 substance use services may also be in the mental  
7 health service and receiving those discharge planning  
8 services. But in terms of their connections to the  
9 community-- so patients who are on methadone, we  
10 would refer to the OASAS opioid treatment programs  
11 throughout the city. And then for buprenorphine, we  
12 refer to federally-qualified health centers, as well  
13 as H+H sites, we also supply or provide information  
14 about H+H's virtual behavioral health service.

15       And then I should also mention that we recently  
16 opened a reentry center. So everyone is welcome to  
17 come there. Through the reentry center, we do  
18 provide Naloxone training and kits as well as  
19 fentanyl testing strips. And that's really a  
20 continuation also of our work in the jails to provide  
21 Naloxone and training in every housing area in every  
22 jail on Rikers.

23       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So about the reentry service  
24 center: How is it going three months in? What

2 differentiates the services provided at the center  
3 from the other reentry services that already exist?

4 MS. CALABRESE: Yeah, thank you. So we're very  
5 excited about the center. It's going well. So all  
6 of our reentry services are really designed around  
7 the continuity of care, and we recognize that our  
8 patients would benefit from a space to go immediately  
9 after their incarceration. So, we have this center  
10 by the Perry Building, it's actually in front of the  
11 Q-100 bus stop. So it's really the first thing that  
12 people see immediately after release. So we've had  
13 to date 569 patients stop in for services that can be  
14 connecting to community-based health and social  
15 services, or it could just be getting a cup of  
16 coffee, getting directions, making a phone call. We  
17 also offer, as I mentioned, the Naloxone, but it's  
18 toiletry kits, condoms, snacks, just a little swag  
19 bag.

20 And then I would also mention we have a  
21 partnership with T Mobile and Premier wireless. We  
22 recognize that a major barrier to a successful return  
23 to the community is a lack of cell phone. It's very  
24 difficult to navigate housing and healthcare and  
25 other social services if you don't have a reliable

2 means of communication, especially since 30% of our  
3 patients identify as homeless or likely homeless  
4 after release.

5       So with T Mobile, they provided smartphones at a  
6 discounted rate. We provide a year-long service  
7 plan. And patients can get those-- patients who have  
8 serious mental illness are eligible when they're  
9 released from Rikers to come to the reentry center  
10 along with some other special populations.

11       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So what kind of what kind of  
12 phones do they get?

13       MS. CALABRESE: It's a smartphone, and it has a  
14 hard case which is also donated by Premier Wireless.  
15 It has special sort of software. We pre-program it  
16 with contact information. It can help them navigate  
17 benefits, and they get to keep the phone even-- and  
18 they may be able to be in a position to pay for the  
19 service plan following the year or but if not, they  
20 still can use the hotspots.

21       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: How many individuals have  
22 received phones?

23       MS. CALABRESE: See if I have that number. I can  
24 get that for you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. How was-- How was  
3 there continuity between the various transitional  
4 when reentry services

5 MS. CALABRESE: Yeah. In terms of with community  
6 based providers or with--?

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I'll ask about MOCJ too,  
8 about how you all are working together.

9 MS. CALABRESE: Yeah, sure. So we most of our  
10 contacts are actually directly with the providers  
11 themselves, with the community-based organizations.  
12 We reach out proactively about patients, or they will  
13 come to us. We have good relationships with the  
14 CBOs. Often the information we're providing is  
15 health information, of course with patient consent.  
16 And then MOCJ and the Department of Correction are  
17 helpful in facilitating those connections.

18 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So just back to the  
19 substance abuse. How are individuals identified so  
20 that they can be given nax-- I have such a hard time.

21 MS. CALABRESE: Naloxone. I know it's hard.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. There's just  
23 like a list of words I can't say. Fentanyl test  
24 strips, or referrals to outside treatment programs  
25 upon release?

2 MS. CALABRESE: Sure. So we do operate the  
3 nation's oldest and largest jail-based opioid  
4 treatment program. It's called KEEP, Key Extended  
5 Entry Program, and through that, that's where  
6 counselors will start patients or continue patients  
7 on methadone and buprenorphine treatment. I  
8 mentioned the connections to services, the OASAS and  
9 federally qualified health centers, they also are  
10 active in the naloxone distribution in the housing  
11 areas. The test-- The fentanyl test strips are only  
12 available at the reentry center. Those aren't  
13 currently in jail facilities.

14 And then I would also mention here we've opened  
15 in partnership with the Department, a new housing  
16 unit we refer to as GATE, Groups for Addiction  
17 Treatment and Engagement, and that's for individuals  
18 who have substance use and mental health needs who  
19 would otherwise be housed in general population. And  
20 that really leverages the group model. There are a  
21 lot of group-based therapies there, of course, as  
22 well as medication available for those who need it.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Do you-- When a person first  
24 comes in and they are-- they sit with CHS, and they  
25 sort of receive an evaluation, do you track who

2 enters your facilities with diagnosed substance abuse  
3 disorder, and whether or not that individual leaves  
4 with the same addiction?

5 MS. CALABRESE: So I can tell you based on recent  
6 census, about 14% of patients had an opioid use  
7 disorder, and of these, 87% chose to enroll in the  
8 program. So that's about 780 patients actively in  
9 KEEP. So we really tried to make things low barrier.  
10 We again will make connections to community-based  
11 services, but we do provide methadone and  
12 buprenorphine while in jail.

13 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So do you track that?

14 MS. CALABRESE: Once they're in the community?

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I tell you what my concern  
16 is. My concern is that there are individuals  
17 entering correctional facilities with substance  
18 abuse, maybe without, but definitely leaving with it,  
19 with addiction. And I wonder whether or not, you  
20 know, how that is tracked? With the proper referrals  
21 that are made, clearly. And whether or not some of  
22 these addictions are actually formed inside the jails  
23 themselves?

24 MS. CALABRESE: Yeah. That's a good question.  
25 So I should say, during our comprehensive medical

2 intake process, which happens when a person first  
3 enters custody, we do screen for substance use  
4 issues, and that's when we can make the connections  
5 to KEEP for services. But I think your point is a  
6 good one that the risk of-- [PHONE MAKES NOISE]

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: A little emergency--  
8 national, you know, whatever, declaration.

9 MS. CALABRESE: I guess. Yes. So right, the  
10 risk of drug overdose in the jails isn't specific, or  
11 even predominantly among people with a known  
12 substance use disorder, especially if people aren't  
13 tolerant to certain drugs. And so that's why we've  
14 really expanded the harm reduction efforts. And  
15 that's why we're making Naloxone available, and  
16 making training available really comes into play.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Counseling? One-on-one can  
18 come in? Okay.

19 MS. CALABRESE: Yeah. That's in addition to the  
20 mental health services. And I should also note, I'm  
21 sure you saw the Health Department issued the  
22 commissioner's advisory related to the overdose  
23 crisis in the city earlier this week. And you know,  
24 the populations that are at greatest risk in the  
25 community, namely black and Latino men, at greatest



2 risk for overdose are also over-represented in our  
3 jails. So it is, you know, service and treatment  
4 that we take very seriously.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I appreciate that. I'm  
6 going to give Councilmember Restler one more-- all  
7 right. I'm going to take one more minute he braved  
8 his way here.

9 So finding suitable housing is a critical factor  
10 in successful reentry. Does MOCJ coordinate with DOC  
11 to help people (and Councilmember Narcisse brought  
12 this up, of course), does MOCJ coordinate with DOC to  
13 help people leaving custody obtain true transitional  
14 housing.

15 MS. MERRILL: Thank you so much for that  
16 question. That's something that we're really proud  
17 of, and that we've worked with DOC in lockstep on  
18 since the height of the pandemic, and we continue to  
19 receive referrals from the Department of Correction,  
20 triage those referrals to our network of transitional  
21 housing providers, and very often provide  
22 transportation directly from correctional facilities  
23 to our transitional housing beds. So that's  
24 something that's been working very well, thanks to a  
25 partnership with DOC.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: What percentage of people  
3 leaving DOC custody are referred to the New York City  
4 shelter system?

5 MS. CALABRESE: That's a very good question. And  
6 I can get back to you on those exact numbers.

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. You know, I'm going  
8 to I'm going to go to my colleague, Councilmember  
9 Restler to ask a few questions. And thank you.  
10 Thank you for your testimony thus far.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Of course, my notes  
12 disappear as soon as I say that I'm ready. I spent  
13 the morning in mostly South Williamsburg clearing  
14 catch basins where we have feet of water. So, I am  
15 very much thinking about my constituents this morning  
16 and folks across the city who are struggling. We  
17 certainly suffered millions of dollars in damages  
18 just in our neighborhood in South Williamsburg and  
19 have serious issues across the district. I hope  
20 everyone's okay and safe. We'll save our displeasure  
21 on the lack of communication and warning for another  
22 day.

23 I just want to start by saying I'm almost not  
24 even inclined to ask DOC any questions because I'm so  
25 disappointed with you all. Last year, you came to us

2 and said it was not for performance reasons that you  
3 were cutting the \$17 million in reentry programming,  
4 because you needed to make these critical budget  
5 cuts. But there are 1029 vacancies in the agency,  
6 cutting 60 of those vacancies, positions that are not  
7 filled today, would have been the equivalent of the  
8 reentry programming. This City Council pushed  
9 aggressively for the reentry programming to be  
10 included in the adopted budget, and the mayor and DOC  
11 said absolutely not. We cannot, will not allow for  
12 this program to be funded, even if the Council  
13 insists on funding it itself.

14 And the reason is clear, because you just don't  
15 want eyes and ears in the jails. You don't want the  
16 Fortune Society. You don't want the Osborn  
17 Association. You don't want trusted people seeing  
18 the horrors that you are responsible for every single  
19 day. And that is why you cut this programming, with  
20 no care whatsoever for the futures of the people who  
21 are in your custody, no desire to help them land on  
22 their feet in a productive ways. You just cut in  
23 eliminated this programming because you didn't want  
24 oversight for the transgressions that you are

2 responsible for. That is why it occurred and it is  
3 disgraceful.

4 So I'm going to not ask any questions of voc.  
5 I'm not going to ask any questions of Correctional  
6 Health. I'm just going to focus on DOP today.

7 I'm deeply concerned about the changes that we've  
8 been hearing about at the Department of Probation.  
9 From what I understand, three of the deputy  
10 commissioners and general counsel's who've been there  
11 for years and are some of the trusted folks at the  
12 agency have all left in the last couple of months.  
13 Michael Forte. I believe Janine Gray is leaving,  
14 Wayne McKenzie. These are distinguished  
15 professionals. The Department of Probation from the  
16 eras of Michael Jacobson, to Marty Horn, to Vanice  
17 Sheraldi, to Anna Bermudez has had a remarkable  
18 history as a reform-oriented agency focused on  
19 preventing our young adults from getting on the wrong  
20 path. And I'm very concerned that we are moving in  
21 the absolute wrong direction.

22 So, I'd just like to ask a few questions.

23 One, when our youth detention facilities, or  
24 secure detention facilities, or city jails for kids,  
25 jails for kids, are at capacity we've seen the

2 population of kids in jail double under Mayor Adams  
3 tenure. Why would we eliminate a highly-effective,  
4 preventative program that engages young adults in our  
5 NYCHA developments? And eliminate it on a day's  
6 notice far before the mayor had announced any PEGs  
7 that were pending? Why would we eliminate this  
8 program on a dime? When it was an effective,  
9 preventative program engaging our high at-risk youth  
10 in this moment?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Thank you for the question.  
12 Maybe it was engaging. I mean, I don't know. Like  
13 you said, I just took office six months ago. But  
14 what it wasn't from what I could see, I didn't see  
15 where any success. I didn't see it. And it's not  
16 just about keeping-- it's about keeping them out of  
17 the criminal justice system. I agree. And that's my  
18 job as well, and that's my intentions. But with that  
19 being said, I'd like to go back to what you said  
20 about the individuals that are leaving the agencies,  
21 right? People move on. I agree. Key people. A lot  
22 of times they're dedicated. Absolutely truly going  
23 to be missed.

24 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Commissioner, just  
25 because the Chair is going to cut me off, if we could

2 just aim for brevity, I would appreciate it, because  
3 I got a number of questions for you.

