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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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December 11, 2023  
Start: 10:08 A.M.  
Recess: 9:08 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Speaker Adams  
Shaun Abreu  
Joann Ariola  
Alexa Avilès  
Diana Ayala  
Charles Barron  
Erik Bottcher  
Gale A. Brewer  
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers  
Tiffany Cabàn  
David M. Carr  
Eric Dinowitz  
De La Rosa  
Amanda Farias  
Jennifer Gutiérrez

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 2

3 COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

4 Kamillah Hanks  
5 Robert Holden  
6 Crystal Hudson  
7 Rita Joseph  
8 Shekar Krishnan  
9 Linda Lee  
10 Farah N. Louis  
11 Julie Menin  
12 Francisco P. Moya  
13 Mercedes Narcisse  
14 Sandy Nurse  
15 Chi A. Ossè  
16 Vickie Paladino  
17 Keith Powers  
18 Lincoln Restler  
19 Carlina Rivera  
20 Pierina Ana Sanchez  
21 Lynn Schulman  
22 Althea V. Stevens  
23 Marjorie Velázquez  
24 Nantasha M. Williams  
25 Julie Won

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 3

4 A P P E A R A N C E S

5 Jacque Jiha  
6 Director of New York City Mayor's Office of  
7 Management and Budget

8 Kenneth Godiner  
9 OMB First Deputy Director

10 Latonia McKinney  
11 Senior Deputy Director for Intergovernmental  
12 Relations and Education

13 Henry Garrido  
14 Executive Director of District Council 37

15 Michael Mulgrew  
16 Fifth President of the United Federation of  
17 Teachers

18 Melissa Khan

19 Joyce Mulvaney  
20 Local 205 Vice President

21 James Davis

22 Louis Cholden-Brown

23 Andrew Ansbro

24 Louisa Chafee  
25 Independent Budget Office

Sarita Subramanian  
IBO's Senior and Research and Strategy Officer

Logan Clark

Sarah Parker  
IBO's Senior and Research and Strategy Officer

Christine Quinn  
WIN

Sandra Escamilla  
Children's Aid

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 4

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

4 Joseph Reece  
5 Vice President of Local 374

6 Donald Nesbit  
7 Executive Vice President of Local 372

8 Ralph Baselice  
9 Vice President Local 983

10 George Nicholas

11 Allison Nickerson  
12 Executive Director of LiveOn New York

13 Randi Levine  
14 Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New  
15 York

16 Gregory Brender  
17 Day Care Council of New York

18 Eric Goldstein  
19 New York City Environment Director at the Natural  
20 Resources Defense Council

21 Nora Moran  
22 Director of Policy and Advocacy at United  
23 Neighborhood Houses

24 Coco Killingsworth  
25 Executive at the Brooklyn Academy of Music

Eric Lee  
Director of Policy and Planning for Homeless  
Services United

Reverend Terry Troia  
President of Project Hospitality

Andres Munoz (SP?)  
9<sup>th</sup> Grader

Camilla Vaquero  
Youth Leader at Make the Road New York

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 5

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

4 Julia Cruz  
5 Youth Leader from the Make the Road New York

6 Ester

7 Lucy Sexton  
8 Cultural Advocacy Coalition

9 Sheila Lewandowski  
10 Chocolate Factory Theater in Long Island City

11 Sarah Mercanti

12 Kattie Mattie

13 Keith Nelson  
14 Bindlestiff Family Variety Arts

15 Meropi Peponides  
16 Justice Committee

17 Andrea Ortiz  
18 Dignity in Schools New York

19 Tania Mattos  
20 Interim Executive Director of UnLocal

21 Hailey Nolasco  
22 Center for Justice Innovation

23 Magaly Melendez  
24 Program Manager of Bronx Hope

25 Yonah Zeitz  
Katal Center for Equity Health and Justice

Adam Ganser  
Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks

Merritt Birnbaum  
President and CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy

Heather Lubov  
Executive Director of City Parks Foundation

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 6

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

4 Christina Taylor  
5 Deputy Director for the Van Courtlandt Park  
6 Alliance

7 Anthony Feliciano  
8 Vice President of Advocacy for Housing Works

9 Nicole McVinua  
10 Director of Policy at Urban Pathways

11 Gabriela Sandoval Requena  
12 Director of Policy and Communications at New  
13 Destiny

14 Lauren Schuster  
15 Vice President of Government Affairs at Urban  
16 Resource Institute

17 Jeremy Soto  
18 El Puente

19 Ambreen Qureshi  
20 Executive Director of EVC

21 Chai Jindasurat-Yasui  
22 Vice President of Policy at Nonprofit New York

23 Caitlyn Passaretti  
24 Policy Associate at the Citizens Committee for  
25 Children of New York

Monae Priolenau  
Speaking on behalf of Janelle Farris

Erin Orr  
Teaching Artist for Arts Connection

Natalia Aristizabal  
Deputy Director of Make the Road New York

Juan Carlos Salinas  
Director of Education at Jamaica Center for Arts  
and Learning

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 7

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

4 Tamia Santana  
5 Chief Officer of Engagements and Inclusion of  
6 Ballet Hispanico

7 Jane Shang  
8 Advocacy Coordinator from the Korean Community  
9 Services

10 Rachel Watts  
11 Executive Director of Arts Connection

12 Kimberly Olsen  
13 Executive Director of the New York City Arts and  
14 Education Roundtable

15 Taina Wagnac  
16 Senior Manager of State of Local Policy at the  
17 New York Immigration Coalition

18 MJ Okma  
19 Sage

20 Gabrielle Vazquez  
21 Mural Arts Groundswell Mural Arts

22 Megan Ahearn  
23 Program Director for NYPIRG

24 Kathleen Kerrigan  
25 Thompkins Square Park

Debra Freeman  
Four Freedoms Democratic Club

Marianne Pizzitola  
New York City Organization of Public Service  
Retirees

Laura Genovese  
New York City Retiree

Sue Ellen Dodell  
New York City Retiree

Lena Fry  
Grow NYC Workers Collective

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 8

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

4 Ruth Grebrer  
Grow NYC Workers Collective

5 Austin Arasena  
Grow NYC

6 Jazelle Adeno  
7 Grow NYC Workers Collective

8 Josh Kellermann  
Director of Public Policy at the Retail Wholesale  
9 and Department Store Union

10 Ed Miller  
Program Manager at Arts Connection

11 David Moss  
12 Legal Defense Fund

13 Jessie Spellman

14 Divid Durant  
Justice Committee

15 Nadia Swanson  
16 Ali Forney Center

17 Sidney Grant  
Starts with the Arts

18 Michael Magazine

19 Paulette Healy  
20 Bay Ridge

21 Tanisha Grant  
Director of Parent Support and Parents New York

22 Andrew St. Ana  
23 Asian American Federation

24 Alex Malescio  
25 Urban Upbound



1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 9

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

4 Donovan Swanson

5 Veronica Wong  
6 Advocacy Director at University Settlement

7 Nicole Touzien  
8 Dancewave

9 Luke Boyd  
10 Historic Richmond Town

11 Yvonne Roen  
12 Artist

13 Natasia Sidarta  
14 Gowanus Canal Conservancy

15 Renee Crowley  
16 Lower East Ecology Center

17 Corey Hassan  
18 Testifying on behalf of Lynn Kelly

19 Chris Chalfant  
20 volunteer for the Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

21 James Dill  
22 Executive Director of Housing and Services Inc

23 Tierra Labrada  
24 Associate Director of Advocacy at the Supportive  
25 Housing Network of New York

Sarita Daftary  
Co-Director at Freedom Agenda

Andrew Perry  
Senior Policy Analyst at the Fiscal Policy  
Institute

Jason Cianciotto  
Vice President of Communications and Policy at  
GMHC

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 10

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

4 Chi Loek  
5 Executive Director of UA3

6 Jimmy Costello  
7 New York City Compost Project

8 Anna Sacks  
9 Save Our Compost Coalition

10 Mark Laster  
11 Co-Chair of the Forest Hills Green Team

12 Sarah Garrison  
13 Physician

14 Mary Ellen Sullivan  
15 Brooklyn SWAB

16 Christopher Leon Johnson  
17 Self

18 Christine Hensen  
19 Parent

20 Delila Whirl  
21 Marshall England Early Learning Center

22 Fiona O'Grady  
23 Samaritan Suicide Prevention Center

24 Dior St. Hillaire  
25 Chair the Bronx SWAB

Nakeesha Francios  
Good Sheperd Services

Rhonda Kieser  
Chair of the Brooklyn SWAB

Beth Slepian  
Testifying on behalf of Lorial Crowder

Peter Tarson

Mary Arnold

1 COMMITTEE ON AGING JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON  
2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 11

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Check one, two. Check one,  
4 two. This is a prerecorded sound test for the  
5 Committee on Finance. Today's date is December 11,  
6 2023. It's being recorded by Michael Leonardo in the  
7 Council Chambers.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to  
9 today's New York City Council Hearing for the  
10 Committee on Finance. At this time, we ask that you  
11 please silence all cellphones and electronic devices  
12 to minimize disruptions throughout the hearing. If  
13 you have testimony you wish to submit for the record,  
14 you may do so via email at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).  
15 Once again, that is [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). At  
16 any time throughout the hearing, do not approach the  
17 dais. We thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we  
18 are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [GAVEL] Okay, thank you  
20 Sergeant. Good morning and welcome to today's  
21 Finance Committee meeting. I'm Council Member Justin  
22 Brannan and I have the privilege of Chairing the  
23 Committee on Finance. I first want to acknowledge  
24 we've been joined by our Speaker Adrienne Adams in  
25 addition to members Lee, Krishnan, Narcisse, Brooks-  
Powers, Barron, Schulman, Carr, Marte, and Joseph and

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3 on Zoom, we've been joined by Council Member Ariola  
4 and Moya and we've also been joined by Council Member  
5 Brewer.

6 Today, the Finance Committee will be holding an  
7 oversight hearing to review the Mayor's November  
8 Financial plan. While the Council typically begins  
9 its budget examination process with the preliminary  
10 budget in March, the proposed changes by the  
11 Administration in the November plan and their effects  
12 on New York City require closer attention at this  
13 time. But before I go any further today, I want to  
14 invite our Speaker Adrienne Adams to give her opening  
15 remarks.

16 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Good morning. I'm New  
17 York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and I thank  
18 you all for joining us today and thank you to our  
19 Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan for Chairing  
20 today's Oversight Hearing on the Mayor's Fiscal Year  
21 2024 November Financial Plan.

22 On November 16<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Adams released his  
23 November Financial Plan that includes broad five  
24 percent cuts to city agency budgets and a citywide  
25 hiring freeze as part of a program to eliminate the  
gap or PEG.

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2 Two additional rounds of similar reductions are  
3 expected for a total of 15 percent in ordered budget  
4 cuts by the spring of 2024. The Mayor's Office of  
5 Management and Budget or OMB, has proposed the PEG in  
6 response to budget gaps for the current Fiscal Year  
7 which are closed in the November Plan as well as in  
8 outyear budgets that remain.