4 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So, the reason why the  
5 program was cut, I explained earlier, there were no  
6 successful metrics. There was nothing supporting it.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: So it was program was  
8 based on the Arches program, which is a highly  
9 successful evidence-based approach, where there has  
10 been extensive outside research and independent  
11 analysis and evaluation to demonstrate efficacy.

12 Next Steps is based in the NYCHA developments  
13 where we have some of the greatest challenges in the  
14 city. It's with credible messengers that engage  
15 young adults, one-on-one in effective mentoring.  
16 I've seen the program up close. I've seen it in in  
17 communities across Brooklyn. It works. And frankly,  
18 I had thought your record in Queens was one of  
19 partnering with CMS providers and leveraging the  
20 expertise and credibility that they can offer. And  
21 I've been really surprised that that hasn't been the  
22 approach you've taken at the Department of Probation.

23 So the next question I'd like to ask is, when you  
24 arrived at DOP, how many officers carried guns?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I don't know. I didn't  
3 even know how many guns they had, because there were  
4 no systems in place to tell me that.

5 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: How many officers carry  
6 guns now?

7 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Anybody that's in a  
8 supervising position?

9 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: How many people carry  
10 guns in your agency?

11 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: [[TO OTHERS:] How many  
12 guns do we have? [TO COUNCIL:] We'll get back to  
13 you on that.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: From what I understand,  
15 we now have Department of Probation Officers across  
16 the city of New York, openly carrying guns, and--

17 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: They all had-- They all  
18 firearms when I got there. Everyone has to be  
19 firearm trained in order to be a probation officer.

20 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: This is a highly  
21 unorthodox policy relative to other city agen-- other  
22 agencies around this country, other state agencies.  
23 And it's deeply disturbing to me that we are  
24 increasing by the hundreds, the number of guns out in  
25 New York City. It is not the right message for us to

2 be engag-- our probation officers, in uniforms,  
3 carrying guns are not the mentors that our young  
4 people need. And instead, we're cutting and  
5 eliminating the mentorship programs that were  
6 effective.

7 I think that it is both going to deeply and  
8 profoundly undermine the efficacy of the agency to  
9 have uniform-wearing, gun-toting individuals. And  
10 I'm deeply concerned for our collective safety. You  
11 know, when the mayor made comments on the campaign  
12 trail that he was going to carry a gun into City  
13 Hall, and into church, and anywhere he liked, I  
14 didn't think that it would carry down to all of our  
15 agencies carrying guns. And the prevalence of guns  
16 at the Department of Probation is highly concerning.  
17 And I am certainly going to be digging in much more  
18 closely on this policy, the risks that it represents,  
19 and going to do everything that we can, here from the  
20 Council to place severe restrictions and limitations  
21 on them.

22 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Probation officers have  
23 always carried firearms, it was just optional.

24 [CROSSTALK] Some of the-- Some of the probation  
25 officers were carrying prior to me being appointed to



2 this position. My thing is, I'm proactive, they go  
3 into households where guns have been recovered, drugs  
4 have been recovered. It's a safety reason. So as a  
5 result of such, anyone supervising probationers, our  
6 clients, they're required to carry firearms.

7 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: This is--

8 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: In the office--

9 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Patient had been a place  
10 where we were oriented toward reducing incarceration,  
11 helping people get on the right path. It is turning  
12 rapidly into a punitive agency under your lead--

13 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Absolutely not.

14 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: --and I'm deeply  
15 concerned about it. The message that is sent by  
16 officer after officer carrying a gun into people's  
17 homes, carrying a gun when people visit their  
18 probation office in downtown Brooklyn, is deeply  
19 disturbing. This is the wrong direction for the  
20 Department of Probation. This is the cop-ification  
21 of New York City government, and I'm deeply concerned  
22 about it.

23 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm very concerned about  
24 the officers safety when they're conducting these  
25 conditional searches, and going into households where

2 we have recovered firearms, where we have recovered  
3 drugs. I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned  
4 about the clients as well. So when I when I cut a  
5 program, this particular program, these 17 service  
6 providers are still service providers for DOP. I  
7 don't want it to be where we think we're not in  
8 business with them. We are. And I don't want it to  
9 be mistaken that this may not be, you know, this  
10 program is totally eliminated.

11 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: My understanding is that  
12 the program manager took authority on themselves to  
13 inform the providers that there was going to be no  
14 more funding in days. Days. Less than a week. And  
15 they were without any direction from the agency. The  
16 agency leadership said, "We don't even need to tell  
17 them that we're eliminating these critical mentorship  
18 programs engaging our most at risk youth." And this  
19 is the thing: We've doubled the number of kids in  
20 jails under this mayoral administration. Doubled.  
21 Our youth detention facilities are full. We went  
22 from a census of-- that's now at 223 from the last I  
23 checked. If you want to see the MMR and my Google  
24 Docs aren't loading, so I don't have any of the stats  
25 in front of me. So I apologize. But it was a 35%

2 increase in admissions for our youth detention  
3 facilities this year. What does it mean when we  
4 eliminate the preventative programs that are engaging  
5 exactly the at-risk youth that we want to support.  
6 It means that more of them are going to end up going  
7 to our youth jails. The decisions that were making  
8 at what had been a preventative-- an agency that was  
9 focused on prevention, that was focused on helping  
10 our young people get on the right track is turning  
11 into a punitive agency. It is turning into an  
12 agency, where probation officers are walking in the  
13 door with guns and scaring people rather than helping  
14 people.

15       And I'm-- I think there is a lot more oversight  
16 and analysis that is needed here. I am very  
17 concerned about the loss of the expertise of Michael  
18 Forte, and Janine Gray, and Wayne McKenzie,  
19 distinguished professionals who had spent many years,  
20 I imagine many decades between them at the Department  
21 of Probation. And we're replacing them all with  
22 people who don't have probation experience, who don't  
23 have the expertise. This is the wrong direction.  
24 And I'm-- I want to be as clear as possible. I am  
25 profoundly concerned.

2 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm not concerned. I'm not  
3 concerned, Councilmember. I think we have the  
4 expertise that we need. And I don't negate anyone  
5 that dedicated their time to local city government.  
6 I did so 36 years. I walked in these doors, and I  
7 don't see the metrics that I think is going to help  
8 us reduce recidivism. I can't find them. And I  
9 don't see them. And when I ask for them, I can't be  
10 provided with them. I'm changing that. Because  
11 that's the only way--

12 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Next Steps is based on  
13 the Arches program.

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: --you're going to affect  
15 recidivism.

16 COUNCILMEMBER RESTLER: Arches has been  
17 independently evaluated and analyzed for years. Next  
18 Steps has been in place for the better part of a  
19 decade and has been highly effective. These programs  
20 are meeting the needs of our most at-risk young  
21 adults. If you don't want to see those results, and  
22 you don't want to see the data that shows how this  
23 work is making a difference, then that's your  
24 decision. But we're moving in the wrong direction.  
25 The priorities are not what they should be. And I

2 really believe that this City Council needs to push  
3 back much more aggressively and provide critical  
4 oversight, and place strict limitations on what is  
5 happening. Because I've been really proud dating  
6 back over decades to the reform-oriented work of the  
7 Department of Probation. And I've never felt more  
8 strongly that the agency is on the absolute wrong  
9 track. So thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So, Commissioner, in terms  
11 of-- you said, it's all about the metrics, which I  
12 hear you. Have you looked at sort of the outcomes  
13 over the past couple decades?

14 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I have.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Especially over the last 10  
16 years, where it's been proven that programming has  
17 actually had positive outcomes, has actually reduced  
18 recidivism? Have you ever seen any like reporting by  
19 Vera Institute, or by collaborations between CUNY and  
20 former Commissioner Sheraldi.

21 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: So I-- I have. But what I  
22 haven't seen, since I walked in this door, a metric  
23 supporting the reduction of recidivism. What I  
24 haven't seen is--

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Over how many years ago? I  
3 know what time you got in, but I want to know how  
4 long are you looking back--

5 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: I'm looking back--

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: at these disappointing  
7 metrics?

8 COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Right. So I'm looking back  
9 five years, and I can't get true numbers. And that's  
10 because the system is in place. I testified here  
11 several months ago, for a-- for a budget hearing. If  
12 you knew what it took for me to get some of those  
13 numbers, it's very challenging, and it's no one's  
14 fault, other than the system that's in place, that  
15 the state put in place. We are moving away from  
16 that. We're currently, like I said, building out a  
17 system where we don't have to go to 50 different  
18 repositories to get numbers that we need, that's  
19 indicative of success, that's indicative of us  
20 reducing recidivism. It is simply not there. And  
21 I'm very transparent. It's not there. So it's  
22 difficult enough. So case management is critical.  
23 It is critical. Marrying up our clients is critical  
24 to the to their needs, in order to reduce recidivism.  
25 It's critical.

2           There's some things that are not in place, and  
3 we're building it out. And, you know, it's  
4 challenging, but it's doable. It's doable.

5           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: I think it's just very--  
6 such a difference in terms of, you know, saying that  
7 a program is emblematic of what works, and then now  
8 saying there were no metrics in place. But you  
9 looked back five years. We're going to look back  
10 five years.

11           COMMISSIONER HOLMES: Mm-hmm.

12           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Again, I've-- Just through  
13 my humble time as Chair and looking back at some of  
14 these reports from 2013 and 2017, about how these  
15 programs have actually had beneficial outcomes? SoTo  
16 say that we can't find any data for the last five  
17 years to prove that these programs were a benefit  
18 instead of a hindrance, or that there wasn't anything  
19 in place to measure it? I find it a little bit  
20 concerning. And not quite-- I'm not quite there in  
21 terms of believing it. So, my duty, through my  
22 charter-mandated responsibility of oversight and  
23 investigation is to bring the data, bring the  
24 anecdotal, and ensure that we also understand that we  
25 have to center humanity as we do this.

2 So thank you for your testimony.

3 I just want to ask DOC, because we've heard  
4 clearly from the Commissioner, that this is about  
5 metrics. DOC says they made their cuts because of  
6 the Mayor's mandated 4% budget reduction in fiscal  
7 year 2024's adopted budget. That's why you made the  
8 cuts? Because the mayor made you?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: It was-- Excuse me.  
10 It was in response to the budget cuts that were  
11 placed on the agency, correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Was there a push to try to  
13 keep these contracts in place, knowing-- knowing how  
14 beneficial the the-- the exchange was in the outcomes  
15 between the providers and the incarcerated people  
16 themselves?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: I'll say broadly,  
18 certainly this was a great concern and a very  
19 challenging cut for us to make. We did-- did  
20 maintain some service providers. So, when we made  
21 \$17.1 million in cuts, we also still, you know, had  
22 around \$16.2 million budget projected for this fiscal  
23 for the program division. So six were cut, but we  
24 still retain around 18 (and DC Torres can elaborate  
25 little more on that) with about 17 subcontractors



2 ranging in the \$50 to \$130k range, as well as again,  
3 the emphasis on the program staff and taking on the  
4 responsibility. It is a big-- It's a big cut and  
5 something we don't take lightly-- lightly at all.

6 In terms of metrics, also important to us, under  
7 Commissioner Molina and this administration, we've  
8 really put an emphasis on understanding how valuable  
9 quality-- of what quality is our data. So we stood  
10 up a data quality team, which is under a division  
11 called Management, Analysis and Planning, and we've  
12 staffed it with the best in the city. We've got  
13 analytics people that have joined us from other  
14 departments, who know the business very well and who  
15 have track records for really building robust  
16 metrics. They've been working on our MMR metrics.  
17 They've been working on getting a hold of all the  
18 agency data, to get us in a position to really  
19 evaluate anything we need evaluated, programs being  
20 important as well as one of those things, right? As  
21 well as other issues that we're taking on whether  
22 it's staffing or indicators across the board, we're  
23 really honing in on those as a focus for us right  
24 now. But DC Torres, I'll let her elaborate a little  
25 bit more on the contract side. If you know--

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, let me just-- Let me  
3 just--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MCCARTY: Go ahead.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: --intervene for a second  
6 because I do want to-- there's about 20 people  
7 waiting to testify. You mentioned the data quality  
8 team. One of the pieces of data that was given by  
9 CHS was that 30% of people are identified as homeless  
10 at the reentry center?

11 MS. CALABRESE: So that's actually done in--  
12 based on our work in jails. We find that patients,  
13 yeah, 30% identify as being homeless or likely  
14 homeless after release.

15 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So homelessness, I would  
16 say, you're going to get back to me on the numbers  
17 for people entering with substance abuse versus being  
18 discharged with substance abuse? Do you track that?  
19 Is the data quality team tracking any of that?

20 MS. CALABRESE: So it's separate from the  
21 department. So we do our own data management. I can  
22 certainly follow up on more specifics on substance  
23 use. I guess I should note, you know, if someone is  
24 using drugs in the jails, but they're not part of the  
25 opioid treatment program, that isn't necessarily

2 going to be known to the provider, you know,  
3 potentially something they're discussing with a  
4 clinician, but it may not show up in those  
5 statistics.

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And I understand that  
7 there's certain things that you can and cannot share,  
8 but I imagine there was some sort of cross-sharing  
9 here and collaboration between the two agencies,  
10 right? So, I just want to make sure that if there  
11 are people in custody or have been identified by  
12 either DOC or you, that you're looking at housing,  
13 substance abuse, I think Commissioner Holmes  
14 mentioned her focus on literacy and employment. So  
15 I'm just ensuring that you're all working together--  
16 together to identify these gaps in these trends in  
17 the-- in the highest priority services from  
18 individuals. I know that nonprofits are doing that.  
19 I wanted to ensure that the agencies are.

20 MS. CALABRESE: Yes, we do work closely. Again,  
21 we wouldn't share, you know, Protected Health  
22 Information necessarily--

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Of course not.

24

25

2 MS. CALABRESE: --but the department does make  
3 referrals to us, you know, of course, for mental  
4 health, but also for substance use.

5 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay. Well, I want to-- I  
6 want to thank you all for being here. I want to  
7 thank you for your testimony. Again, I want to thank  
8 everyone for coming in. Clearly there was the  
9 declaration, and like, please be safe getting home.  
10 I mean, these are some of the worst conditions we've  
11 seen since probably Ida. And, again, thank you for  
12 your testimony.

13 I'm looking forward to some of the data that we  
14 discussed in terms of follow up, some of these  
15 outcomes. And I do hope that you and members of your  
16 administration stay to listen to the many partners  
17 and providers that are going to be here testifying  
18 that have waited two hours to do so.

19 MS. CALABRESE: And I did get the number. We've  
20 distributed 100 phones so far, but have many hundreds  
21 more.

22 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Okay, thank you. Be safe.  
23 Thanks again.

24 So for those here to testify in those on Zoom,  
25 I'm going to have committee counsel call you up only

2 because it's kind of like a flowing situation in  
3 terms of who here is in person and on Zoom. So bear  
4 with us. And we want to make sure that everyone who  
5 wants to gets a chance to provide testimony. And  
6 thank you again to everyone who is here, and joining  
7 us via Zoom.

8 COUNSEL: Okay. Just a quick announcement for  
9 in-person panelists: Please come up to the desk once  
10 your name has been called. For virtual panelists, we  
11 will be calling individuals one by one to testify.  
12 We'll be limiting public testimony today to three  
13 minutes each. Please begin once the sergeant has  
14 started the timer. For virtual panelists, once your  
15 name is called a member of our staff will unmute--  
16 unmute you, and the sergeant at arms will set the  
17 timer to give you the go ahead to begin. Please wait  
18 for the sergeant to announce that you may begin  
19 before delivering your testimony. We're going to  
20 start with a hybrid panel. I believe in person, we  
21 have Nadia Chait, and then we're going to hear from  
22 Andre Ward and Megan French-Marcelin.

23 You can start whenever you're ready.

24 Good afternoon, Chair Rivera. And thank you for  
25 holding this hearing today. I'm Nadia Chait. I'm

2 the Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy at CASES.  
3 And unfortunately over the last month, we've had a  
4 really challenging time with our probation contracts.  
5 We have a range of programs that we partner on  
6 probation with, both programs that serve young people  
7 preventatively in the community, and programs that  
8 are intended to serve folks who are under probation  
9 supervision.

10 As you acknowledged in your questions, the Next  
11 Steps program was cut incredibly abruptly. We  
12 received notice at 8:21 p.m. that the program would  
13 cease to be funded less than five business days  
14 later. This is an intensive mentorship program that  
15 is grounded in building trusted relationships with  
16 young people. So it is-- I can't really see a  
17 scenario where we would ever want to cut a program  
18 that abruptly, but to do that to young people who  
19 have really built those relationships with their  
20 mentors was just incredibly hard for us.

21 And I want to read just a little bit that our  
22 Next Steps program participants shared with us about  
23 the value of this program in their lives.

24 They said: Next Steps has helped us to find jobs  
25 and internships while helping to motivate us on a

2 daily basis. Next Steps creates a good safe,  
3 positive space for us to express ourselves and be  
4 free. With mentors that genuinely care, it gives us  
5 extra support from someone that we can go to without  
6 the fear of being turned away. This program has  
7 encouraged us to always do the right thing, and to  
8 follow in the right path."

9 And the same participants who share that  
10 statement with us, they see their mentors in the  
11 community. Our mentors were hired from the community  
12 and they're part of the community. And a month after  
13 the end of the program, we are still having  
14 participants go up to our mentor and say, "When can  
15 we meet again? What are we doing next?" Because  
16 they're not in other programs. They have not been  
17 connected to other services. This was a preventive  
18 program. They're not eligible for Arches. Our  
19 participants were young men. So Girls Talk is not a  
20 program that's going to serve them.

21 And so we really appreciate your support and  
22 really urge the city to restore the funding for Next  
23 Steps, and to bring this program back.

24 And the other program I'll talk about very  
25 quickly is IMPACT. We do have several other

2 contracts with the Department of Probation, including  
3 Adolescent Portable Therapy, which the Commissioner  
4 mentioned. APT is a great program. We were very  
5 happy to have that contract renewed. But it's not at  
6 all the same as IMPACT. It's not an alternative to  
7 placement. While it does serve young people who are  
8 under probation supervision, it is a voluntary  
9 referral from probation officers. So, it's not the  
10 same as what the, you know, what the process would  
11 have been for young people on IMPACT. IMPACT would  
12 have been a much more intensive program. And also it  
13 would have served far more young people. It would  
14 have served 175 people were APT serves about 30 each  
15 year. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

17 COUNSEL: Thanks. Next we'll go to Andre Ward,  
18 participating via Zoom.

19 MR. WARD: Yes. Good morning. Do you hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yes, we do.

21 MR. WARD: Good morning Chair Rivera and members  
22 of the Committee on Criminal Justice for the  
23 opportunity to provide this testimony. My name is  
24 Andre Ward. I'm the Associate Vice President of  
25 Policy at the Fortune Society, which has been around



2 for about 55 years as an organization, supporting  
3 successful reentry from incarceration and promoting  
4 alternatives to incarceration so as to really  
5 strengthen the fabric of our communities.

6 And one of the things that we know at Fortune, in  
7 FY 23, we served about close to 11,000 people or so  
8 across our programs, and in our continuum of housing  
9 models, including nearly 2700 people held in our city  
10 jails. You know, as a group of providers, you know,  
11 until June 30th of this year, every day we've  
12 collectively engaged with nearly 1700 people across  
13 200 housing units and jails with hard skills,  
14 training, et cetera.

15 But as you know, Chair, those contracts were  
16 canceled. And the overwhelming number of people in  
17 our city jails are black and brown, as I'm sure you  
18 know. And we as a city failed to invest in the kind  
19 of programs that help them secure employment and  
20 supportive services after their release, we are  
21 really collected be contributing to the whole widely  
22 reported growing gap in unemployment rates between  
23 black and white New Yorkers. So, it's a really  
24 important issue for us.

2           And we're fortunate that we provide-- We're  
3 really proud to say that, you know, we hire our  
4 mission, approximately half of our staff had been  
5 directly impacted by the criminal legal system. We  
6 also know, even including our newly named incoming  
7 president and CEO, Stan Richards, who was also held  
8 in Rikers at one period of time, in his life, and we  
9 know it works, right? And we strive every day to  
10 make sure that we are supporting people. And we know  
11 that what works first and foremost is providing  
12 people with safe, stable, affordable housing and  
13 ensuring they're on pathways to financial stability  
14 and wellness. And having a home is critical, right?,  
15 to all of our abilities to find and maintain  
16 employment, pursue education and be connected to  
17 family. You know, people-- or rather, once people  
18 who have the necessary base of operations and stable  
19 housing, they thrive, they are also able to be  
20 financially stable. They also have physical and  
21 mental wellness in many instances, and Fortune offers  
22 both those pathways to our robust array of community  
23 programs.

24           One of the things we know is, you know, we also  
25 know that connecting with people before they're

2 released from jail makes a difference in their  
3 likelihood of engaging us once they are released.  
4 Our data shows that people who engage with us while  
5 released-- or rather, after they're released, who did  
6 not work with us while in jail, approximately 400 of  
7 those people enrolled in our community-based transfer  
8 of services within the past 12 months were previously  
9 engaged with us while they were in jail. And so  
10 within the 60 days immediately upon their enrollment.

11 So that just really speaks to the importance of  
12 these programs, but as of June 30, that warm handoff  
13 to other--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank  
15 you.

16 MR. WARD: --jail programs was obviously stopped  
17 abruptly with the cutting of the programs. So you  
18 know, we can understand that the city faces tough  
19 financial choices. But we also know that as a city,  
20 we must take the long view about how to best enhance  
21 our collective safety and well-being, and we must  
22 always guard against selling, you know, exacerbating  
23 existing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

24 So we thank you Chair for holding this hearing.  
25 And we certainly look forward to making sure that we

2 partner with all of our organizational partners to  
3 make sure that people are receiving what they need.  
4 So thank you.

5 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we'll hear from Megan  
6 French-Marcelin.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin, Megan,

8 MS. FRENCH-MARCELIN: Thank you so much. And I'm  
9 going to be very short because I am currently holed  
10 up in a coffee shop after the flooding took-- took  
11 the electricity and power out of my house.

12 I want to just thank the Chairwoman and  
13 Councilmember Restler for their very pointed comments  
14 and questions to the Commissioner of DOP. I have  
15 seen I-- I have sort of witnessed these series of  
16 cuts the cuts from DOC to providers to the DOP cuts  
17 as a sign of what's to come. We see these cuts to  
18 evidence-based community-led programs as a real  
19 return to the draconian law and order of New York,  
20 under Giuliani in the 1990s, that didn't serve us.  
21 And it's not going to serve us now. In fact, it's  
22 going to further entrench existing inequalities in a  
23 way that will-- that-- I'm going to keep it really  
24 short, because I can barely hear myself.

2 But these programs have been instrumental for our  
3 young people. And I think I found it particularly  
4 upsetting to hear about a marketing campaign that is  
5 going to cost, I imagine, millions of dollars when  
6 you're cutting a \$3 million program that was actually  
7 serving our youth. I'm going to cut it there,  
8 because I can't hear. But thank you so much for your  
9 comments, and I urge the City Council to take a more  
10 proactive stance on supporting these programs  
11 financially and restoring our systems to a place  
12 where we're doing holistic care.

13 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we'll call the folks  
14 who are in person here today. Kingsley Rowe, Zakya  
15 Warkeno, Andy Collado, Arnell Jackson, Janelle  
16 Farris, and Hubert Lila.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: And while you all are  
18 getting settled, I just want to call on Councilmember  
19 Alexa Avilés. I know she wanted to make a statement  
20 and say something, we can unmute the Councilmember.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much Chair.  
22 Can you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yes, we can.

24 COUNCILMEMBER AVILÉS: Yes, thank you. I,  
25 unfortunately, in Brooklyn in my district and I wish

2 everyone's districts and everyone stay safe during  
3 these rains.

4       You know, I have to say for the record, I find  
5 the testimony today from the Commissioner of  
6 Probation, quite frankly, appalling. We've had  
7 conversations-- it is clear that there was no  
8 evaluation, there was no corrective action, there was  
9 poor communication on behalf of the Department of  
10 Probation to the providers.

11       When the commissioner notes, "no data," in fact,  
12 what she also failed to make clear is that the  
13 providers provided monthly deliverables, quarterly  
14 goals reporting over this entire year period. There  
15 are stories upon stories of true success of young  
16 people finding their ways, being supported. And  
17 quite frankly, for \$150,000 per site, this program  
18 has delivered clearly on what we are trying to do.