9 OMB has estimated that the budget gaps for Fiscal  
10 Years 2025, 2026, and 2027 remain at \$6 billion to \$7  
11 billion for each year. For months, the Mayor's  
12 Administration has solely attributed these budget  
13 challenges facing our city squarely on the arrival of  
14 tens of thousands of asylum seekers in our city. OMB  
15 has projected that the cost of care and shelter for  
16 migrants will be \$12 billion over three years while  
17 other financial oversight bodies have estimated lower  
18 costs. The Council has urged that the Administration  
19 pursue different ways to provide asylum seeker  
20 related services that are more effective and cost  
21 efficient than the city over relying on contracts  
22 with expensive for-profit companies.

23 Nonetheless, the reality is that many factors are  
24 contributing to the gaps in our city's outyear  
25 budgets and asylum seekers are not to blame. The

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expiration of billions in Federal COVID-19 stimulus  
dollars, slowing economic growth, real estate  
challenges, such as commercial office vacancies and  
weakening residential home sales and underbudgeted  
costs are the underlying drivers of our budget gaps.

Despite the resilience of our national and local  
economies, the Council's economic and tax revenue  
forecast released yesterday is projecting that the  
city is expected to enter a period of slower tax  
revenue growth. The forecast anticipates tax revenue  
to decline in FY24, which has only happened three  
times over the past 40 years. Still, the Council  
forecast estimates the city will receive \$1.2 billion  
more in tax revenue for this fiscal year than  
recognized by OMB, which has not updated its revenue  
projection since April. All of this makes clear that  
the city facing tough economic headwinds in the  
coming years that we must confront. But our approach  
must be surgical and strategic prioritizing the  
investments that we need to safeguard for New  
Yorkers. Cutting every agencies budget  
indiscriminately will disproportionately impact every  
day New Yorkers. The essential services that New  
Yorkers rely on like educational programs, that

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3 provide stability for young people, our libraries,  
4 and sanitation services that keep our streets clean,  
5 must be protected.

6 As a city, we have already witnessed what happens  
7 when city agencies are understaffed and lack the  
8 resources needed to serve New Yorkers. The delivery  
9 of life saving food, benefits and housing assistance  
10 to help residents find and stay in their homes, have  
11 already been delayed putting too many families at  
12 risk. Working- and middle-class families have been  
13 leaving New York often because of the combined lack  
14 of affordability and breakdown in city services.  
15 This exodus of New Yorkers is not one we can continue  
16 to afford. Our city must take a different approach  
17 to its budget.

18 For the current fiscal year, in addition to the  
19 \$1.2 billion more revenue expected, there is also  
20 \$1.45 billion of end year reserves that must be used  
21 within the Fiscal Year. We must protect vital  
22 services as a priority for our city and New Yorkers.  
23 As we approach closure of the outyear budget gaps, it  
24 will require additional support from Albany and  
25 Washington that city stakeholders must be united and  
demanding. Nowhere is this more important than for

our schools and students that are still trying to  
recover from pandemic learning loss. Closing our  
significant budget gaps will also require other  
solutions, including the identification of additional  
revenues. We cannot close our budget gaps by simply  
cutting services. There are voluminous tax breaks  
that the city and state continue to provide without  
an analysis of whether they provide public benefit to  
our economy.

When we face budgetary challenges, all  
considerations must be on the table and that must  
include revenue and tax breaks. Let's think  
creatively about finding additional revenues in a  
thoughtful way that spares working in middle class  
New Yorkers from harm. At a time of serious budget  
challenges, we must be responsible.

Today, we seek to examine the Mayor's financial  
plan to clarify a path forward to support the health  
of our city and all who call it home. This will  
require the Administration to work collaboratively  
with the Council, service providers and all New  
Yorkers who have a stake in the success and future of  
our city.



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3 As a city, we can and must shift our approach to  
4 meet the challenges ahead. I look forward to hearing  
5 from OMB Director Jacques Jiha and Administration  
6 officials about the Mayor's November Financial Plan  
7 and ways to protect our budget and city. Thank you  
8 to our Council Finance staff for your hard work on  
9 this critical oversight hearing and I turn it back  
10 over to Chair Brannan.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Speaker Adams.  
12 We've also been joined by Council Members Ossè,  
13 Louis, Menin, Nurse and Abreu.

14 On November 16, 2023, the Office of Management  
15 and Budget released the November plan, an update to  
16 the city's financial plan agreed upon with the  
17 Council at adoption of the FY24 budget this past  
18 June. In the November Plan, the FY24 budget  
19 increases to \$110.5 billion and the FY25 budget gap  
20 increases by \$2 billion to \$7.1 billion.

21 The increased expenditures in the November plan  
22 are largely driven by the addition of funding related  
23 to the city's asylum seeker response partially offset  
24 by a program to eliminate the gap. The PEG changes  
25 amount to \$3.7 billion for the first two years of the

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3 financial plan and \$7.5 billion in total across the  
4 entire financial plan.

5 Today, we'll look to examine the November plan  
6 with a focus on the effects of the PEGs and how the  
7 Administration plans to maintain essential services,  
8 both now and in the years ahead, as well as receive  
9 testimony from members of the public. The elevated  
10 and increasing costs of asylum seeker operations  
11 remain a concern and the Council continues to  
12 maintain that financing the solutions for an  
13 international migrant crisis is far too high a burden  
14 for any local government to bear on its own. Our  
15 partners in Albany and DC can and must stand up for  
16 their proportional share.

17 With that said, we should be clear that it is  
18 inaccurate and careless and sometimes dangerous to  
19 infer that our current financial circumstances are  
20 solely the result of increased costs from the asylum  
21 seeker response. The Council has sounded warnings  
22 before that the funding of permanent city services  
23 with temporary time limited COVID relief funds was  
24 problematic and stress the need to locate other  
25 sources of funding to guarantee the continuation of

these crucial services once those COVID funds  
expired.

Cost related to the migrant influx are an  
additional hurdle but we wouldn't be seeing gaps like  
this today if that was the only challenge on our  
plate. I also want to take time to note this  
Committee with the Committees on General Welfare and  
Oversight and Investigation held a joint hearing on  
October 23<sup>rd</sup> on the Administrations cost projections  
for the asylum seeker response. November 9<sup>th</sup>, we  
sent a follow-up letter to the Mayor's Office of  
Asylum Seeker Operations with questions and requests  
for information from Speaker Adams, myself and  
several of my colleagues, including information the  
Administration agreed during the hearing to get back  
to us on.

Despite repeated reminders, we have not yet  
received the requested information and so we'll be  
digging further into the Administrations cost and  
projections for asylum seeker response today.  
Furthermore, this Committee and the Council cannot  
ignore the fact that the Administrations November  
plan, the PEGs includes plan savings targeted items  
that the Council and the Administration just agreed

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upon as part of our adopted budget this past June.

3 The Administration PEGs effect a number of areas,  
4 community schools, libraries, the CCRB, just for an  
5 example, that this body fought to preserve from cuts  
6 at adoption, rendering the handshake agreement made  
7 barely five months ago meaningless.

8 In this hearing, we'll want to know why the  
9 Administration elected to implement a blunt and  
10 widescale approach to savings instead of something  
11 more tailored to impose the least disruption to the  
12 lives of every day New Yorkers.

13 Before we begin, I want to thank the Finance  
14 staff, Deputy Chief of Staff Tanisha Edwards, Finance  
15 Director Richard Lee, Managing Director Johnathan  
16 Rosenberg, Deputy Directors Emre Edev, Chima  
17 Obichere, Paul Scimone, and Eisha Wright, Assistant  
18 Directors Crilhien Francisco, Elizabeth Hoffman,  
19 Chief Economist Dilara Dimnaku, Unit Heads Aliya Ali,  
20 Julia Haramis, Florentine Kabore, Jack Storey, Paul  
21 Sterm, and the tireless Finance Analyst and support  
22 staff who work hard behind the scenes, Committee  
23 Counsel Mike Twomey, my senior advisor John Yedin for  
24 all their hard work in putting this hearing together.

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2 To get the show on the road, I'm going to turn it  
3 over to the Committee Counsel to swear in OMB, so we  
4 can get moving. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Raise your  
6 right hands please. Do you affirm that your  
7 testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
8 knowledge, information and belief and that you will  
9 respond honestly to Council Member questions Director  
10 Jiha?

11 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy Director  
13 Godiner?

14 KENNETH GODINER: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Senior Deputy Director  
16 McKinney?

17 LATONIA MCKINNEY: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may begin.

19 JACQUES JIHA: Good morning Speaker Adams, Chair  
20 Brannan and members of the Finance Committee and City  
21 Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
22 here today about the November 2023 financial plan  
23 update. I am Jacque Jiha, Director of New York City  
24 Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. I am joined  
25 by OMB First Deputy Director Ken Godiner and Senior

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3 Deputy Director for Intergovernmental Relations and  
4 Education Latonia McKinney.

5 In this November Plan update Fiscal Year 2024  
6 remains balanced at \$110.5 billion. This presents  
7 growth of \$2.4 billion since budget adoption and  
8 relates to the recognition of \$2.6 billion in grant  
9 funds and \$776 million of better-than-expected  
10 revenue collections primarily driven by income  
11 instead of taxes.

12 The plan was crafted in the midst of a national  
13 humanitarian crisis. Since the spring, the city has  
14 cared for more than 150,000 asylum seekers. With  
15 over 67,000 currently in our care. Last August we  
16 updated our asylum seeker expense forecast because we  
17 were seeing higher growth in the asylum seeker  
18 centers. At the time, we said the city would need to  
19 spend \$12.25 billion to feed, care for and house  
20 these migrants over Fiscal Year 2023 through 2025.

21 This is nearly three times higher than the  
22 previous cost estimates for those years. This  
23 drastic increase opened a gap in Fiscal Year 2024 and  
24 substantially expanded the Fiscal Year 2025 gap which  
25 was already high at \$5.1 billion as of the adopted  
budget. For this reason in September, the Mayor

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announced a PEG that required agencies to reduce city  
funded spending by five percent. The November plan  
was our first opportunity to fund the updated asylum  
seeker expense forecast.

As a result, we added \$6.2 billion in city funds  
over Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 on top of resources  
that were appropriated at adoption. The PEG was  
[INAUDIBLE 00:16:43] with every agency meeting their  
target. We achieved almost \$3.7 billion in savings  
over Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 without laying off a  
single employee.

We worked diligently throughout the PEG process  
to minimize service reductions for New Yorkers by  
prioritizing efficiencies, expense re-estimates and  
underspending. But despite our best efforts, we  
expect some operations will be impacted. We will  
work with the agencies as they operation or as the  
plan to minimize disruption of services to New  
Yorkers and if financial circumstances change, we  
will reassess some of the savings initiatives.