19       And so I want to understand that what is-- What  
20 I need to say here is what is clear is that the  
21 failure is on the behalf of the Department of  
22 Probation. And I am deeply, deeply concerned, as  
23 noted by Councilmember Restler that the Department is  
24 regressing to its darker days, have a punitive

2 agency, of an agency that looks like the police  
3 department.

4       So unfortunately, what we are seeing here, there  
5 has not been a clear justification or rationale for  
6 the abrupt cancelling of these contracts. And in  
7 fact, even the notion that these young people were  
8 referred to other programs, are we also noting that  
9 those programs were given adequate funding to absorb  
10 a whole new cadre of young people? Or are we  
11 expecting programs to continue to service young  
12 people with less and less resources? So I am deeply,  
13 deeply disturbed by the way things are going and how  
14 this contract was handled.

15       And I just need to say lastly, Commissioner, if  
16 this is an example of the type of partnership that  
17 you will purport with providers, we're going to-- we  
18 are very concerned by that. The message that you're  
19 sending to providers is that there are no protocols,  
20 there is no communication, and defunding can happen  
21 at any time, at any whim, with no clear indicating  
22 why. And this is not the way we need to work with  
23 our providers for our young people. They are worth  
24 every single cent. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you, Councilmember.

3 As-- As we heard, I know many of you are going to  
4 talk to us about how the numbers are there.

5 Deliverables are always required. I know, I've been  
6 on that end. And so with that, I would love to start  
7 with whoever's ready to go first. And thank you,  
8 Councilmember.

9 MR. ROWE: Hello. So, thank you Councilwoman  
10 Rivera. Thank you for inviting me to talk at this--  
11 this committee hearing. My name is Kingsley Rowe.  
12 I'm a Senior Forensic Reentry Social Worker with the  
13 New York County Defender Services, which is based in  
14 Manhattan. My job is to support clients returning  
15 from Rikers, and by providing social services and  
16 reintegration back into the community.

17 I submitted a lengthy testimony which I gave to  
18 the Sergeant At Arms. But I'd like to take my two  
19 minutes to go through a few-- a few things.

20 First, I was at Rikers yesterday. And it's  
21 always a mess. I spent four hours waiting to see one  
22 client yesterday. And it-- Normally it's always this  
23 way. So it's very hard to see clients and-- and see  
24 people because the length of time it takes to see  
25 people.



2       Regarding-- Regarding the next important thing is  
3 housing, housing, housing. No one can expect to be  
4 successful in community without housing. I speak for  
5 myself. I was incarcerated for 10 years. When I  
6 came home, it was only because my father had a home  
7 base for me to-- to launch from, that I was able to  
8 do the things that I needed to do in society, which  
9 would mean going to NYU, getting my undergraduate  
10 degree, and getting my master's degree from NYU. But  
11 I wouldn't have been able to do any of that had not  
12 had housing.

13       During the pandemic MOCJ operated successful  
14 reentry hotels. There were still a few beds open and  
15 operated by Housing Works, but that isn't nearly  
16 enough.

17       I've attached the attached details that  
18 demonstrate the successes of these programs, with--  
19 with my written testimony, but I cannot say enough  
20 good things about them, how they literally save  
21 people's lives.

22       I don't know one can imagine you know, coming out  
23 of jail and having no place to go. A shelter isn't a  
24 isn't stable place to live. A shelter isn't, you  
25 know, isn't going to give them the foundation that

2 they need, to reintegrate with their families, to be  
3 successful, or to get jobs. I heard that-- I heard  
4 the Commissioner of Probation say that she-- she  
5 wants them to buy houses, and she wants them to you  
6 know, to be set. But if you're taking away all the  
7 tools that one needs to be successful, how are they  
8 going to be? It's like some someone wanting you to  
9 put on boots-- you know, pull up your bootstraps, but  
10 you don't have any boots to put on, you know, you  
11 don't have any to pull up.

12 Also, with regard to the phones. I saw the  
13 phone-- I was at the trailer yesterday. I saw the  
14 phones. But it was empty. It was empty. And the  
15 clients that I speak to at Riker's, my clients. I  
16 asked them about the trailer, and no one knows  
17 anything about the trailer. No one. They have these  
18 resources there. They have no-- I believe two  
19 caseworkers and one [inaudible] worker but the place  
20 is empty.

21 And so I was trying to figure out, like, how are  
22 they sort of letting the clients know, letting these  
23 individuals who are incarcerated know about the  
24 services that they have? And, I mean it's there, but  
25 no one is partaking of them.

2           Regarding phones. So, see I never heard MOCJ  
3 talk about phones, and they have given them out to,  
4 okay, they said 100 people. In order to get a phone  
5 you have to be SMI, which means you have to you know  
6 have a mental and also sometimes diagnosed by DOC.  
7 You have to be older than 60, and you must belong--  
8 you are you must belong to a protected class or  
9 transgendered. But that leaves a swath of people who  
10 don't have phones, or with means to communicate.

11           I understand the reasoning behind getting--  
12 getting phones to people who are-- have mental  
13 illness or getting phones to people who like or are  
14 indigent. But the majority of people are not-- not  
15 able to take advantage of the phones-- the phones  
16 that they have. So that sort of needs to be an  
17 expansion of the-- what qualifies one to have a  
18 phone.

19           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Well, we do-- I do have your  
20 testimony as well, here.

21           MR. ROWE: Yeah.

22           CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: So not only do I see your  
23 recommendations in terms of legislation and things  
24 that we should do, including reinstating the  
25 contracts that were lost, which I think many of us

2 are in full agreement with, I do appreciate the  
3 numbers that you also included here, and your  
4 testimony. So thank you for that.

5 MR. ROWE: Also, there's-- there's a lot of  
6 programs that I know, you spoke to them about the  
7 programs in the jails. And I have I have-- I have,  
8 like a program like college way, have significant  
9 issues, trying to reach clients in Rikers. It is  
10 like-- You know, it is this very difficult to engage  
11 with anyone there, just from the standpoint of the  
12 officers there, the staff there. Just, there seems  
13 to be a real disconnect between the people who come  
14 to help there and the people who are manning the  
15 jail.

16 So anyway, I guess that-- that you can say--  
17 anyway, you can sort of redefine what that  
18 relationship is. Because I think in terms of-- I  
19 just think is more-- more punishment.

20 You know, you talk that you talk to people in  
21 Rikers, and-- and they say, "Oh, these people are,  
22 you know, criminals, and these people don't deserve  
23 anything." And this is the prevailing culture within  
24 Rikers. You know, how can someone get well, how  
25 could someone, you know, progress, if everything

2 around-- everyone around them is saying that "You are  
3 nothing. You are-- You know, you deserve to be where  
4 you are." You know, making it difficult for people  
5 to get services. Like, I have clients who say, I'm  
6 trying to get to-- I'm trying to get to the program,  
7 but no one is calling me on my block. No one won't  
8 allow me to go there. You know, the tablets. You  
9 know, I just hear about this, the tablets. I have  
10 clients who say they're unable to get tablets, you  
11 know, they're unable to use them in appropriate ways.

12 So, you know, I would hope that you would take  
13 Department of Probation, take Rikers, take these  
14 people to task, for, you know, for the services that  
15 they're providing or the platform they're providing,  
16 the services to people who are incarcerated.

17 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you.

18 MR. ROWE: Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very much. And  
20 thank you for you know, sharing your own experience  
21 and how you brought that in. That don't-- thank you.

22 Is this working. Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yes, it is. Just can we  
24 move a little closer?

2 MS. FARRIS: Thank you. Good afternoon, and  
3 thank you for having this hearing. I know you're not  
4 responsible for the rain. My name is Janelle Ferris.  
5 I'm the Executive Director of Brooklyn Community  
6 Services. It's an organization that fosters the edu-  
7 - educational success of children, the leadership,  
8 development of youth, and the employment and housing  
9 stability of adults in Brooklyn.

10 I'm here to testify in support of work plus  
11 programs. They are the target of the Department of  
12 Probation for the next programs to be cut.

13 At BCS we operate a work plus program in East New  
14 York, a community that's been disproportionately  
15 impacted by systemic poverty, violence, and  
16 disinvestment. Through this program, we connect  
17 youth who have been involved in street violence,  
18 incarceration, or have dropped out of school and have  
19 limited educational and work skills. We connect them  
20 to counseling, workforce training, and individualized  
21 support. The BCS Work Plus helps you to achieve  
22 stability for themselves and their families, to make  
23 better decisions, and to become contributing members  
24 of their community.

2 In January 2022, the Adams Administration  
3 released a blueprint for community safety, which  
4 outlined a roadmap to strategize, to reduce gun  
5 violence throughout the city of New York. The  
6 blueprint targets communities such as East New York  
7 where opportunities, skills, training, they're all  
8 needed for young New Yorkers who are justice  
9 involved. The Works Plus Program is a worthy  
10 component of the Mayor's plan.

11 At BCS, we have a cohort of 34 participants who  
12 are engaged for a year in our program. We provide  
13 them with case management, education, workforce  
14 training, as well as referrals to mental health  
15 programs and other services. Since 2020, nearly 100  
16 people have received our support and earn  
17 certification and credentials for upwardly mobile  
18 employment. We're proud of people like Tahir Dukes.  
19 Tahir was referred to our program by another  
20 graduate, and he entered Work Plus and earn several  
21 OSHA certificates and is now earning a living wage  
22 working in construction and building maintenance.  
23 Eliminating Work Plus will take opportunities like  
24 this from young people like Tahir, programs that can

2 put them onto a pathway for success and self-  
3 actualization.

4 The Department-- The Department of Probation's  
5 mission is to hold people on probation accountable,  
6 and give them opportunities to forge new pathways so  
7 they can move out and stay out of the justice system.  
8 Ending these programs is counterintuitive. And the  
9 Department of Probation owes it to the City of New  
10 York, owes it to the Administration that says it is  
11 committed to reducing gun violence, and its own  
12 studies support the programs that they are now  
13 looking to cut.

14 So, I thank you for listening and having this  
15 hearing and for supporting programs such as this.

16 MR. LILA: Good afternoon, Chair Rivera. My name  
17 is Hubert Lila. I'm a Program Director at Brooklyn  
18 Community Services and I supervise the East New York  
19 Department of Probation Work Plus program. We  
20 service 34 at-risk individuals a year from the East  
21 New York section of Brooklyn, as you know, one of the  
22 highest poverty and housing insecure sections of New  
23 York City.

24 Work Plus assists young people between the ages  
25 of 16 and 30 with professional development,



2 vocational training, employment assistance, as well  
3 as conflict resolution. But more importantly, we  
4 instill hope and motivation into our young adults.

5 Yes, we can quantify how many of our clients are  
6 under credential training, or earned a GED, or  
7 secured employment. And I know metrics are important  
8 to this body. But how do we quantify self-esteem,  
9 self-dignity, and self-pride? We can't physically  
10 measure these variables. But still, we have many  
11 clients' testimonies that demonstrate transformation,  
12 emotional growth, and maturity since participating in  
13 Work Plus.

14 They can't be here today, so I would like to  
15 amplify some of the voices. As my colleague stated,  
16 Tahir Dukes: "Work Plus didn't only help me acquire  
17 my OSHA certification and internship, it helped me  
18 realize that there's more to life than just my block.  
19 That the way things are is not the way things have to  
20 be. And if I could change my way of thinking and my  
21 perception, then I could change my reality." Eddie  
22 B.: "Work Plus taught me that not every problem has  
23 to be fixed with a hammer, and that the more tools I  
24 have in my toolbox, meaning life skills, then the  
25 better I will be at resolving issues and managing

2 crisis in my life. Today, I'm confident that I could  
3 deescalate negative situations in my life, and I  
4 don't have to resort to violence to solve any  
5 problems." William S. "I wanted to do better, and  
6 knew I had to choose a better way to feed my family.  
7 But I didn't know where to start, and traditional  
8 school wasn't for me. But Work Plus allowed me to  
9 earn a certified vocational training, help me with my  
10 resume, and to secure job in construction. I no  
11 longer have to hustle to support my family. And most  
12 importantly, I'm becoming the man my kids can be  
13 proud to call dad."

14       These are just a few testimonies from the clients  
15 we serve. Our unique combination of college-educated  
16 and credible messenger staff allows us to meet  
17 clients where they are, work with them, and guide  
18 them where they need to be. There isn't a one-size-  
19 fits-all, and each client is different and unique.  
20 So our approach is different as well. We don't tell  
21 clients what they have to do. We ask them what they  
22 want to do and where they want to be a year from now,  
23 and we help them get there. If we lose Work Plus,  
24 then we lose hope for a better East New York. The  
25 only difference between young people in East New

2 York, as opposed to young individuals in Brooklyn  
3 Heights is not the ability, but their access to  
4 opportunity, and Work Plus brings that accessibility  
5 to East New York.

6 I commend Commissioner Holmes earlier for  
7 standing on the record, that she will not close any  
8 other DOP program, but enhance them. I hope she  
9 remains true to that statement.

10 Thank you so much for your time Commissioner and  
11 Chair Rivera.

12 Good morning. Thank you, Chair Rivera and  
13 committee members for holding this hearing and for  
14 allowing us the opportunity to testify.

15 My name is Andy Collado. I'm the Director of  
16 Economic Empowerment Programs at Riseboro Community  
17 Partnership, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit I am proud to  
18 work for and represent. I manage and guide the  
19 financial coaching and workforce development programs  
20 for our Empowerment Division. Part of those  
21 responsibilities consists of our two youth-focused  
22 Department or Probations funded programs: Works Plus  
23 and Next Steps.

24 Today, I'm here to testify against the cutting of  
25 funds for Next Steps programs, and advocate for our

2 alumni and current participants, as well as the  
3 dedicated staff that have made a difference in their  
4 lives.

5       Since 2017, we've had 100 alumni and current  
6 participants, all from NYCHA housing in Brownsville,  
7 come to us as open minds, looking for mentorship and  
8 guidance as they navigate the muddy waters  
9 surrounding their dreams, dreams that could one day  
10 lead them out of-- lead them out of poverty. But  
11 even those who escaped poverty are highly likely to  
12 return to that same level within only a few years.  
13 And the longer they have been in poverty, the higher  
14 rate of them returning to it. And that's according  
15 to the Center of Poverty Research at UC Davis, but  
16 it's something we see all the time.

17       The biggest contribution to crime is poverty  
18 itself. So how do we help our youth? The very  
19 future of this city, to avoid crime, to find a way  
20 out of poverty and to stay there, and then also to  
21 spread those lessons to their communities, friends  
22 and family?

23       Well, the DOP had the right idea. The Department  
24 of Probations had a successful plan to helping the  
25 youth in high-crime public housing hotspots

2 successfully avoid criminal justice involvement and  
3 help those who have-- who have had the involvement  
4 avoid it going forward. That plan was Next Steps,  
5 until it wasn't.

6 With less than five days' notice, we were told  
7 that the program will end. That isn't just pulling  
8 the rug out from under these aspiring and inspiring  
9 future contributing positive members of our great  
10 city. That was pulling it so hard that we all ended  
11 up with blacks and blues as our heads and jaws hit  
12 the floor.

13 When we met with Commissioner Holmes, we were  
14 told our program was redundant, without telling us  
15 who was making us redundant in our neighborhoods, an  
16 answer we're still waiting for.

17 We were told the data didn't show enough impact.  
18 But never-- were never given an opportunity to  
19 provide the data that DOP was looking for. When  
20 there are decisions made that impact so many at-risk  
21 youth, you can't judge us on data we would never  
22 asked for or even told you we're looking for.

23 She mentioned earlier about the systems. So,  
24 it's very similar to me as if you were to get a whole

2 bunch of gold ore, and instead of finding the ways to  
3 test if it's actual gold, you decide to throw it out.

4 We provided everything that we were asked for in  
5 our monthly reports. The answer to what impact they  
6 were looking for in their decision has still not been  
7 answered, and multiple times today, she could not  
8 give a clear answer to what specifically she was  
9 looking for.

10 We were dismissed as a casualty of war, and I'm  
11 seriously concerned that all we're doing is creating  
12 more combatants and enemies for the war on crime.  
13 Because poverty and lack of resources, like cutting  
14 the wildly successful credible messenger program  
15 known as Next Steps, will only lead to more crime in  
16 our neighborhoods.

17 When we took participants to Harvard for tour  
18 with a graduate from their own neighborhood that was  
19 increasing opportunity and possibility. When we help  
20 an alum who got into Oberlin College and needed help  
21 adjusting to a completely different environment,  
22 needed help with the skills needed to stay there, it  
23 was what she learned in that program that not only  
24 helped her to thrive, but to be able to reach out to

2 us when she felt something was above her capacity.  
3 We were the lifeline.

4 When our-- When your friends die through gun  
5 violence, it was the mentor sitting with the  
6 participants and helping them process their emotions  
7 and build the resilience and foresight to push past  
8 traumatic experiences to figure out their next steps.

9 Committee, the program is done as of last Friday.  
10 I implore you to help us advocate and support these  
11 youth, to find ways to bring it back, and frankly to  
12 expand it. Some of us had enough funding to continue  
13 helping the participants for a bit longer, but that  
14 help won't see the new year.

15 This was a program that worked, that had engaged  
16 staff and engaged participants, that was making a  
17 difference-- that was making a difference. What  
18 message are we sending to the youth that needed us  
19 the most, that have worked so hard to get where they  
20 are, changing their behaviors, their perspectives,  
21 their possibilities, by treating them like an  
22 ambiguous line item in the future of our city?

23 Thank you for the opportunity to testify here  
24 today, Committee, and I hope you understand in my  
25 testimony the urgency of this issue.

2 I wish you all a blessed day and hope that you  
3 can help us create more blessed days for our  
4 communities as well.

5 Can you hear me?

6 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Yes, we can.

7 MR. JACKSON: Okay. Thank you, first of all, for  
8 hearing us and giving us an opportunity to speak to  
9 the decision by the Department of Probation to  
10 abruptly terminate the Next Steps program. My name  
11 is Arnell Jackson, and I was the Program Manager for  
12 the Next Steps at the Polo Grounds Housing Complex in  
13 Harlem.

14 I've been a part of the program since its  
15 inception, since 2014. And to be honest with you, I  
16 was shocked at the way that the program ended without  
17 any proper notice, in effect, basically, giving us  
18 less than a week to provide closure for these young  
19 people, search for viable resources, and to look for  
20 employment for other credible messengers, who have a  
21 hard time getting employment.

22 One of the key principles of our program, and  
23 what we stress to our participants, was to make sure  
24 that there was effective communication. And we go  
25 out of our way to make sure that our young people had



2 a voice and were able to have a say in what goes on  
3 in their lives.

4 So, I'm sure you can understand how difficult  
5 that was, when we had to explain to them that in this  
6 situation, you actually don't have a say in what goes  
7 on in your life and your immediate future.

8 Officer-- Commissioner Holmes often said that it  
9 was redundant. But what made Next Steps different  
10 was the fact that they didn't have to be on probation  
11 to attend. It allowed them to become part of  
12 something without being involved in the system, which  
13 was a blessing and of course. It was harder to get  
14 them to stay, because there was no agency saying, you  
15 know, "you have to be here." They were here because  
16 they wanted to be there. You know, an ounce of  
17 prevention.

18 We're all aware of what it takes and what it  
19 costs to feed and, you know, house an inmate for a  
20 year. And there's still no conclusive evidence that  
21 you know, that someone actually gets better by using  
22 these methods. So, I mean, there's no opportunity to  
23 gain anything when you are locked up. When you are  
24 out, there are more opportunities and it's better to  
25 try to find something before it happens.

2 In our Zoom with Commissioner Holmes, she  
3 mentioned that she saw that we were taking the young  
4 people to the movies. And I would argue that if you  
5 have a young person who's in the movies for two  
6 hours, it takes them away from the neighborhood. So  
7 that's better than being influenced negatively for  
8 two hours.

9 And as far as evidence, where she continually  
10 said there is no evidence, we did a two-part workshop  
11 after we took them to the movies to see Black Panther  
12 (this was all sent to them)-- Black Panther and this  
13 was put out by Harvard Graduate School of Education.  
14 So this is what we used to talk to our young people  
15 about the movie, and the direct correlation between  
16 reading comic books and literacy, which she talked  
17 about, literacy.

18 So we were able to talk about race, we were able  
19 to talk about gender, we talked about colonialism.  
20 We were able to address all of those things.

21 Another thing that we really focused on was  
22 identification, because our kids were getting locked  
23 up because they had no ID. So we made sure we got ID  
24 for everybody. So much so that we ended up getting  
25 passports. And here are the pictures that were sent

1 with them-- to them, of our young people. We got six  
2 and 2022. This was sent to them. Once we got the  
3 passports, we got together (because we're part of a  
4 larger agency part of Children's Village), and we  
5 were able to get funding, and we took our young  
6 people on trips. This past August, we went to  
7 Baltimore, and here is the packet. Last year, we  
8 went to Philadelphia. We stayed in Baltimore, and we  
9 went to Morgan State. We got a tour of Morgan State  
10 University. We went to Philadelphia in 2022.

12 Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, we were able to  
13 get some funding from Children's Village. So we took  
14 the passports and we took our people to Toronto,  
15 Canada twice, both years. What we did there, we were  
16 able to help them with the rate of exchange. They  
17 got to see people of color that lived outside the  
18 United States. They got an immense amount of new and  
19 different things. And my last point-- I know I'm  
20 over time, I'm sorry. Our mentors, who were from the  
21 streets, they saw what the kids needed. So, we put  
22 together an effective resume writing course, so that  
23 they could learn interview skills and resume writing.  
24 That's this packet. We also did around prom time,  
25 because our kids wanted to go to prom, and they all

2 wanted to go and get the \$99 suits, and they were all  
3 black, and all red. We did a grooming workshop where  
4 we got people from the neighborhood to come in and  
5 teach our people how to tie ties, and how to put  
6 everything together.

7       And the last point was: In our community, we  
8 started talking about collective economics. So  
9 instead of providing-- getting food from Domino's  
10 Pizza over and over, we started going to the black-  
11 and-brown-owned businesses and the Spanish-owned  
12 businesses. And we got an opportunity to have them  
13 speak to the entrepreneurs. And here's a list of  
14 that.

15       So all of these things were given to them. So as  
16 far as proof and evidence, I'm not sure what other  
17 evidence they're looking for. But I understand that  
18 I'm over time, and I just wanted to thank you for the  
19 opportunity to fight for our young people.

20       CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Absolutely. Thank you. No,  
21 I think movies are art. Just plain and simple. And  
22 everything else is certainly an experience that could  
23 change any-- anyone's path in any given moment. So--  
24 So thank you for going into that. I think that's  
25 important. And it's sad to hear that that wasn't

2 acknowledged as meaningful enough to preserve. Thank  
3 you.

4 Hello, good afternoon. My name is Zakya Warkeno.  
5 I'm a Policy Advocate and Social Worker at the Bronx  
6 Defenders. Advocates in our office were outraged  
7 when we heard that the Department of Corrections was  
8 getting rid of the \$17 million budget for community-  
9 based programs, and making themselves the program  
10 providers. Prior to Bronx Defenders, I was a  
11 greenhouse instructor in the horticulture program at  
12 Rikers, and I got to see participants get excited  
13 about experiential learning.

14 There is a lot of intentionality and  
15 thoughtfulness that goes into creating lesson plans  
16 that will be meaningful-- that will meaningfully  
17 engage participants, and this will be lost on DOC.

18 A client being held in RESH, the Enhanced  
19 Supervision Housing unit located behind the Rose M.  
20 Singer Center, described programming as being chained  
21 to a desk and given a packet to work through by  
22 themselves with no further engagement with the  
23 material. This is a preview of what's to come if DOC  
24 is allowed to be program providers. DOC as the  
25 program provider will be a conflict of interest,

2 because as an institution, they have no investment in  
3 helping incarcerated folks get out of jail. A  
4 detained-- A detainee's program involvement is an  
5 advocacy tool for negotiating with judges and  
6 Assistant District Attorneys for better case  
7 outcomes.

8       When I first came to Bronx Defenders a social  
9 worker shared with me a mitigation report, or also  
10 called a pre-plea investigation report, or called  
11 PPI. And-- And she shared that with me as an example  
12 of how to tell someone's story to a district  
13 attorney. And to my surprise, that report was about  
14 one of my former students from the therapeutic  
15 horticulture program. And that report highlighted  
16 their participation in the program as a vehicle for  
17 changing the course of their life.