Through our aggressive savings effort, we  
balanced Fiscal Year 2024. These actions also  
effectively limited the growth of the Fiscal Year  
2025 gap but were not enough to cover the incremental

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3 asylum seeker expenses. So, even with a successful  
4 PEG, new spending grew the Fiscal Year 2025 gap by 40  
5 percent to an unprecedented \$7.1 billion, which is \$2  
6 billion larger than it was at adoption in June.

7 By law, this gap must be closed in the  
8 Preliminary Budget that would be released in just 37  
9 days. It's important to note that there are always  
10 outyear gaps at the stage of the budget cycle.

11 However, without the substantial migrant related  
12 spending, the Fiscal Year 2025 gap would have been  
13 manageable and within historic norms. The reality is  
14 that as a municipality, the city has limited fiscal  
15 tools to address a challenge of this scope on its  
16 own.

17 Consequently, as we announced in September and  
18 then again in November, we will implement another  
19 five percent PEG on city funded agency spending in  
20 the upcoming preliminary budget. The Mayor, however,  
21 is concerned about the impact on safety and  
22 cleanliness, hence the Fire Department, the  
23 Sanitation Department and the NYPD will be exempted  
24 from this line of savings.

25 We will also be working with the Office of Asylum  
Seeker operations to reduce asylum seeker spending by



20 percent. Among are the goals we will address  
spending to a level consistent with the cost of  
services provided to the city existing shelter  
population, reduce the length of shelter in HERRCs  
days, and manage the current shelter capacity more  
effectively in order to avoid opening up new sites.

On top of these efforts to achieve savings and  
spending, we will use annual reserves and take other  
measures to close the Fiscal Year 2025 gap. I want  
to be very clear that the road ahead will be  
difficult. We simply cannot rely exclusively on PEGs  
to fund asylum seekers expenses. It is not  
sustainable. If you are not able to substantially  
reduce the migrant census we face very difficult and  
bring decisions around how to fund this national  
humanitarian crisis. Absent robust financial  
assistance and to question strategies from the  
federal and state government. Your partnership is  
crucial to help us weather this storm. Collectively,  
we represent 8.3 million New Yorkers. Your voices  
are powerful and amplify the deep concern we all have  
for the welfare of this great city.

We appreciate the Councils efforts at the state  
and federal level to advocate for the resources we

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need from Albany and Washington. I urge you to  
continue this work and want you to know that we are  
here to support your effort. We also encourage you  
to share creative and innovative solutions to the  
challenges we face in managing a balanced budget,  
ensuring continuous service delivery and operating  
city government effectively under these  
circumstances.

In closing, this is not the first time New  
Yorkers have faced adversity and it won't be the  
last. But as our city shows, we are resilient and I  
will welcome every obstacle that has been put in our  
way. With your partnership and because of the steps  
we are taking, we will weather this challenge too.  
We look forward to working together in the weeks and  
months ahead and I will be more than happy to take  
your questions now.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, before we turn to  
Speaker Adams for questions, I want to acknowledge  
we've been joined by Council Members Velázquez,  
Stevens, Williams, Hanif, Cabàn, De La Rosa, Avilès,  
Gutiérrez, Hudson and Powers. Speaker Adams.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Thank you Mr. Chair and  
welcome again. In your September 9<sup>th</sup> letter to

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3 agencies, in regard to the November Plan PEG, you  
4 stressed the agencies – you stressed to the agencies  
5 that while they were required to submit five percent  
6 reductions to their city funds budget, these  
7 reductions should avoid meaningfully impacting  
8 services where possible. You went on to inform the  
9 agencies that they should expect rounds of cuts prior  
10 to the release of the next two financial plans.  
11 Given that the Council anticipates having \$1.2  
12 billion in additional revenue and with the  
13 availability of the \$1.45 billion in in year  
14 reserves, why are we cutting important programs for  
15 our children? Like community schools and computer  
16 science in the middle of the school year when we know  
17 that this is destabilizing to them? How is that a  
18 prudent budgeting and policy choice?

19 JACQUES JIHA: Madam Speaker, uhm, thanks to the  
20 tireless effort of the OMB staff, close to 82 percent  
21 of the savings were generated from by not cutting  
22 programs, okay. The majority of the PEG where  
23 expense re-estimates on the spending, elimination of  
24 vacant position, cause shifting to federal and state  
25 funding sources in efficiency savings. And more  
importantly from our perspective, all of the savings

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were achieved without laying off a single employee.

With that being said, in this plan, there are some  
PEGs that would impact services. Our goal is to work  
with the agencies as they operationalize their plan  
to make sure we minimize as much as we can the impact  
on the public.

We wish there was a less spinful way to fund this  
national humanitarian crisis given that we must  
adhere to uh the city's right to shelter mandate and  
we are not getting adequate financial assistance from  
the federal government and from the state.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Which agencies weren't  
able to avoid making cuts that had meaningful impacts  
to service in the November Plan PEG?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, as I said, we uh — most of the  
PEGs, okay, most of the PEGs because I said 82  
percent of the PEGs did not impact services. There  
were some agencies okay, that face some — that had  
some — that would be impacted by these PEGs.  
However, as I said, we'll be working with those  
agencies as best as we can to minimize the impact on  
the public.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: How sure are you that  
agencies are actually going to be able to weather 15

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3 percent cuts to their budgets without meaningfully  
4 impacting services?

5 JACQUES JIHA: Again, the goal is basically  
6 trying to minimize as best as we can, as I said, we  
7 asked that — my letter to the agencies, we asked  
8 them to identify savings that did not include layoffs  
9 and to avoid services that would have impact on the  
10 public. Again, we will work closely with them like  
11 we have done in the past and we also want to partner  
12 with you to find alternative ideas. Again, we don't  
13 have a monopoly of wisdom, so if you have better  
14 ideas, more creative ideas that would help us to deal  
15 with this problem, we will work with you and try to  
16 implement those as well.

17 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Looking at prior years,  
18 many city agencies typically underspend their budget,  
19 which we all know. We understand it gets swept of  
20 the close of the Fiscal Year. For instance, the  
21 Department of Citywide Administrative Services  
22 underspent on average \$78.5 million in each of the  
23 past two years. That's \$110.4 million in Fiscal Year  
24 2022 and \$46.6 million in Fiscal Year 2023.

25 Some agencies needs are greater than others  
because of the direct human services they provide to

the public while others are able to maintain their level of service because they always have budgets greater than their need. So, why use a cudgel to make these reductions, mandating a 15 percent reduction for each agency instead of taking a scalpel approach to the reductions looking at the budget holistically?

JACQUES JIHA: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what we have planned. As I mentioned to you before, we use underspending, we right size many of the agencies as much as possible in order to avoid impacting the operations and services. We identify savings, however, there were not enough because as I said, this is a huge problem. Even after the PEG exercise, where we generated \$3.7 billion in savings. We still have a \$7 billion budget gap that we have to face in Fiscal Year 2025.

So, it's not like we didn't try. Okay, we tried. As I said, close to 82 percent of the PEG savings were not generated by cutting programs. Okay, they are basically like you said, we look at underspending. We look at expense estimates, but there were not enough. Okay, so therefore, and I understand the concern but remember as you go through

1 this exercise, if you were to reduce one agen- for  
2 you to generate that kind of savings to reduce one  
3 agency let's say to three percent instead of five, it  
4 means that you have to increase another agency to  
5 seven percent, okay. So, it's just not enough okay  
6 because the size of gap is so big. As I said, even  
7 after the PEG exercise, we still have a \$7 billion  
8 budget gap that we have to close in 37 days.

10 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Yeah, I don't think that  
11 we're - that there's a discrepancy as far as the gap  
12 is concerned. It's a way to close the gap that we're  
13 trying to get to a more reasonable way to do that.  
14 Why does the Administration rely solely on broad cuts  
15 to agencies in this approach to budgeting rather than  
16 pursuing a more balanced solution? Or set of  
17 solutions like examining the billions in tax breaks  
18 that may produce no positive economic benefit for the  
19 city at all?

20 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, this has always been part of  
21 the process. The challenge that you have with uh is  
22 what are they called tax expenditures. It is a long-  
23 term commitment that the city makes okay. So, even  
24 if you were to remove them, you're going to get it  
25 back very, very far down the road. So, it's not like

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3 you could use the savings right away to close the  
4 budget gap because this is a long-term 20, 30 years  
5 tax expenditures. You've provided developers, you  
6 provided folks, so these are long term commitments.  
7 Removing them is going to give you the savings all  
8 the way in the long term but you can't use them in  
9 the very short term to deal with the budget problem  
10 that you currently have.

11 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: I hear what you're  
12 saying Mr. Director but I need to hear that there is  
13 at least some kind of consideration to do that.

14 JACQUES JIHA: Well, it's just something that is  
15 - remember please it's also subject to, we also have  
16 to have authorization from Albany. We have to go to  
17 Albany for Albany to remove them. These are things  
18 that are put in place by state law. But again as I  
19 said, I hear you. This is something that we always  
20 review. We always take them into consideration but  
21 the impact of them okay, is going to be fighting a  
22 long one if you do but for us to close Fiscal Year  
23 2024-2025 budget gaps, it's almost impossible for us  
24 to resort to them because they won't provide the -  
25 they won't yield the savings that we need in the  
short term.



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2 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Okay, we'll talk about  
3 that a little bit more. But at adoption, it was  
4 estimated that over 20,000 positions were vacant.  
5 While there had been a concerted effort made by the  
6 Administration with assistance from the Council to  
7 hire for these vacancies. The September PEG letter  
8 all but halted the process initiating a hiring freeze  
9 for most positions. Currently we estimate the city  
10 has over 16,000 vacancies, which will likely continue  
11 to grow as agencies attrite employees without the  
12 ability to replace them. We've heard from agencies  
13 and seen in the Mayor's Management Report that  
14 critical agency services have been hindered. Some  
15 seriously as a result of the large number of  
16 vacancies. How can you justify a blanket hiring  
17 freeze that doesn't allow for critical positions to  
18 be filled at a greater than a one, four, one level?

19 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, as always Madam Speaker, it  
20 has always been our policy, okay to exempt positions  
21 that are critical through public safety, health,  
22 revenue generating positions. As part of this  
23 freeze, we exempted frontline workers for the cash  
24 assistance or SNAP and SNAP application review. We  
25 exempted EMS, 911 dispatchers, fire protection

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3 inspectors, uniformed positions were exempt from this  
4 hiring freeze. For HPD, the housing inspectors, DOB  
5 inspectors were exempted but again, as I said, we are  
6 in a very difficult situation. We face a very  
7 difficult time, okay so therefore we had to rely on  
8 the hiring freeze okay, so that the agency have the  
9 tools they could use apply toward the PEG savings  
10 that we're asking them.