18       And before I wrap, we urge City Council to pass  
19 two very important bills, one of them being Intro  
20 549, sponsored by the Public Advocate, which will end  
21 solitary confinement in New York city jails and have  
22 a more humane form of separation. And the other  
23 being Intro 1203-2023, Councilmember Riley's bill  
24 which would require DOC to provide discharge papers,

2 or jail release papers to everyone leaving their  
3 custody. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you. Thank you to all  
5 of you for your testimony and for your work. Thank  
6 you very much.

7 COUNSEL: And thanks again to this panel. If  
8 there's anybody present who does wish to testify in  
9 person, please see the sergeant at arms in the back  
10 to fill out a slip. But for now we're going to move  
11 to panelists who are joining us via Zoom. And I'll  
12 just name off the first three so everybody could be  
13 prepared. But we'll-- we'll start with Veronica  
14 Vela, then Rebecca Kinsella, and then LuAnne  
15 Blaauboer. We will start with Veronica.

16 MS. VELA: Hello. I'm with the Prisoners' Rights  
17 Project of the Legal Aid Society. The Legal Aid  
18 Society continues to be concerned that DOC's decision  
19 to cut the funding for programming by outside  
20 providers will further destabilize the city jails.  
21 Not only is it a bedrock of correctional practice  
22 that programming decreases violence, but we knew that  
23 this department has neither the culture nor the  
24 competence to provide these programs itself.

2 DOC was already failing to meet basic obligations  
3 to people in its custody. The ongoing staff  
4 mismanagement resulted in thousands of people being  
5 denied access to medical services every month. The  
6 housing areas are without staff on post, including a  
7 fire safety watch, which is critically important in  
8 areas without adequate fire alarm systems, and  
9 persons in custody are going days without receiving  
10 recreation, medication, and even meals.

11 Now despite what we heard today, we know many of  
12 our clients are not receiving any programming. If  
13 DOC cannot provide staff to deliver life-sustaining  
14 services like medication and meals, it most certainly  
15 cannot be trusted to develop, implement, and manage  
16 crucial jail programs. These cuts have eliminated  
17 longstanding successful programs that provided direct  
18 support to people on their housing areas. The  
19 Inexplicable decision to do this at a time when the  
20 department desperately needs tools to improve  
21 conditions is sadly consistent with a department  
22 preoccupied with eliminating all transparency.

23 Consider that in 2022 when deaths in custody,  
24 we're greater than any other year in two decades, the  
25 department's response was to stop notifying the media



2 when a person dies in custody. The Board of  
3 Correction recently had to sue the department access  
4 to video from within Rikers after DOC abruptly  
5 withdrew it, and Commissioner Molina has urged the  
6 federal monitor to not release damning reports,  
7 because he was afraid they would cause great harm to  
8 the department.

9 The department is trying to avoid scrutiny by  
10 hiding its dysfunction from outside eyes. DOC is  
11 less concerned with the harm suffered by people in  
12 custody than it is with the objects they create. DOC  
13 should not continue to evade accountability. The  
14 Council should demand that DOC publish an ongoing  
15 updated list of programs, providers, and enrollment.  
16 And because DOC would rather withhold complete and  
17 accurate information than accept accountability, the  
18 Council must independently verify any data to be  
19 accurate, and that the programming needs of people in  
20 custody are being met.

21 In a jail that has exorbitant use of force and  
22 violence rates and cannot manage basic jail functions  
23 like access to medical care, there are many reasons  
24 why programs provided by outside professional  
25 providers should be expanded, not eliminated.

2 And finally, every person with the means to  
3 reduce the population of the city jails must exercise  
4 that power and continue to push until this population  
5 is low enough that even DOC can meet the basic human  
6 needs of those in the system.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 MS. VELA: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you so much. And I  
10 want to apologize to Mr. Rodriguez. I would like to  
11 call on-- on you to testify now if that's okay.

12 Thank you for your testimony, Veronica.

13 MR. RODRIQUEZ: How you doing? My name is Ahmed  
14 Rodriguez. I am the Director for Community Media  
15 Services in Queensbridge, which is one of the  
16 lousing, which is the largest housing complex in the  
17 country. Speaking on behalf of the Next Steps  
18 program, which has just been terminated by the-- by  
19 the Probation Department, there are a lot of concerns  
20 here. I recently went on New York 1, and I  
21 interviewed, and they were asking about the program,  
22 and we were talking about it, and the response from  
23 the Department of Probation, the Commissioner was  
24 that the-- the program could be put off into  
25 different programs.

2 Now you've heard a lot of testimony from people  
3 here about-- and it's clear that this Council is a  
4 true champion for justice for our young people. So I  
5 commend all the work that you guys do. But there was  
6 a lot of inaccurate information shared, you know,  
7 mentioning-- In her thing, she said, "Well, it's \$2.5  
8 million that we're spending. We're not spending it  
9 on that anymore, we can redirect those funds." And  
10 the reality is that, you know, the programs that are  
11 existing, like Girls Talk, which is a great program.  
12 But if you look at it as gender specific, it only  
13 speaks to a particular age group 13 to 17. And it's  
14 only for girls, our program starts with 16 to 24 year  
15 olds. So that is truly a loss right there. So our  
16 young men who are involved in a lot of at-risk  
17 behavior are not able to do that. She mentioned Blue  
18 Chips, another great program. However, the  
19 assumption is that all of our young people want to be  
20 athletes. And that's not the case. Some of them  
21 want to be judges, some of them want to be lawyers,  
22 some of them want to be councilmen, some of them want  
23 to be teachers, some of them want to be painters.  
24 They want to be a host of different things. And  
25 they're not eligible to be in that program.

2 She mentioned Arches. Arches is another great  
3 program for young people who are on probation. The  
4 unique thing about Next Steps is that we are about  
5 young people who are on probation and who are not.  
6 So we are preventative.

7 The idea is not to bring people to probation. I  
8 don't want young people on probation, we want to try  
9 to stop them from getting there. So having a program  
10 like Next Steps is imperative because we are also  
11 embedded in all of the NYCHA complexes, so they don't  
12 have to leave. We're trying to take the guns out of  
13 these young people's hands. And we host-- We're  
14 cooking with them. We're taking them on trips. I  
15 heard about her being a little disturbed, I guess,  
16 with the movie trip. I took my young people to Great  
17 Adventure. And while she doesn't think that that may  
18 be a good trip, we did it in collaboration with the  
19 NYPD out of Queensbridge Space Nine. They actually  
20 rented-- they actually got one of their vehicles,  
21 crossed state lines with us (which they had to get  
22 clearance for), and brought our young people to Great  
23 Adventure because they had never experienced that.  
24 They'd never been there. Some of our young people  
25 just do not leave those communities. I've taken them

2 on trips. We watch-- We watch films like The Diary  
3 of Anne Frank, and then we go visit the Holocaust  
4 Jewish Museum, because in their minds, they only see  
5 the discrimination against them and no one else.

6 I know I'm over time. We've done a host of  
7 different trips with them, culturally-based trips. I  
8 think it's imperative that people understand that we  
9 need this program for these young people. And I'm a  
10 little-- again, a little concerned about the thing  
11 about the number of \$2.1. First of all, it costs  
12 \$560,000 to keep a person incarcerated. So imagine  
13 if we save four of them, which we-- we have already  
14 done, we've already hit on mark. So we're saving  
15 money by investing in this program. If anything,  
16 there should have been more money put into these  
17 programs.

18 So I just ask that, that you look very closely at  
19 how the direction they're moving in, and what it is  
20 they're going to plan to do it. Because I heard no  
21 real plan of action. And one of the things she--  
22 they didn't get to tell you was that when he ended  
23 the program, what they did was they asked us, after  
24 they terminated the program, they didn't offer any  
25 funding, they just said, "On August 31st, we're not

2 giving you guys any money, but we'll give you three  
3 extra weeks to look for stuff." We could have done  
4 that on our own. So, we weren't able to feed kids,  
5 we weren't able to give kids Metro cards, we weren't  
6 able to do the things that we normally do to help  
7 them move about the way they need to move about in a  
8 productive manner. So, you know-- and the fact that  
9 she left. If you were truly concerned about what was  
10 going on here, you would have stayed to hear with all  
11 the providers, but she walked right out because she  
12 was no longer obligated to be here. So that tells  
13 you the direction that probation is going.

14 And so please, please, I urge you to really  
15 monitor. We cannot have people in charge of stuff  
16 that can wake up one morning and just feel like they  
17 don't have to do anything. They can just cancel  
18 this, cancel this, and it's okay. It's not okay.

19 Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: Thank you very much. Thank  
21 you for waiting. Thank you for all that you do.

22 COUNSEL: Next-- excuse me. Next we'll go to  
23 Rebecca Kinsella.

24 Rebecca, you may begin.

2 MS. KINSELLA: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Rebecca Kinsella, and I'm an Associate Director of  
4 Social Work in the Criminal Defense Practice at  
5 Brooklyn Defender Services.

6 Thank you to the committee and Chair Rivera for  
7 holding this important hearing today.

8 In May our office appeared before this committee  
9 to express our strong opposition to the Mayor's  
10 proposed budget cuts to community-based agencies  
11 providing services in the city jails. We are now  
12 seeing the impact we feared. I visit people in  
13 custody in the city jails every week, and I can tell  
14 you that programs are critical to keep people  
15 healthy, safe, and motivated to keep fighting their  
16 cases.

17 Many of my clients are facing serious charges,  
18 which means they've been at Rikers for months, if not  
19 years waiting for their cases to move through the  
20 system. You know that Rikers is dangerous. You know  
21 that it is unsafe, that people are dying inside, that  
22 the buildings are deteriorating, that staff are at  
23 best exhausted and at worst horrifically abusive.  
24 People are isolated and after the cuts to funding  
25 there's increasingly nothing for people to do.

2 One person I work with is detained in the new  
3 enhanced supervision housing and Rose M. Singer. He  
4 receives what DOC calls programming while chained to  
5 a restraint desk. In his unit, DOC has been bringing  
6 half of the population out of their cells for  
7 programming at 5 a.m., where they remain locked to a  
8 desk until 9 a.m. During the majority of these  
9 hours, no programs are taking place. People are  
10 sitting chained to a desk while waiting hours for DOC  
11 program provider to arrive. So many choose not to  
12 participate at all.

13 Two young men that Brooklyn defenders represents  
14 reported that programs they had been actively  
15 participating in disappeared over the summer,  
16 programs such as OSHA, CPR, driving, welding, and  
17 digital literacy. Collectively, the two had  
18 completed more than seven certifications. They were  
19 both eager to participate in any other programming  
20 and achieve certifications, but none are currently  
21 available.

22 Another young person has been completing GED  
23 coursework and is very close to completing the  
24 program, but school in his unit has been  
25 discontinued. He told us that there are at least 10



2 other school-aged people on his unit who would like  
3 to participate, but they have not been allowed to go.

4 The decision by the Mayor in DOC to eliminate  
5 community-run programs was dangerously misguided and  
6 short sighted. And contrary to their claims here  
7 today, DOC has been unable to adequately replace the  
8 quantity and quality of the programs, leaving people  
9 with nothing to do in custody, day after day, week  
10 after week, month after month. This has a profoundly  
11 negative impact on people's mental and physical  
12 health and aggravates the chaotic environment of the  
13 jails.

14 Many of the programs community-based agencies  
15 offered allowed people to learn skills, receive  
16 education, and build support that may be useful when  
17 they are released for Rikers. These were reentry  
18 tools even if DOC resists labeling them as such. The  
19 Council must work to fully restore the funding for  
20 community-based reentry and jail based programming to  
21 ensure that incarcerated New Yorkers have access to  
22 the support they need to survive their time in jail  
23 and to successfully returned to the community.

24 Thank you all for your time.

25 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next LuAnne.

2 You may begin LuAnne.

3 MS. BLAAUBOER: Thank you and thank you Chair  
4 Rivera and Committee on Criminal Justice for the  
5 opportunity to testify today. My name is LuAnne  
6 Blaauboer, and I'm the Vice President of Vocational  
7 Programs at Good Shepherd Services. Good Shepherd  
8 has several contracts with DOP, including Next Steps,  
9 which was abruptly terminated on August 24th, and  
10 Works Plus, and others.

11 My testimony today is going to focus on the Works  
12 Plus Program which I oversee at Good shepherd, and  
13 which resembles Next Steps in terms of size and  
14 funding dollars. So, I'm very concerned about the  
15 future of these programs.