11 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Okay, I'm going to move  
12 onto the asylum seekers which you stress in your  
13 remarks and overall for the reason, as being the  
14 reason, the primary reason for these cuts. In the  
15 November plan, a total of \$4.7 billion is budgeted in  
16 Fiscal Year 2024. \$6.1 billion in Fiscal Year 2025,  
17 \$2 billion in Fiscal Year 2026 and \$1 billion in  
18 Fiscal Year 2027 for the cost related to the  
19 provision of services to the asylum seekers. This  
20 includes an additional \$6.9 billion added in the  
21 November Plan for fiscals 2024 and 2025. If the  
22 asylum budget was its own agency, it would be the  
23 fourth largest city agency budget.

24 In looking at state funding and breaking that  
25 down in each fiscal year, how much of the funding  
added in the November plan is from state sources and

what services and programs does the funding relate  
to?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, the city response to the  
ongoing national crisis has exceeded what anyone  
would have anticipated a year ago. We build on  
infrastructure to basically for over 150,000 migrants  
and taking care of 67,000 of them.

The asylum seeker expenses, right now, we're  
looking as part of as I said in my testimony, we  
added \$6.2 billion in Fiscal 2024 and 2025. That's  
city funds, okay for Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 on top  
of what we appropriated, what was appropriated in the  
adopted budget.

In terms of the state, we added about \$447  
million in Fiscal Year 2024 and \$272 million in  
Fiscal Year 2025. But as I said, from the federal  
government, we're getting very little. So far we  
have a commitment of about \$155.9 million and that's  
what was added in the November plan to account for  
the federal contribution for this. So, it's \$155.9  
million toward a \$12 billion problem.

CHAIRPERSON ADRIENNE ADAMS: When we look at  
funding by agency as of the adopted plan, funding for  
asylum seeker services was budgeted across seven

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agencies. In the November plan, this expanded considerably to 26 agencies with additional funding allocated to 25 agencies. Why has there been such a large expansion and can you please walk us through how much funding was added to each agency in the November Plan, in which fiscal years and for what services or programs?

JACQUES JIHA: This is a crisis that require the entire city to be involved as part of to be involved as part of the process. Do we settle 155,000 people? So, we have to rely on staffing from all agencies because we have agenc— you know we have folks basically volunteer and so therefore their overtime has to be covered by the city.

Our goal is to manage down the census going forward, so that we could ensure that the agencies have the appropriate staff to handle the workload. So, again as I said, our goal as we PEG the asylum seekers to bring down the census as much as we can, so that we don't have to rely on employers from all these other agencies.

I could give you a breakdown, I would give you a breakdown of the major agencies that are more impacted. There's about 26 I believe. The DHS is,

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for Fiscal 2024 is like \$1.3 billion and \$1.3 billion  
in 2025. H+H, it's \$1.4 in 2024, \$2.6 in 2025. HPD  
is about \$286 million in Fiscal 2024 and \$619.6 in  
2025. NYCEM it's \$131.9 million in 2025 and DCAS  
\$379 in 2024 and \$403. But as I said, I will provide  
your staff the list of all the agencies, a breakdown  
of all these agencies how much is allocated by the  
agencies but most of them is basically to account for  
staff overtime in those agencies.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: In early August, several  
weeks after the budget was adopted, the  
Administration released updated costs and population  
projects for the asylum response efforts that  
projected an additional \$6.9 billion would be needed  
in Fiscals 2024 and 2025. This additional funding  
was added to the budget in the November Plan. Given  
that the August revision to cost projections was  
released four months ago, why were projects not re-  
estimated for the November Plan?

JACQUES JIHA: Because so far we have not seen  
any systematic deviation from our forecast. There's  
been no change in our forecast in the November plan.  
The census and actual spending more or less align  
with our projection. So, therefore there was no

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reason for us to change the forecast. We'll continue  
to monitor the data on a monthly basis to see you  
know the census worth and the per diem costs. So,  
we'll continue to monitor those and if there's a need  
to do so, we'll add you as forecast in January.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: So, you don't have any  
plans to -

JACQUES JIHA: In this - in November plan, there  
was no reason to change it because as I said the  
response since as of November okay, the spending is  
\$1.66 billion of spending against a forecast of  
\$1.64. Okay, so the forecast and the actual more or  
less match. So, there was no reason for us to change  
the forecast at this moment and time. But again,  
we'll continue to monitor the data on a month-to-  
month basis and if there's a need to change the  
forecast, we will do so in January.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: When does the  
Administration next expect to update its projections?

JACQUES JIHA: In January, in the Preliminary  
Budget.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: And what modifications  
are you planning to make to the assumptions and  
approach to projections?

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3 JACQUES JIHA: Again, because we're going to, we  
4 are doing like a 20 percent PEG on the asylum seeker  
5 expense, so we're going to have to see exactly how  
6 we're going to break down the different assumptions  
7 we're making in terms of the census, where we expect  
8 the census to be. And on the other hand, what we  
9 expect the per diem cost to be because our goal is to  
10 bring down the per diem cost and at the same time to  
11 continue to monitor the census by you know with the  
12 policies that we're implementing. We have the 30  
13 days and 60-day policies. So, we will continue to  
14 monitor those two things because we're seeing the  
15 impact of the 30 days and 60 days in terms of  
16 managing the exit, increasing the exit of folks out  
17 of the system. So, we continue to monitor those  
18 trends to see and you know so when we make the  
19 appropriate adjustment add on the census side or on  
20 the per diem cost side.

21 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Okay and looking at the  
22 per diem then, the November 20, 2023 PEG letter,  
23 indicates that preliminary plan will include a 20  
24 percent PEG on asylum expenses in Fiscals 2024 and  
25 2025 to reduce per diem costs and the length of  
shelter stays. How much savings would be generated

and how will the savings be generated? Which  
agencies will be impacted?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, the goal here is  
trying — working upwards is the three-prong approach.  
One is as I said earlier is managing down the service  
and staffing model that we currently have to reduce  
the per diem cost to a level consistent with the per  
diem for the DHS system. That's one thing. So, the  
services, we're going to look at the services and  
provide how much staffing, reduce the staffing,  
reduce the services. That's one thing to bring the  
per diem cost.

The other thing as I said we're doing is to  
managing the exit, to increase the exit because this  
is very critical okay. Because if we don't bring  
down the census, it's going to be extremely difficult  
for us in the outyears because right now, we are over  
relying on PEG to manage to fund the census. So, if  
we don't bring down the census, we can't continue to  
rely on PEGs to do so, we're going to have to make  
some difficult decisions as a city. Okay, in terms  
of how we're going to fund this going forward if we  
don't bring down the census.



So, the seventh piece is managing down the census, okay? You know using different policies to see what works okay, to get as many people out of the system as quickly as possible. And the third piece of the strategy is basically manage more effectively the current capacity that we have. Okay, in terms of moving folks from high-cost hotels to cheaper places. One of the things that we're thinking about doing is the small HERRCs and the small hotels, move them from private providers to not-for-profit providers.

So, we're looking at better ways of managing the system now that we have the one way, we're not managing this to emergency, so these are the major three pieces of the puzzle that we're going to try to tackle. It's not going to be easy okay to bring down the expenses by 20 percent because as we speak, we have a major, okay major increase in the population of folks coming. Major in flow coming in now, okay so it's not going to be easy to do so but this is our goal.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Is the city planning to implement additional shelter stay limits?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, we continue to review many initiatives, many policy initiatives to see what

works, what doesn't work. This policy currently, from our perspective, is we're seeing some positive result out of exit policies that we're implementing. Funds, since we, we review a sample of let's say 500 notices that were sent. What we're seeing, normally under normal circumstances, we have people leaving the system after 60 days. 51 percent of people leaving the system after 60 days. But because of the notices, we see an additional 33 percent. So, we only have like 16 percent of the cost in the system after 60 days.

So, there are, you know we're seeing an impact of the policy initiatives, so we'll continue to explore those initiatives and basically expand them to even more folks to see to the extent that we could get as many folks leaving the system as quickly as possible.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Can you give us an idea of how many of those folks are actually coming back once those limits are imposed?

JACQUES JIHA: So far, we've got about 16 percent of folks coming back and reapply okay but again, you know our goal is to basically target at some point all these case management, all these resources that we have for the hard to leave group, cohort at 16

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percent to provide them as much resources as possible  
to see, to try to get them out of the system as  
quickly as possible.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Let's take a look at  
H+H. I know my colleagues and I have discussed and  
are still talking about H+H, their impact and their  
role, their tremendous role in asylum response  
efforts. The Council would like to better understand  
why the Administration is relying so heavily on H+H  
in its asylum seeker response efforts. In Fiscal  
Year 2023, the majority of spending on the asylum  
seeker response occurred in agencies that provided  
shelter and local services to asylum seekers. DSS at  
\$764 million, H+H at \$476 million and NYCEM at \$92  
million. While DSS incurred the lion share of  
expenditures last fiscal year and is currently  
housing the majority of asylum seekers. DSS  
expenditures in fiscal year 2024 through October  
total \$401 million. A good deal lower than H+H  
expenditures of \$592 million. Why does H+H whose  
mission is to provide healthcare continue to play  
such an outsized role in the city's asylum seeker  
response efforts and we know from October 23, 2023,  
that hearing on asylum seeker response costs it is at

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least partly due to H+H holding contracts that apply  
to the whole system. Are there any other reasons?

JACQUES JIHA: Madam speaker, as you can imagine,  
no municipality, including New York City no matter  
how big we are, has the infrastructure to reset all  
the 150,000 people in a year. Initially, uh, when  
the quest begins, we rely heavily on DHS but once DHS  
reaches capacity, we had to turn to agencies that had  
some kind of existing service delivery infrastructure  
to deal with this problem. Only H+H had that as part  
of the COVID test and trace infrastructure that they  
created okay to go around. So, therefore, that's the  
reason why we had to rely on some agency that had at  
least some semblance of an infrastructure okay to  
deal with a crisis of this magnitude. Because the  
city didn't have that okay. So, once DHS reaches  
capacity, that's when we had to find something else.  
As I said, it's 150,000 folks, in a matter of a year.  
This is not easy.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Thank you. H+H includes  
in its cost for delivery of services for asylum  
seekers an indirect rate of 15 percent. In Fiscal  
Year 2023, the city paid H+H \$62 million for the  
indirect rate. How much has been paid in Fiscal 2024

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and why are we subsidizing H+H's budget leaving less  
funds for the provision of services to asylum  
seekers?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, as you know Madam Speaker, H+H  
does not have the resources to administer a program  
of this magnitude, so therefore the city had to cover  
the administration cost of this program to H+H.

Otherwise, H+H would have to take resources that they  
currently don't have, okay to channel these resources  
toward the management and administration of this  
program.

So, it generally doesn't have the resources, so  
therefore the city had to provide H+H that the kind  
of resources or otherwise you know they wouldn't be  
able to do it. They wouldn't be able to help us  
managing this crisis.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Does H+H follow the same  
procurement rules that other city agencies do?

JACQUES JIHA: H+H will with commit with the  
step-by-step law and this a public benefit  
corporation and they have their own procedures but as  
part of an MOU we have with them, we review the  
contract. We review the contract dealing with the  
migrant crisis. We approved some of these contracts

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3 as part of the MOU we have with them. We have some  
4 kind of oversight over a lot of the activities that  
5 they do?

6 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Through the MOU?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Through the MOU.

8 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: On November 30, 2023,  
9 the Comptroller released a report on emergency  
10 contracting. The same day the report was issued, the  
11 Comptroller's Office sent a notice to city agencies  
12 revoking the citywide prior approval for asylum  
13 seeker response efforts it had previously issued.

14 Going forward, agencies will be required to  
15 obtain independent prior approval on a case-by-case  
16 basis for all emergency procurement requests,  
17 including amendments and extensions. Will this  
18 change have an impact on the provision of services?

19 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, because of the use of  
20 emergency contracts, we managed to reset all of the  
21 150,000 asylum seekers in a matter of a year. The  
22 Comptroller revocation of emergency contracts we'll  
23 probably add sometime to the review process but from  
24 our perspective, as long as the Comptroller is quick  
25 and efficient in his review of the contract, we

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3 should not have any problem whatsoever to continue to  
4 manage this crisis.

5 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: So, in essence, do you  
6 see a benefit then in the revocation by the  
7 Comptroller?

8 JACQUES JIHA: No, you know as I said before, if  
9 you – if our total in New York City could resettle  
10 150,000, one and a half the size of Albany population  
11 in a year, okay, everybody would think it would be a  
12 joke. Okay, it is because of this kind of tools that  
13 we have at our disposal we [INAUDIBLE 00:52:51]. But  
14 again, we have the one winner in front of us, before  
15 we didn't have that. Now we have one way we can plan  
16 better. So again, uh moving the emergency contract  
17 as a tool probably would add to the process. But at  
18 the end of the day, I don't think this is the end of  
19 the road.

20 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: The city is spending  
21 significant sums of money to serve asylum seekers,  
22 yet it seems that the great majority of these funds  
23 are spent on contracts with for-profit entities and  
24 you brought that up a minute ago also. The city has  
25 numerous nonprofit community-based organizations that  
provide many of the same services that the city is

contracting with for-profit entities. Even some of those for-profit providers have little to no track record of providing the services for which they were contracted. Many non-profits have expressed concern that the city is contracting with for-profit organizations while the non-profits who have been providing these services for many years are being ignored. What steps did the city take to consider non-profit organizations, including those that had already contracts with for things such as operating shelters, providing services for immigrants, healthcare, social services and so on for the contracts that ultimately went to for-profit companies and what were the barriers to using non-profit organizations in the first place?

JACQUES JIHA: The challenge is the scope and the size of the profit. As I said, we're settling 155,000 folks and taking care of 67,000. It's a lot more than our current capacity. So, therefore we had to rely on for-profit providers because a non-for-profit, they didn't have the physical infrastructure and the financial wear with all to deal with this. Because don't forget, it would have to tap into the unbalanced sheet to pay and then the city paid them



back. So, you can imagine a non-for-profit struggling already, had to advance money and get paid three, four, five months later by the city.

So, they didn't have the financial wear with all and the physical infrastructure to deal with this problem, so therefore we had to rely on for-profit providers. But as I said earlier, we're pivoting right now okay. Not that we have a long one in front of us, we are moving the smaller HERRCs and hotels to not-for-profit. This is one of the ideas we're thinking about doing as part of the PEG exercise. H+H has already released RFP's of the providers for services and some of them are not-for-providers. We responded to I believe the International Rescue Committee is one of them, one of the big non-for-profit responded to the RFP and we'll continue as they issue more RFP's, they will continue to do outreach to not-for-profit providers. That's those that have financial wear with all to deal with requests of this magnitude.

So, the challenge is the physical infrastructure and the financial wear with all to deal with requests of the magnitude, you know.

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2 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: We're looking forward to  
3 seeing again the not-for-profits who do have the  
4 experience take more of a responsibility.

5 JACQUES JIHA: We definitely will rely on them  
6 more as we go forward. As I said, because now we are  
7 the one way. We're not dealing with the emergency  
8 contract per se right now. We issued RFPs and  
9 reviewing them, we're doing, we issue them to make  
10 sure that they respond to the RFPs but again, as I  
11 said, it's a consideration but it's up to them. They  
12 have to respond to the RFPs based on their financial  
13 wear with all and based on the physical  
14 infrastructure that they have okay.

15 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Okay, thank you. I'm  
16 going to turn it over to Chair Brannan.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Speaker.  
18 Director I want to uhm push back a little bit on, the  
19 Speaker brought up the tax breaks, so our folks say  
20 we could see savings as soon as FY25. I also think  
21 that even if that were not the case, I know we're  
22 dealing with the November plan right now but just  
23 because savings might be in the future, it doesn't  
24 mean we shouldn't take a look at \$14 billion in tax  
25 breaks right?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Of course, it should be on table  
3 but what I'm saying to you is, the benefits that  
4 you're going to get in the short term is very little.  
5 It's the bulk of the benefits in the long term  
6 because this is our long-term commitment.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is that something you would  
8 work with us on to identify some of those tax breaks  
9 that you think might be -

10 JACQUES JIHA: I'd be more than happy to work  
11 with the Council to review, to see what can be done  
12 but again, as I said, you know we have to take into  
13 account the fact that we're dealing with a short-term  
14 problem, very short-term problem, when the benefit of  
15 these things are long term.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, okay, uhm, so the  
17 Council released our forecast over the weekend. The  
18 updated forecast identifies additional tax revenues  
19 of \$1.2 billion in FY24. Uhm, how can the public  
20 properly assess if the city needs to make these  
21 budget cuts when OMB is working on tax revenue  
22 projections that are essentially eight months old?

23 JACQUES JIHA: Uh again, we adjusted our revenue  
24 by about \$800 million spotted in November Plan but  
25 what message that I want to communicate to convey is

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3 revenues alone will not close the existing budget  
4 gap. As I said, even we're adding \$8 million in  
5 revenues, okay, in the November plan and after a  
6 successful PEG of \$3.7 billion, we still have a gap  
7 of \$7 billion to close in 37 days.

8 So, I'm not saying that that \$1.2 billion is not  
9 money. It's money, okay but we need other things to  
10 do so that's when the PEG comes in, okay. Okay, PEGs  
11 of the agency, PEG of the Asylum Seekers program. We  
12 need other tools to deal with the problem of this  
13 size.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We don't disagree, we just  
15 want to make sure we're putting all our cards on the  
16 table.

17 JACQUES JIHA: And we will address our forecast  
18 also in November — uhm, in January, okay. Again, we  
19 are all concerned about the direction of the economy  
20 as your economies indicate in your own report that  
21 there is a slowdown of the economy. That you know,  
22 we'll take that into account and so that will also  
23 guide our forecast of that revenue.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And if OMB releases a  
25 stronger tax forecast as part of the prelim in  
January, do you think further PEGs would be needed?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Again, at this point and time, I  
3 cannot, our goal is to try and solve as I indicated  
4 to you when I brief the big issue of the Council is,  
5 our goal has always been to try to frontload the  
6 solution of the problem so that you know we're not  
7 leaving things to chance okay. We're trying to solve  
8 the problem in November and January. And if we  
9 manage to solve it, there may not be any forward okay  
10 but at this point and time, I cannot guarantee  
11 anything until we release our January plan and see  
12 exactly where we are, where we land.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, the FY23 budget was  
14 adopted with a mayoral estimate of about \$73 billion  
15 in city fund revenues but the year ended with nearly  
16 \$80 billion in city funds revenues. What drove that  
17 increase?

18 JACQUES JIHA: It's uh if I remember correctly,  
19 it's basically driven by improvement better than  
20 expected. Improvement of the economy. It's a job  
21 where that 100,000 more jobs in the and the profit  
22 was probably about \$6 billion more than we  
23 anticipated. So, that's basically what drove - it's  
24 basically the income driven taxes. Personal income  
25 coupled with taxes; these are the main drivers.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I want to talk about uhm,  
4 reserve funds a bit. The city currently has a number  
5 of different funds which are term reserves or they  
6 extensively operate as reserve funds but that's  
7 seemingly where the similarities end. Within the  
8 expense budget, there exists two in year budget in  
9 reserves, the general reserve and the capital  
10 stabilization reserve. So, these two reserves are  
11 unallocated to specific expenses and are typically  
12 drawn down during the fiscal year.

13 With the increasing budget gaps in the outyears,  
14 why was the reduction of the in-year reserves not  
15 included as part of the strategy for beginning to  
16 balance FY25 in the November plan?

17 JACQUES JIHA: As I said in my testimony, our  
18 goal is to use the annual reserves as part of the  
19 preliminary budget. Uhm, which is \$1.45 billion.  
20 Again, they were not used but we're looking at it as  
21 a budget cycle of almost one year. So, we have  
22 November, January Exec and adoption. So, because  
23 something is not used in November, it doesn't mean  
24 it's not going to be used in January. So, our goal  
25 is to we reserve, we save it to be used as part of

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3 January knowing that we have a huge gap in general  
4 with the close.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, the other types of  
6 reserves the city has at its disposal is the rainy-  
7 day fund and the retiree health benefit trust. The  
8 rainy-day fund is funded at approximately \$2 billion.  
9 The HRBT has just about \$5 billion, \$4.8 billion of  
10 funds. Has the Administration considered accessing  
11 the reserve funds to help balance the city's budget  
12 at this time?

13 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, no. The rainy-day fund was  
14 intended to be used as a cushion in case there's a  
15 recession. So, one time, once used and it's gone,  
16 okay.

17 Uhm so therefore we don't intend to use it as  
18 part of this budget cycle. The rainy day, the  
19 retiree health benefit trust was intended to cushion  
20 against \$100 billion of what they call other post  
21 implement benefits. This is about the \$100 billion  
22 liability of - what they call ability. So, \$100  
23 billion. We only have \$5 billion against \$100  
24 billion. So, we don't think it would be wise to use  
25 the retiree health benefit trust.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The Rainy-Day fund, you  
3 won't touch it unless you think there is a recession?

4 JACQUES JIHA: Yes. That's what it was intended  
5 to do, to use for.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we'll talk about the  
7 hiring freeze. What is the overall attrition rate  
8 for city employees?

9 JACQUES JIHA: I believe the overall attrition  
10 rate right now is 8.3 percent. For Fiscal Year 2023,  
11 it's 8.3 percent.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And has the city or any  
13 specific city agency seen an uptick in attrition  
14 rates over the last 12 months?

15 JACQUES JIHA: It's simply what we're seeing is  
16 in line with — since the pandemic with national  
17 trend. Uhm, you know, we — the 8.3 is below the 8.4  
18 we had in Fiscal Year 2022 but again, we will  
19 continue to monitor the trend in Fiscal Year 2025 to  
20 see if it stays you know below 8.3 or at 8.3.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What was the citywide  
22 attrition rate during the pandemic hiring freeze?