16 I'm here today to underscore the value of small  
17 community-specific programs that support vulnerable  
18 populations like justice involved or out-of-school  
19 and out-of-work youth. Our Works Plus Programs  
20 provide job and career readiness, and job access  
21 services to over 50 young adults living in the Bronx.  
22 Many who are referred to us by our Cure Violence  
23 Partner, Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence or BRAG.  
24 These programs are highly local, meaning that each  
25 program serves young people within a single precinct,

2 literally finding and meeting participants where  
3 they're at. These programs are also what I would  
4 call high touch, meaning that we serve young people  
5 in small settings, enabling us to provide intensive  
6 and individualized supports and services to each  
7 participant. And these features are important,  
8 because we're serving youth who are most at risk of  
9 falling through the cracks, including those who are  
10 disconnected from school or work, those whose lives  
11 have been disrupted by contact with the criminal  
12 justice system, and those who live in communities  
13 that are suffering from the long-term impacts of  
14 institutionalized racism.

15       If we want to move the needle on poverty, on  
16 recidivism, or on community violence then programs  
17 like works plus are a crucial part of the solution.  
18 We are a vital link in a system of opportunities  
19 because without us, those who need the resources the  
20 most, are in the most danger of being left behind.  
21 And when young people have no faith in the system,  
22 it's not realistic to think that they're going to go  
23 out of their way to connect with opportunities  
24 attached to that same system.

2 But we know their community. We know them we  
3 know their friends, and we know their families. We  
4 know their dreams. And honestly, those dreams don't  
5 always include being connected to a big cookie cutter  
6 offering like, like the CDL license which the  
7 commissioner touted.

8 It's their connection to our programs, to our  
9 staff that clear the way for their connection to  
10 jobs, careers, and futures. For our participants, we  
11 are bridge from what is to what comes next.

12 So I want to ask again, ask the Council to help  
13 us reinstate the Next Steps mentoring program--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time has  
15 expired.

16 MS. BLAAUBOER: and to help us [inaudible]  
17 programs funded by DOP that not only support youth  
18 across New York City who are on probation, but also  
19 prevent youth from ever touching the system in the  
20 first place.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNSEL: Thank you. The next three participants  
23 we will hear from on Zoom are Zachary Katznelson,  
24 Darren Mack, and Jennifer Parrish. We'll start with  
25 Zachary Katznelson.

2 Zachary, you may begin.

3 MR. KATZNELSON: Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm  
4 Zachary Katznelson. I'm the Executive Director of  
5 the Lippman Commission. Thanks Chair Rivera for  
6 holding this hearing and the chance to testify. I'm  
7 sorry, I couldn't make it in person today.

8 I also want to thank the prior speakers for their  
9 powerful testimony from the frontline perspective of  
10 these creative, impactful programs.

11 I want to bring a slightly different frontline  
12 perspective, which is actually that of correctional  
13 officers. I was at Rikers recently, and I spoke to a  
14 whole range of correction officers from line  
15 officers, to captains, to hire supervisors. And  
16 every single one of them lamented the programming  
17 cuts. Every single one. And it wasn't because I was  
18 actually asking them about the cuts specifically. I  
19 was asking them how they thought we could reduce  
20 violence in the jails. And they all wanted more  
21 programming, because not only do they see the  
22 benefits of building skills for when people are  
23 released coming home to all of our committees,  
24 including theirs. But they also said that huge  
25 numbers of people now, because of the program cuts,

2 are idle. They have nothing to do. And that  
3 idleness leads to frustration, that leads to short  
4 tempers, and that leads to violence. So maybe some  
5 money is being saved. But really the question is at  
6 what cost? And honestly, the open question as to how  
7 much money is actually being saved. Because with  
8 increased violence, it's not just about harm.  
9 Unfortunately, it's about increased medical care  
10 costs. It's about increased overtime, because  
11 officers have to cover for colleagues who've been  
12 hurt. It's increased legal payouts for people that  
13 have been injured.

14 And then as mentioned, they're the once-- once  
15 programming and services that have been lost, just  
16 thinking about how many people at Rikers have  
17 learning difficulties and how hard it is to absorb  
18 information for so many people in large group  
19 settings, let alone in large group settings and loud,  
20 often chaotic day rooms. It's just not functional.  
21 And those social workers that are filling some of  
22 that gap, what were their responsibilities before,  
23 that they've now had to give up in order to provide  
24 the services, which really don't seem to be properly

2 in their in their skill set or rubric? Or should be  
3 their responsibility?

4 Just thinking about what we can do moving  
5 forward? How do we-- How do we help this situation?  
6 You know, what if the Council were to consider  
7 legislation that if the department is not providing  
8 the five hours mandated services implemented  
9 programming every day with their departmental staff  
10 that they have to contract, right? And that  
11 contracting, the whole array of services should be  
12 private. So, we should-- Maybe the Council would  
13 mandate specific programming specific types of  
14 programming, both on a one-to-one and a group basis,  
15 and that programming could be under the auspices of  
16 DOC, or it could be under the auspices of MOCJ, as so  
17 many of the remaining reentry programs are. And, of  
18 course, the program-- the legislation could include  
19 reporting requirements. So, we actually know exactly  
20 what's being provided inside. And no matter what the  
21 commission would very much like to work with the  
22 council, and hopefully partner with the agency to try  
23 and find a way forward that actually works for  
24 everyone at a reasonable cost, but that really  
25 provides programming for people inside.

2 And finally, I just want to state our support for  
3 Councilmember Riley's legislation. It's a common-  
4 sense bill, and most welcome. Thanks so much for--  
5 for hearing me out. Thanks.

6 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, Darren Mack.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Darren, you may begin.

8 MR. MACK: Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair  
9 Rivera, and the Criminal Justice Committee members  
10 for holding this hearing today. My name is Darren  
11 Mack. I'm a Co-Director at Freedom Agenda, which is  
12 a grassroots member led organization dedicated to  
13 organizing people and communities directly impacted  
14 by incarceration to achieve decarceration and assist  
15 transformation. And, you know, Freedom Agenda  
16 commends the Council for convening this hearing on  
17 programming, which is central to meeting the needs of  
18 people in the Department of Corrections, and the  
19 Department of Probation's is custody. And I want to  
20 echo, you know, the call of all the organizations  
21 that provide those critical programs and services,  
22 you know, their call to restore the cuts that are  
23 serving people in DOC custody, you know, and our  
24 youth, in some of the most vulnerable and  
25 marginalized communities in our city.



2       You know, we all know that the Department of  
3 Corrections is in urgent need of correction, because  
4 it's clear that the DOC cannot correct itself. So I  
5 also wanted to state, you know, our support for  
6 Councilmember Riley's bill that will require, you  
7 know, DOC to provide discharge papers, so that people  
8 when they release. Because I'm thinking about-- This  
9 is important in so many ways, because I'm thinking  
10 about, you know, people returning to our communities  
11 after incarceration, such as myself, you know, who,  
12 when I was released from incarceration, I was on  
13 public assistance, and which had mandated  
14 programming. And if you miss some of that  
15 programming, you will be at risk of being cut off  
16 from public assistance. And, you know, those  
17 discharge papers because, you know, could confirm and  
18 validate, you know, I was discharged, I was  
19 incarcerated and discharged, and that process, you  
20 know, could be done more speedily to get back on.  
21 Because get it on public assistance is a very long  
22 and arduous process. It is a very, you know,  
23 strenuous process.

24       And the same for unhoused people in the shelter  
25 system. You know, when people in caught up

2 incarcerated, they lose their bed, and that time of  
3 incarceration is not counted for being unhoused. And  
4 unfortunately, these agencies are not-- not in  
5 coordination with one another, which is another  
6 problem in and of itself.

7       And lastly, I want to, you know, state, you know,  
8 Freedom Agenda supports and urges the Council, you  
9 know, to do the right thing, to do what they can, you  
10 know, right now to fundamentally to improve the  
11 conditions that people are, you know, experiencing in  
12 our jail system. Namely, passing Intro 549 which is  
13 the bill to [inaudible] climate in New York City  
14 jails. You know, this legislation. You know, it  
15 does show that people will have access to programs  
16 and-- and, you know, this abusive practice of  
17 solitary confinement, or restrictive housing, or  
18 whatever you want to call it in our city. And thank  
19 you so much for-- for listening and have a good day.

20       COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, Jennifer Parrish.  
21 And, sorry, just after Jennifer Parrish, we'll hear  
22 from the last four people that I believe are on-- on  
23 Zoom. That would be Julie Delfina, Brad Cauthen,  
24 Peleya Patterson, and Jessica Yager. But right now  
25 we'll go to Jennifer Parrish.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

3 MS. PARRISH: Good afternoon. Thank you for  
4 holding this hearing and for the opportunity to  
5 testify today. My name is Jennifer Parrish. I work  
6 at the Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project,  
7 and I'm a member of the Jail's Action Coalition and  
8 the Halt Solitary Campaign. The Mental Health  
9 Project represents the Brad H Class, which is  
10 everyone who receives mental health treatment in the  
11 city jails, which is now more than half of the  
12 population.

13 Currently, this Administration is moving in the  
14 opposite direction from where we need to go to create  
15 a fair criminal legal system and reduce the jail  
16 population. For many years, New York City had been  
17 moving away from mass incarceration. We made this  
18 progress through a number of initiatives, but a  
19 crucial one was preventative services in the  
20 community, and funding community providers who can  
21 intervene and create the-- address the underlying  
22 needs that prevent arrest and prevent incarceration.  
23 But instead of building on those successes and  
24 continuing to reduce the jail population, this  
25 Administration is defunding the very services that

2 have contributed to a decade's-long decrease in the  
3 use of incarceration. And it demonstrates that the  
4 demonstrate that the Administration would rather--  
5 would rather fun punishment and incarceration which  
6 are harmful to individuals and communities over  
7 things that make community safe and healthy.

8 The Administration's turned away from the  
9 emergency reentry hotel program which was established  
10 during the pandemic. This emergency housing resulted  
11 in many people being released and allowed them to  
12 participate in alternatives to incarceration. This  
13 housing was a safe way to decarcerate. Currently,  
14 there's no immediate low-barrier housing with  
15 supportive services that can be accessed immediately  
16 upon release from incarceration. We encourage the  
17 Council to fund this kind of housing in the next  
18 budget cycle.

19 The Administration is also going in the wrong  
20 direction and its operation of the jails. Rather  
21 than taking the necessary actions to reduce excessive  
22 use of force and increase programming. The  
23 department has ended effective program provided by  
24 community-based organization, and it's well  
25 established that reducing idle time in jail

2 contributes to reductions in violence. Yet the  
3 department has chosen to stop funding these programs.

4 The department's inability to operate the jail  
5 safely has resulted in people not being able to get  
6 to health care and discharge planning appointments  
7 with Correctional Health Services, and that's caused  
8 a dramatic decline in the quality of discharge  
9 planning provided people with mental health concerns.  
10 Far too many people with mental health challenges are  
11 released from incarceration without benefits,  
12 treatment, and housing even though the services are  
13 mandated by the Brad H Settlement Agreement.

14 The Department has also turned away from efforts  
15 to reduce the use of solitary confinement and is  
16 currently violating the Halt Solitary Confinement Act  
17 in many ways. The Council can remedy the situation  
18 by passing Intro 549, which defines what a cell is  
19 and what [inaudible] cell is, so the department can  
20 no longer hide behind the fiction that being alone in  
21 a cage is outside-- is out of cell time. This  
22 legislation allows-- allows for separation, but in an  
23 environment where underlying issues can be addressed  
24 and programming provided, instead of the ineffective  
25 isolation, which only makes the jails less safe.

2 Finally, we support Intro 1203, Councilmember  
3 Riley's bill. This legislation--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

5 MS. PARRISH: --will benefit our clients in--  
6 whose benefits-- whose SSI benefits have been  
7 suspended. The Social Security Administration  
8 requires people to provide proof of their release  
9 from custody, and having these kinds of letters of  
10 incarceration will enable that process to happen more  
11 quickly.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

13 COUNSEL: Thank you Next, Julie Defina.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Julie, you may begin.

15 MS. DEFINA: Thank you. Good afternoon, I would  
16 like to thank Chair Carlina Rivera and the Committee  
17 on Criminal Justice for this opportunity to speak in  
18 support of the Next Steps Mentoring Program. My name  
19 is Julia Defina, and I'm the Senior Director of  
20 Justice Programs at Community Mediation Services in  
21 Queens. My agency has been the service provider for  
22 the Next Steps contract with Queensbridge Houses  
23 Since the program's inception in 2014, and we've  
24 maintained a consistent relationship and partnership  
25 with the Department of Probation since 2011, as we

2 have held past and current programs, six DOP funded  
3 contracts.