23 JACQUES JIHA: It was 5.6 in 2020, 4.8 in 2021  
24 and 8.4 in 2022.

25



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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, uhm, we're talking  
3 about vacancies. So, based on the actual full-time  
4 headcount of as October and the new budgeted  
5 headcount totals as of November, what is the current  
6 total number of vacancies citywide?

7 JACQUES JIHA: It's about 18,360.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 18,360?

9 JACQUES JIHA: Hmm, hmm.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And how many of those  
11 positions are city funded?

12 JACQUES JIHA: City funded is about 12,914, I  
13 believe yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so there is still a  
15 number of agencies with vacancy rates above ten  
16 percent.

17 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: DOB, DCAS, Corrections,  
19 DOF. Has OMB considered agencywide exceptions to the  
20 hiring freeze?

21 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, you know it's not a very -- as  
22 I said, very efficient to do it citywide. So, what  
23 we've been doing is we've been exempting certain  
24 titles. Titles that are critical instead of doing  
25 citywide exemption.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, November PEG included  
3 savings of approximately \$135 million in the current  
4 year from the elimination of over 1,600 vacancies,  
5 which is less than ten percent of the existing  
6 vacancies. Why was there not a greater focus on the  
7 elimination of vacancies as part of the November PEG?

8 JACQUES JIHA: We have, as part of the PEG, we  
9 have about 2,100 vacancies were reduced for Fiscal  
10 2024. That save was about \$257 million and we have  
11 an additional 2,400 in 2025 for savings of about 306.  
12 The challenge, however, if you take all vacancies, it  
13 means that we're going to have to any minute call  
14 uniform teachers and revenue generating positions,  
15 okay that are very critical. So, from our  
16 perspective, the agencies choose at best to manage  
17 their resources so therefore we rely on the agencies  
18 to submit the proposals for us and even if the  
19 proposals include PEG vacancies, we take them rather  
20 than us imposing vacancies on them.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Has OMB calculated what the  
22 savings would be in FY24 and FY25 if the city would  
23 eliminate all existing vacancies?

24 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I believe it's about \$1.2  
25 billion for Fiscal 2025 that would be. But again,

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3 the danger is you would risk and get rid of all the  
4 teachers, all the uniform vacant positions, which  
5 would only alleviate the wise cost.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Something my colleagues and  
7 I and the Speaker touched on as well is uhm, I think  
8 when uhm OMB issues equal cuts, it may seem that OMB  
9 is being merciful by assigning the same amount of  
10 pain to every agency. But I think equal cuts don't  
11 equal equitable cuts because a five percent cut to an  
12 agency with a \$20 billion budget is different than a  
13 five percent cut to an agency with a \$20 million  
14 budget.

15 How much thought was given into those across-the-  
16 board cuts and the disproportionate results?

17 JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said to the Speaker  
18 earlier, we did exactly that. 82 percent of the PEG  
19 savings basically came from things other than  
20 programs and it's because we are extremely careful.  
21 Okay, our goal is to minimize as best as we can the  
22 impact on the public. This is something which is  
23 done [INAUDIBLE 01:09:28] okay. It's a process the  
24 way we go about things. If we have vacancies okay,  
25 we're trying to target those things. If we have  
expenses that are over limit, we resubmit them, bring

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3 them in line okay with actual spending. Okay, we do  
4 underspending saving, so we are very good about the  
5 way we go about these things. I understand exactly  
6 what you're saying but however, what I said, in an  
7 environment when you have to cut, when you have to  
8 save so much in terms of resources, every time you  
9 reduce one agency, you have to make it up somewhere  
10 else. So, you have to reduce it for somebody else.

11 For us, we generate the same kind of savings.  
12 So, that's the reason you know we go about these  
13 things in a deliberate fashion, try to minimize as  
14 much as we can the impact on programs and impact on  
15 services.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do you think we would — I  
17 mean obviously a lot of the headlines have been about  
18 the migrant crisis and the cost related to the  
19 migrant crisis. The Council contents that we would  
20 not be here today if it were solely for the migrant  
21 crisis and that a lot of the pain that we're facing  
22 now is due to the end of COVID stimulus funds. Uhm,  
23 I'm not sure OMB agrees with us on that but can you  
24 talk about that?

25 JACQUES JIHA: No, it's not that we don't agree  
with you, that's not the point. There is always a

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3 budget gap in New York City history, okay? The  
4 budget gap existed before the migrants stopped coming  
5 to New York City.

6 So, the point we're making is the incremental  
7 okay. That's the point we're making. The  
8 incremental. In other words, our budget gap would  
9 have been normal like historic norm, nothing  
10 significant about them, okay but what drive the  
11 budget gap beyond okay where we are is the migrant  
12 crisis. That's the point we're making, okay because  
13 the budget gap, we had a budget gap before the  
14 migrant crisis okay, alright. So, it's not just the  
15 migrant, we're saying the incremental okay, that's  
16 what's driving — we're saying the migrant is the  
17 driver of who is above and beyond the historic norm.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Do we have an accounting of  
19 the funds we've received from Albany and Washington  
20 to this point to help us with the migrant crisis?

21 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, as I said we added \$6.2  
22 billion to the funds for Fiscal 2024 and 2025. The  
23 state is about \$1.8 billion and federal government is  
24 about \$155.9 million I believe, million dollars.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Could you say that again?  
So, the state?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Is about \$1.9 billion.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: \$1.9 billion and federal  
4 government?

5 JACQUES JIHA: The federal government is \$155.9  
6 million.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yup. Uhm, okay, I just  
8 have one more because we have, we have about 30  
9 members here who want to ask questions. So, I want  
10 to talk quickly uhm about the DSNY PEGs but I want to  
11 leave some for the Chairs as well. Can the  
12 Administration commit to keeping the city clean while  
13 reducing key cleaning services like litter basket  
14 collection?

15 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, listen, uh city cleanliness  
16 is a priority of the Mayor. This is why Sanitation  
17 was exempted from the PEG in the January Plan. Uh,  
18 DSNY is making the same level, keeping the same level  
19 of service in the commercial zones. The only area  
20 where you're going to see is a drop in litter baskets  
21 is basically an area where you have underutilization,  
22 okay but an area where you have high utilization,  
23 commercial districts, uh the litter baskets rates  
24 will continue.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, the FY24 budget  
3 included one year funding of \$22 million for  
4 supplementing litter basket service. It's something  
5 that my colleagues and I fought really hard for.  
6 Since this funding is not baselined, why was a PEG  
7 also put on this service?

8 JACQUES JIHA: Again, this is crisis we have to  
9 deal with. We have to reallocate resources from  
10 certain areas to other areas to fund the migrant  
11 crisis. As I said, we have very much constrain by  
12 the right to shelter, so therefore we have to fund  
13 the migrant crisis. So, our job basically has been  
14 to reallocate resources wherever we have, where we're  
15 going to see this impact to pay for the migrant  
16 crisis.

17 So, it's not like you know it is something that  
18 if financial concerns change, we will reassess that  
19 saving initiative. But at this point and time where  
20 we are, we have to fund resources some way.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm going to turn it  
22 over to Deputy Majority, sorry Majority Leader Powers  
23 for questions. Quickly Keith, sorry just we've also  
24 been joined by Council Members Hanks, Dinowitz, Won,  
25 Restler, Rivera, Sanchez and Holden.

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3 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Thank you. Nice to see  
4 you guys. Thank you for taking the time to answer  
5 questions. I'm just going to hone in on one topic.  
6 I want to talk about the Sanitation organics budget.  
7 Obviously, as part of the PEG, the implementation of  
8 the organics collection in the Bronx and Staten  
9 Island was delayed from April of FY24 to October of  
10 FY25. I recognize that that's in compliance with the  
11 laws that we had passed I believe but still wanted to  
12 get a better understanding of it.

13 Uhm, number one, has headcount been allocated  
14 already to support that expansion? And if so, is the  
15 plan to redistribute personnel in the meantime?

16 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, no. They had no staff  
17 dedicated specifically to the organics program. The  
18 way the Sanitation Department works, staff perform a  
19 number of different functions and specific  
20 assignments from day to day. So, you know in  
21 reality, there are no staff currently dedicated per  
22 se to organics.

23 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Okay. Uhm, can you  
24 confirm that citywide curbside organics collection is  
25 currently happening in at least 30 Sanitation



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3 districts and will be in all five boroughs by October  
4 of 2024 as required by the City Council's law?

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yes. Currently, we have  
6 residential curbside organics program tailored to  
7 district in Brooklyn and Queens and definitely we'll  
8 comply with them.

9 MAJORITY LEADER POWER: Okay. Funding for  
10 educational technical assistance programs related to  
11 the community composting programs was eliminated as  
12 part of the November plan. That funding as you know,  
13 helped maintain a partnership with seven botanical  
14 gardens and nonprofits in the five boroughs. Can you  
15 – as you know the Council feels strongly about that  
16 and it's a valuable and popular program. Can you  
17 confirm or tell us whether the PEG completely  
18 eliminates funding for this program?

19 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, yes. It is when it comes to  
20 funding, but regarding the organization, DBG  
21 organization that receive funding, they decide to  
22 allocate their resources. So, their staffing, how  
23 they address their staffing, it's up to them, so.

24 MAJORITY LEADER POWER: But just want to get you  
25 on the right period, the PEG does completely

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3 eliminate funding for those programs, is that  
4 correct?

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

6 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Okay and as your  
7 understanding, I understand you're saying they can  
8 use that as needed but our understanding is that it  
9 will reduce headcount at that program. Is that your  
10 understanding?

11 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, it is my understanding as  
12 well.

13 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Okay, uhm, with the cuts  
14 to that, to the community program, can you confirm  
15 the city or let us know if the city will still be in  
16 compliance with Local Law 88, 89 of 2023 this year  
17 that established community composting programs?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, the city will remain in  
19 compliance with Local Laws 88 and 89.

20 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Okay, and last question  
21 just on outside of organics, can you tell us what  
22 changes – I know that the sanitation is cut from the  
23 – or is exempt from the next year's budget cuts but  
24 can you tell us what the expected reductions will be  
25 on sanitation service with the current PEG that's

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3 being made in terms of personnel pickup, things like  
4 that.

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, we as I said, the litter  
6 basket is one piece of it. But again, we will work  
7 with the agencies you know as they operationalize the  
8 PEGs to a goal to – our goal is to make sure they  
9 minimize the impact on services as much as possible.  
10 There will not be any change to the collection,  
11 pickup for refuse, recycling and organics. Uhm, and  
12 places where you'll see some changes will be the lot  
13 cleanings. You know cleaning of lots and litter  
14 baskets, but again, this will probably be more  
15 focused on areas where you know, where you have  
16 underutilization rather than commercial areas. But  
17 again, they don't have a final plan yet in place.  
18 They are working to finalize their plan because  
19 again, as I said, it's trying to minimize as much as  
20 possible the impact on services.

21 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Thanks, just last  
22 question, can you let us know when we would expect to  
23 know when the final plan is and when we can share  
24 with constituents or –  
25

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2 JACQUES JIHA: We will definitely once we have –  
3 once the operation is upline, we will sit down and  
4 share them with the Council.

5 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: What's the timing of  
6 that?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, I will come back to you, okay.

8 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Okay, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Brooks-Powers  
10 followed by Brewer.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and good  
12 morning. I have a couple of questions; I'm going to  
13 just ask them and then ask that you respond. So,  
14 first under the Home First Down Payment Assistance  
15 PEG, the November plan includes a swap of \$26.4  
16 million across Fiscal 2024 to 2027 to the capital  
17 budget for funding, HPD's Home First Down Payment  
18 Assistance Program. Expense budget savings as a  
19 result of this swap are \$3.4 million in the current  
20 year, increasing to \$9 million by the end of the  
21 plan. When should we expect HPD and OMB to issue the  
22 necessary certificate to proceed? Which will enable  
23 the use of capital funds for the Home First Down  
24 Payment Assistance program and will an equivalent  
25 amount of capital funding be added to the capital

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budget in January? Will these funds be reprogrammed from within the agencies existing capital budget from funding that was already earmarked for other critical affordable housing projects?

And then just pivoting over to DOT. As of October, DOT had an actual headcount of approximately 5,100, which was about 1,200 less than its budgeted headcount. With a vacancy rate of nearly 20 percent, the agency continues to struggle to meet mandated targets and benchmarks. Will DOT be able to hire and fill these positions despite the hiring freeze or are they expected to continue operating with one out of five positions unfilled? Does this high vacancy rate concern the Administration and will DOT be required to eliminate vacancies as a part of the next round of PEGs? And lastly, the November plan includes a revenue PEG of \$42 million in Fiscal 2024 and \$40 million in Fiscal 2025 and 2026 related to additional revenue from speed cameras.

According to OMB, this is a result of a re-estimate of future revenue based on new data as well as the moving of cameras into new areas. Where does DOT plan on moving the cameras and how many cameras in total will be moved? What boroughs will see the

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3 greatest increase in speed camera installations and  
4 how will the department determine where cameras will  
5 be installed?

6 We want to make sure that equity is included in  
7 this and not being placed and overburdensome  
8 targeting low-income New Yorkers. So, we want to  
9 know in terms of what that matrix is going to look  
10 like. And I can repeat any question that you need me  
11 to.

12 JACQUES JIHA: Okay, let me try. Uh, with  
13 respect to the Home First Down Payment Assistance  
14 program, HPD currently is still in the initial stage  
15 of working out the extension of the program and  
16 therefore it is difficult to predict exactly when HPD  
17 and OMB would issue the necessary CPs. Because the  
18 CPs, the issuance of the CPs usually happens near the  
19 end of the review process. And HPD would be able to  
20 accommodate the need within the existing capital  
21 budget because the need is very small compared with  
22 the overall size of HPD capital budget. So,  
23 therefore they should be able to sustain them.

24 Regarding DOT, DOT budgeted headcount is 5,762 as  
25 of November and their active headcount is 5100, which

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3 means that they have 630 vacancies, which is about 11  
4 percent vacancy.

5 Uhm, typically agencies submit their PEG plan for  
6 OMB. That allows them to manage their operation  
7 effectively, so we are not requiring DOT to submit  
8 any reduction, vacancy reduction plan. Regarding the  
9 cameras, DOT plan to move -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry really  
11 quickly before you move on from that point, so why  
12 are you not requiring them to make any space in terms  
13 of the headcount? Are they going to be held to the  
14 hiring freeze that's in place? Because right now,  
15 they're unable to meet legal mandated goals that are  
16 set.

17 JACQUES JIHA: Again, the goal of the freeze, the  
18 hiring freeze was to give the agency the ability to  
19 use the hiring freeze you know as part of their  
20 saving plans, okay. So, until we get out of this  
21 jam, you know the hiring freeze to be in place.

22 Okay, again, once the crisis is over we'll visit that  
23 issue. Uhm, regarding the cameras, DOT plan to move  
24 25 cameras per month. They would move these cameras  
25 from location where speeding has been largely  
corrected and this is driving down speeding to new

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location where you have speeding and crash, high  
speeding and crashes, okay. This is a data driven  
exercise and the location will continue to be  
determined by speeding incidents and seize crashes.

Uhm, I don't know where the cameras are or will  
they will be. Nobody knows. That's the whole part  
of this is uh -

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Do you have an  
idea - well, that's not the whole part of it because  
it shouldn't be a gotcha. That's one, but uhm, in  
terms of which borough do we know like he says 25 is  
it like five per borough or is it like ten in Queens.

JACQUES JIHA: I don't know what the strategy is  
but I'm assuming it's probably going to be the simple  
portion as we currently have with the different  
boroughs but I thought no, you know.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, uhm, on  
December 4, 2023, Health + Hospitals Finance  
Committee voted to unanimously award \$565.6 million  
of new contracts related to catering, laundry and  
case management services at the HERRCs to 13  
companies. Most of them for profit and I know that



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the Speaker asked about this but I listened to that entire meeting and the contract expected to receive final approval obviously from the Health + Hospitals Board. I think they may have already. I know that Board well. I know that they will be agreed to. But this is the problem, I know you said that the community-based nonprofits and our city do not have the capacity to take care of all of these contracts. I do not agree and I want to know why so many of these awards were given to for-profit companies. Despite the fact that you think there aren't enough support here, think of those large Phipps Houses. Think of the United Neighborhood Houses. Think of others that could do this. I want to know what efforts did the administration make to consider nonprofit companies when determining these awards. Can you be specific as to what you did to find nonprofits? IRC is great. I know IRC very well but it's a national company and the nonprofits are getting killed by these budget cuts. One way to survive, to keep them whole would have been to help them work on this project. Thank you, please answer that question.

JACQUES JIHA: Yes, and we all agree. [APPLAUSE]

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Quiet please.

3 JACQUES JIHA: We all agree that it would serve  
4 the city interest to award these contracts to not-  
5 for-profit, because as you can imagine the services  
6 are cheaper than for profit providers. -

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

8 JACQUES JIHA: So as of now, what we know is no  
9 contracts have been awarded yet by H+H. Our goal  
10 again as I said, is to move the small HERRCs, the  
11 small hotels to not-for-profit providers. Uh, it  
12 really is about being able to ensure that we - one of  
13 its logistically and fiscal opponent will continue to  
14 so. We are extending the IFP process to see if we  
15 can get more not-for-profits to respond to the IFPs  
16 issued by H+H. We will do our outreach as best as we  
17 can. But again as I said, we issue an IFP, it's only  
18 one national one that responded.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I understand.

20 JACQUES JIHA: And the reason is simple. The  
21 question is, do they have the financial wear with  
22 all? Don't forget, you're talking about billions of  
23 dollars that they have to advance okay and the city  
24 has to reimburse them.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I understand Director but

3 —

4 JACQUES JIHA: So, the question is, do they have  
5 the financial wear with all okay, because they have  
6 to tap into their own balance sheet. So, as I said  
7 the goal is to move slowly. We have the one-way now,  
8 okay before we didn't have that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I understand.

10 JACQUES JIHA: Okay, we're pivoting right now,  
11 okay and our goal is to rely as much as possible on  
12 non-for-profit providers going forward. But in the  
13 midst of the crisis, okay when we have the outcome  
14 with 150,000 folks, the scope and the size of the  
15 problem is so big that not-for-profit providers in  
16 New York could not deal with that problem because  
17 they don't have the finances. They don't have the  
18 balance sheet.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, you and I might  
20 disagree on that. Some of them have major support in  
21 terms of their endowments, so we can have a  
22 conversation. You're not talking about small  
23 nonprofits. I'm talking about the big ones. I think  
24 I know them all because I've been doing this work a  
25 very long time.

JACQUES JIHA: Sure, sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But I understood from Dr. Long who sat exactly where you are. I have great respect for Dr. Ted Long but he said that the new contracts RFP'd by H+H would in fact be different than what we had seen as a continuation from what I would call as you did, the test and trace and the pandemic. But one of the contracts was awarded to DocGo , despite the ongoing concerns with the company and their limited track record in this type of work. They do health, they don't do casework and given that there are concerns regarding the high cost of asylum response efforts, the reliance on the for-profit companies and the level of cut being implemented by the city agencies, how will these new contracts be saving the city money? I think again DocGo would not be the company I would choose. I would certainly suggest why can't some of these larger contracts be broken up so that a nonprofit has two or three hotels? The Watson on 57<sup>th</sup> Street, I know well, 2,000. Guess what? A nonprofit can handle that. So, I want to know why in the world would DocGo get this contract because they had it before. I

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3 understand it was a continuation but during the RFP  
4 they got it again. Can you explain that to me?

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, uhm, again as I said, H+H  
6 put out an RFP and many providers responded including  
7 some not-for-profits.

8 The vendors that we select whether they are the  
9 [INAUDIBLE 1:32:24] or new [INAUDIBLE 01:32:26] we'll  
10 have to through a round of negotiation okay where the  
11 city and H+H will insist on reducing prices than we  
12 are getting now. We have not yet selected vendors  
13 okay. The amounts in the article are not to exceed  
14 amounts and in no way represent a commitment to pay  
15 those amounts but instead, they are like a cap on  
16 what can be spent.

17 Uhm, again as I said, one of the vendors that  
18 responded to the RFP is the International Rescue  
19 Committee.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: IRC, yes.

21 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, IRC you know and in the  
22 upcoming RFP, we'll continue to reach out to not-for-  
23 profit vendors. Okay, so to make sure they  
24 participate and the answer for the RFPs because the  
25 RFP are out there, okay. We could only tell them,

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hey there's an RFP. If they decide for whatever  
reason they don't respond -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But maybe you write the  
RFP differently so that the New York City nonprofits  
that are large could respond. There are ways of  
writing an RFP and the Speaker said, we'd like to  
work with you. Yes, that's an example where we would  
like to work with you. Do we have your commitment to  
work with us on this particular issue?

JACQUES JIHA: I will reach out to - we will  
reach out to H+H to make sure that they crafted the  
RFP in a way okay, that non-for-profit providers in  
New York can adequately respond to the RFPs.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I'd love to  
see DocGo go away. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Alright, good morning.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Good morning. The  
November Plan PEG also included savings for  
reductions in funding to community schools per  
session, per diem. Can you tell us the list of  
community schools that would be impacted by the PEG  
and what services will be impacted?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I don't have the list of the  
3 schools that will impacted.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I'm going to ask my  
5 questions, since my time is limited.

6 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Will the reduction in per  
8 session per diem impact Summer Rising as well? It  
9 was noted that the Administration would be adding 125  
10 school safety agents to the pool of 3,930 currently  
11 active. Will the 125 additional school safety agents  
12 be hired this school year? What will the budget now  
13 be given this hiring? And what is the clear hiring  
14 policy for school safety division given this  
15 immediate reversal?