4 For the past 12 years the Department of Probation  
5 has been an excellent partner and highly supportive  
6 of the vulnerable populations they serve. For this  
7 reason, the decision to abruptly and the Next Steps  
8 program was highly shocking and incredibly  
9 disappointing. Next Steps as we've heard today and  
10 previously has served young adults between the ages  
11 of 16 and 24 who reside in various NYCHA developments  
12 across the five boroughs.

13 The department-- The Commissioner of the  
14 Department has stated that every Next-- has made the  
15 claim that every Next Steps participant will be able  
16 to get mentorship support through other city funded  
17 programs highlighting three programs, Arches, Girl  
18 Talk and Blue Chips. I didn't want to belabor the  
19 points that have already been made, but given the  
20 parameters, the enrollment criteria for these three  
21 programs, the vast majority, the overwhelming  
22 majority of Next Steps participants actually would  
23 not qualify to participate in these in these  
24 programs.

2       The failure to offer more appropriate examples of  
3 alternative options is maybe some indication of  
4 acknowledgment that sufficient amounts of suitable  
5 alternatives actually do not exist for this-- this  
6 population.

7       As the commissioner has stated, successful  
8 mentoring programs are tailored to specific needs and  
9 do not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach and  
10 structure. To that end, Next Steps is not redundant.  
11 And there are many unique aspects-- aspects of the  
12 program that set aside themselves from-- set aside  
13 themselves from other programs. Our program operates  
14 right in the neighborhoods that these young people  
15 reside. We meet them literally and figuratively,  
16 where they are at. The population that we've served,  
17 are not necessarily looking to participate in  
18 programs, right? We're going out there. We're  
19 looking to identify young people that are truly  
20 disconnected, not enrolled in school, not employed,  
21 and quite frankly, require a lot of encouragement to  
22 even take the step to join our programs. Our  
23 incredible mentors encourage these often-resistant  
24 young groups of people to give the program a chance  
25 and immediately work to establish a trust and



2 rapport. They're available 24/7 to these young  
3 people. Their a phone call away. If any crisis may  
4 occur or stressful situation and oftentimes they're  
5 able to meet with their young-- the young mentees in  
6 person at any hour of the day.

7 Our teams have been highly successful in  
8 connecting out-of-school youth to educational  
9 opportunity and connecting unemployed youth to job  
10 opportunities. The program has undoubtedly--  
11 undoubtedly prevented young people from being  
12 arrested.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired. Thank  
14 you.

15 MS. DEFINA: Okay. I'd just like to urge the  
16 Council to continue to support full reinstatement of  
17 Next Steps. Thank you.

18 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next Brad Cauthen.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Brad, you may begin.

20 MR. CAUTHEN: Hi, guys. Can you hear me?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yup. We can hear you.

22 MR. CAUTHEN: Okay, thanks. Thank you,  
23 Chairwoman Rivera and fellow members of the Criminal  
24 Justice Committee. We are big fans of your work and  
25 your advocacy. My name is Brad Cauthen. I'm the

2 Director of Jail-Based Services and Workforce  
3 Development with the Osborne Association.

4 As many of you know, Osborne is one of the  
5 largest and oldest criminal justice service  
6 organizations in the state. We serve participants  
7 from arrest to reentry and have offices in Harlem,  
8 Brooklyn, Buffalo, Newburgh, and our headquarters in  
9 the Bronx. I oversee Osborne's programming in New  
10 York city jails, including Rikers Island.

11 As you are aware, our programming on Rikers was  
12 drastically reduced when DOC eliminated \$17 million  
13 that supported six provider agencies serving  
14 thousands of individuals, most of whom are pretrial  
15 and awaiting their day in court.

16 When DOC eliminated this funding for external  
17 providers, they assured us that there would be a  
18 smooth transition to their bringing all of this in  
19 house and they would do the work themselves, they  
20 would do the programming. We have a keen interest in  
21 how the department is trying to fill the void in our  
22 absence. And we know some have been working very  
23 hard on this, those that are partners, we know they  
24 care as well. But we want to make sure that the work  
25 still gets done without gaps. We're concerned that

2 the-- that the adequate and quality programming is  
3 not happening at the level that is required, needed,  
4 and deserved by those in custody. Our staff invested  
5 passionately in supporting these individuals'  
6 success. Many of our staff were formerly  
7 incarcerated themselves. Sadly, many are no longer  
8 employed with us due to the funding cut. Across all  
9 six providers, over 75 direct service staff positions  
10 were eliminated, almost half of whom were formerly  
11 incarcerated. On July 1 of this year, when DOC  
12 assumed the responsibility of providing programming,  
13 they also assumed the responsibility of providing  
14 five hours of programming each day across housing  
15 areas in every facility. The requirement under the  
16 law specifies that programming is to include  
17 vocational training, counseling, cognitive behavioral  
18 therapy, and drug dependency treatment. Recreational  
19 programming like chess, ping pong, and basketball are  
20 important and beneficial, but they do not fulfill the  
21 requirement. It is hard to believe that the  
22 department will be able to develop and require--  
23 develop the required programming, train existing  
24 staff, and hire new staff in such a short period. In  
25 fact, many of the detainees that we encounter on the

2 island have expressed their frustration that we are  
3 no longer there providing services.

4 A comprehensive jail program is critical-- is a  
5 critical component to jail operations. It reduces  
6 tension and violence inside the facilities. It  
7 provides motivation, rehabilitation, connection, and  
8 hope. Without consistent, reliable quality  
9 programming offered by steady, trained, and  
10 culturally competent staff, idleness and conflict  
11 increase. This is the last thing that Rikers needs.

12 We ask that the Council closely monitor the  
13 program provisions across all housing areas and all  
14 facilities by seeking access to DOCs internal program  
15 database, and to consider additional legislation to  
16 address the current and potentially worsening  
17 situation.

18 In closing, I want to remind us all that the best  
19 programming-- programming for most people on Rikers  
20 is outside of Rikers in the community. There are  
21 simply too many people out there and--

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time expired.

23 MR. CAUTHEN: --should not be there for as long  
24 as they are, with the consensus nearly double of what

2 it was during COVID, we must accelerate and commit to  
3 a full-court press to reduce the numbers on Rikers.

4 Thank you for your time and everyone get home  
5 safe.

6 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next Peleya Patterson.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Peleya, you may begin.

8 MS. PATTERSON: All right, thank you. Thank you,  
9 Chair Rivera and the members of the Committee on  
10 Criminal Justice for the opportunity to testify on  
11 the Department of Probation's decision to abruptly  
12 terminate the Next Steps mentoring program in August.

13 My name is Peleya Patterson, and I'm the Vice  
14 President of Community Based Justice and Mentoring  
15 Initiatives at Good Shepherd Services. Good Shepherd  
16 Services is a provider of community-based youth  
17 justice programs, Care of Father's Family Enrichment  
18 Center and Community Partnership Program, as well as  
19 community centers and after-school programming. My  
20 verbal testimony will focus on the need for the  
21 Council to continue to help us demand that the  
22 Department of Probation reinstate the next steps  
23 monitoring program and help us protect programs  
24 funded by DOP that support youth across New York  
25 City.

2 We are truly dedicated to the young people and  
3 communities of New York City and accept as a part of  
4 those communities. Each and every day we meet our  
5 young people where they are, in their communities,  
6 and-- and that is why it is so important why we  
7 reinvest in the communities. Our communities have  
8 the solutions to the issues facing our young people.

9 A huge part of what Next Steps does is exposure  
10 and expansion. We expose our young people to new  
11 experiences in order to expand their horizons. We do  
12 that with college visits, cultural events,  
13 entrepreneurial programming, and day-to-day  
14 individual case management.

15 At a time like this when we are in crisis and our  
16 young people are in crisis, we want to remove the  
17 services for youth programming across our New York  
18 City communities. Commissioner Holmes' city doesn't  
19 sound like one that's invested in young people,  
20 doesn't sound like a city that's invested in  
21 communities, it doesn't sound like a city that wants  
22 to see young people thrive and grow in their  
23 communities. Next Steps has existed because there  
24 are people in our communities who care and who are  
25 invested. Next Steps is successful, because we are

2 built on credible messengers, people in our  
3 communities who actually care, who are actually  
4 concerned, and actually invested in the concerns  
5 about NYCHA developments, the communities and the  
6 people within them. Our young people are facing so  
7 many issues right now, that we need to reinvest in  
8 them, not take resources away. There's an urgency  
9 for young people's tomorrow. There is an urgency for  
10 young people's needs, cares, and concerns. And those  
11 start at a program like Next Steps. We need Mayor  
12 Adams and Commissioner Holmes to reinstate Next Steps  
13 immediately.

14 Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

15 COUNSEL: Thank you. Next Jessica Yager.

16 Jessica, you may begin.

17 MS. YAGER: Thank you so much. Good morning,  
18 Chair Rivera and members of the City Council. My  
19 name is Jessica Yager, and I'm the Project Director  
20 at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, which is a  
21 project of the Center for Justice Innovation. For  
22 almost 30 years the center has supported the vision  
23 embraced by the Council of a fair, effective and  
24 humane justice system.

1           Today, I'm here to express our support for  
2  
3 evidence-based programs that contribute to a safer  
4 New York and for the continued need to invest in  
5 community-based programming. The center has operated  
6 next step programs in Staten Island and Red Hook  
7 since 2020. This program is a powerful example of  
8 investing in upstream solutions to address public  
9 safety, and the research and data behind the program  
10 demonstrates its effectiveness.

11           Off ramps like Next Steps are critical tools to  
12 divert people away from incarceration, prioritize  
13 rehabilitation and address the root causes of  
14 involvement in the criminal justice system. Next  
15 Steps empowers and supports vulnerable underserved  
16 youth in select NYCHA developments from the justice  
17 system through a unique approach. In Red Hook, our  
18 monthly life skills topics serve as a foundation of  
19 our programming, equipping participants with  
20 essential skills in the areas of communication,  
21 advocacy, problem solving, and teamwork. Through the  
22 power of peer support, our participants achieve  
23 remarkable success while staying clear of the justice  
24 system.



2       In our last two cohorts we serve 32 outstanding  
3 youth in Red Hook. Out of the 32 participants who  
4 embraced this transformative journey, 11 graduated  
5 high school successfully and embarked on the path to  
6 higher education, 4 of the 32 participants have  
7 transitioned into full-time employment, and we have  
8 many other success stories. Programs like Next Steps  
9 are not only the right approach, they're also the  
10 smart approach.

11       The research tells us that the key to helping  
12 people thrive and avoid legal system involvement is  
13 investing in the whole person and building stability  
14 across multiple areas of their life. The research  
15 also shows that human interaction is central to the  
16 effectiveness of interventions. The quality of human  
17 interaction outweighs the importance of any  
18 particular protocol or approach. Next Steps is  
19 grounded in proven fundamental principles. Using the  
20 power of positive mentor role models, the program  
21 actively supports young people in identifying  
22 planning and achieving productive goals for their  
23 futures. The center stands ready to continue the  
24 implementation of proven programming that connects  
25

2 individuals to services that divert them from the  
3 justice system and further public safety.

4 We look forward to continuing to work with the  
5 city to forge creative solutions. Thank you for your  
6 partnership and for the opportunity to testify today.

7 CHAIRPERSON RIVERA: There are no other  
8 individuals to testify? I just want to thank you for  
9 your testimony. Thank you for all that you do.

10 With that, I just want to thank everyone who is  
11 present-- who was present at testify, who waited on  
12 Zoom all of this time. Really emphasizing  
13 quantitative and qualitative data is both incredibly  
14 important, and really accelerating and expanding  
15 programs that work knowing that the best programs  
16 really exist in people's communities.

17 So thanks to all I want to thank all of the staff  
18 here at the Council and the committee staff as well.  
19 And with that, we adjourn.

20 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date 10/06/2023