16 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, it wasn't a reversal per se,  
17 it was just that when the uhm NYPD came and asked for  
18 the class, at the time we is didn't have resources in  
19 the budget forward because we have not yet addressed  
20 the budget for the raises that we initiated with the  
21 unions. So, once those resources were added okay,  
22 the increased salary. So, then they had resources in  
23 the budget. So, they used those resources basically  
24 to hire a smaller class because we don't have a lot  
25 of resources at this point and time to deal with all

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2 these different issues as I've been saying all  
3 morning because we basically are reallocating  
4 resources from one area to another.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Uhm, and one of the  
6 things we saw was we worked on the SFS wait uhm and  
7 we noticed that for some reason you have not  
8 accounted for moments to determine the SFS formula  
9 and some schools have not been receiving their  
10 funding since December of 2022. Can you commit to  
11 adjusting that school budget?

12 JACQUES JIHA: The New York City public school is  
13 basically taking that into account and they know that  
14 the model that they used to do in the past, even the  
15 influx of new migrants, they have to provide  
16 additional resources through the schools and they  
17 rely just as quickly as possible, okay the formula to  
18 take into account the new migrant as quickly as  
19 possible.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Correct but that's been  
21 since December of 2022. We have not adjusted that  
22 budget and when we recalculated the formula for SFS,  
23 we included high poverty in students in temporary  
24 housing and we saw those numbers go up. So, it  
25 impacted the schools budget by not having those



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3 funding in that budget. And with the PEGs that you  
4 see, will OMB commit to make change before the second  
5 round of midyear adjustments?

6 JACQUES JIHA: I believe that the New York Public  
7 School is revising this policy as we speak to quickly  
8 move other resources to our school. Timing, it's up  
9 to when they complete their work but I believe that's  
10 what they're doing.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: And let's talk about  
12 Carter cases real quick. \$1.1 billion for Carter  
13 cases.

14 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, it is an issue that is a  
15 function to us as well. We're seeing significant  
16 growth in the number of Carter cases and this is a  
17 discussion we're having with the school, the public  
18 school system regarding our best to curb the increase  
19 in the Carter cases.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: We have about 13,700  
21 pending Carter cases. Can OMB provide a breakdown to  
22 cases including how many cases are Carter versus  
23 Connor? And how many new cases have been initiated  
24 since last school year and what's the uhm average  
25 cost per case?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: I would have to come back to you  
3 with the breakdown. We have to work DOE to provide  
4 you a breakdown of the Carter and Connor cases and  
5 how much it's costing for each one of them.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Because I think it would  
7 be wiser if you're looking to save money, to invest  
8 in the services, so we cannot have so many Carter  
9 cases.

10 JACQUES JIHA: We've been investing a significant  
11 amount of money in this but yet, it's not good  
12 investing on both hands.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: But we're cutting Pre-K  
14 Special Education, which is the pathway that created  
15 Carter cases.

16 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, it's an issue of concern to  
17 all of us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you Chair. I'll  
19 come back.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Won.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much. As you  
22 can tell, the Council is very aligned on how we view  
23 the current PEG situation and it is a full house  
24 today. Good morning.

25 JACQUES JIHA: Good morning.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: As the Chair of Contracts,

4 we have been hearing a lot of questioning on the

5 contracts especially on the migrant crisis.

6 According to the November 30<sup>th</sup> Comptroller Release

7 Report evaluating the city's use of emergency

8 procurement, we know that vendors can start work

9 immediately once the agency awards the contract.

10 After this, agencies are supposed to submit formal

11 documentation for review to the Comptroller and the

12 Law Department within 15 days of the contract start.

13 But the Comptrollers report found that the vast

14 majority of submissions were received later than 15

15 days after the contract started and that agencies

16 only submitted 27 percent of asylum seeker related

17 written determinations within the 15 days.

18 What was the cause of the considerable delays and

19 what is the Administration doing to ensure the

20 required documentation and the emergency contracts is

21 submitted to the Comptroller in required timeframe in

22 the future since there are so many people in the room

23 from community composters to educators, arts, we are

24 all here because we are being impacted by these PEGs

25 that you have made across the board and these are

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3 real people's lives, especially people who are  
4 unionized who are about to lose jobs in two weeks.

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, I would have to defer to  
6 specific agencies and I'm happy to look into it and  
7 see what can be done. Why it's taking them so long,  
8 okay but again, I would have to come back to you  
9 because you know specific agencies, what's the  
10 reason? What's rational? Why it's taking them so  
11 long?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: As you've heard from both  
13 the Finance Chair and the Speaker and everyone else  
14 that has asked questions so far, it is clear that our  
15 current financial crisis is not just based on the  
16 asylum seeker humanitarian crisis that we're in  
17 alone. We know that right now, our asylum seeker  
18 crisis started in Spring of 2020. We are now at the  
19 end of 2023. You have had more than a year. Can you  
20 help me understand why all of the migrant shelter  
21 contracts right now, whether it requires shelter or  
22 food, healthcare, mental health, anything that they  
23 deserve in services, has yet to be standardized. Why  
24 is it that food contracts at H+H differ from HPD to  
25 DHS, OEM, and everyone across the board has different  
caps for spending especially when it comes to food

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yet the quality continues to remain dismissal? Like  
dismal?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, as a migrant myself, I'm very  
proud of the work that the Mayor is doing to take  
care of the migrant. We are not blaming the migrants  
for the crisis. The city as always had budget gaps,  
always. Okay, what we're saying is the incremental,  
what's above the historic norm okay, what's above  
what history of gap has been, that's what we're  
saying is caused by the 150,000 migrants okay, that  
we have to take care of. We are not blaming the  
migrant for the crisis. We're saying only, okay, we  
always have gap but what's above the gap okay, that's  
what we're saying has been caused by the migrant.  
So, regarding to go back to uhm, the question about  
procurement, again as I said, every agency has their  
own issues okay. So, we're going to have to go back  
to these agencies and talk to them, to see what's  
causing okay them to delay alright and we'll get back  
to you on this.

COUNCIL MEMBER WON: We are going to have a food  
procurement hearing tomorrow on specifically on all  
the differences in food procurement and the quality  
that it lacks throughout our city with all these

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3 agencies and I just want to zero in on what Council  
4 Member Brewer was saying, that the DocGo Contract  
5 for example, it's paying case workers more than \$150K  
6 according to the contract on the max that they could  
7 receive as an employee of DocGo. When we have cost  
8 of living adjustments that have never been met for  
9 our human service providers in this room who are  
10 about to be laid off in two weeks.

11 So, I will yield my time. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Krishnan.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you Madam Speaker  
14 and Chair Brannan for today's hearing. Thank you Mr.  
15 Director. Before starting my questions, I just want  
16 to say I am shocked by this Administrations fiscal  
17 policy to the extent that exists. It is self-  
18 defeating because you are creating the very fiscal  
19 cliff that you claim we are in existing right now.  
20 We are facing cutting from services that asylum  
21 seekers and vulnerable New Yorkers depend on as you  
22 do in fact blame them. It is contradictory because  
23 as we talk about all these cuts to essential  
24 services, there are mega expenses as we discussed  
25 before for no bid for-profit contracts for police  
radios, for settlements of wrongful conviction claims

that should never have been brought in the first place. And you are clawing back funding that this city hall itself allocated in the last budget within less than six months. And it is also desperate because I have yet to see this Administration since it came into office, do any sort of serious audit of its agencies to find a way for government spending that does in fact exist and to be sure, we face fiscal challenges. But to go after the essential services that our most vulnerable New Yorkers depend on is going to increase income inequality, study after study, economic theory after economy theory has shown that.

So, my question, I want to focus on the Parks Opportunity program, which provides job experience for Parks workers on public benefits but this means working the program 40 hours a week. They get job training. Training of interview skills. There were 1,000 parks workers in this program last year, 35,000 since 2003. And again, this is a program for individuals on public benefits providing them the opportunity for mobility, stability and to overcome poverty.

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2 The Mayor is eliminating this program entirely.

3 Someone who claims to want to invest in workforce  
4 development programs. So, my first question to you  
5 is what is the total amount of funding that the Parks  
6 Department will be losing because of this PEG?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Again, uhm, to clarify some of the  
8 point that you make is folks in the JTP program will  
9 continue to have job opportunities. DSS decided that  
10 this was not a program that leads to long term jobs  
11 okay for folks. So, therefore -

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yeah.

13 JACQUES JIHA: Can I finish please?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Well, my question  
15 specifically was about and you should ask the workers  
16 in that program, who are losing this opportunity how  
17 they - about that program. So, my question to you -

18 JACQUES JIHA: They -

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: My question to you, my  
20 question to you is what is the total amount of the  
21 PEG? What is the total amount of the PEG to the  
22 Parks Department?

23 JACQUES JIHA: Parks uhm, it's - put it this way.  
24 The Parks is not paying for it okay? The PEGs apply  
25 to HRA. HRA is \$17.5 million okay that is being



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removed from HRAs budget. It's not from Parks budget  
okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Right, sorry Mr. Budget  
Director, I'm limited on time, so let me jump in and  
tell you. It's a \$60 million PEG to Parks because  
you piggybacked the cut to HRA because they  
administered the public benefits but the impact is  
felt by Parks. That's a \$60 million PEG to Parks.  
That's 12 percent of the Parks agency budget. Not 5  
percent, 12 percent. So, I'd like to know because  
these are workers, the bulk of them that clean our  
parks across the city. How will the day-to-day  
maintenance and operations of the parks be impacted  
by this PEG and specifically the elimination of the  
Park program?

JACQUES JIHA: We're moving money from HRA into  
parks okay, so that parks can hire full time  
employees to do the maintenance and operations of the  
park, instead of relying on those seasonal workers.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yeah.

JACQUES JIHA: Okay? So, Parks will have  
employees because we're moving resources from HRA  
into the Parks Department okay? Two, now Parks is  
going to have full time employees instead of having

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3 seasonal employees working for these okay and every  
4 six months okay they have constantly to renew and so  
5 they don't have productivity. They don't have -  
6 obviously they don't have the experience because  
7 you're constantly rotating these folks. So, now,  
8 they're going to have a full-time staff just cleaning  
9 parks.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Got it. Let me Mr.  
10 Budget Director because I'm short on time. Let me  
11 answer my own question. Because of this PEG and  
12 because elimination of this program, our parks now,  
13 instead of being cleaned seven days a week, will be  
14 cleaned one day a week. And 17,000 trash cans that  
15 exist in parks across our city will be overflowing.

16 Now, Mr. Budget Director, do you believe that our  
17 parks should be clean?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Of course.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Okay. Do you believe  
20 that our parks should be safe?

21 JACQUES JIHA: Of course.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yeah and there's also,  
23 I'd add to that an emerging amount of evidence that  
24 our parks actually contribute to public safety. So,  
25 my question is, given that, given the fact that

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there's now a 12 percent PEG to parks. Given as you  
said our parks should be clean, that they should be  
safe and they contribute to public safety, why on  
earth would our Parks Department not be exempted from  
the next round of PEGs in January, as you've exempted  
other agencies like NYPD and Sanitation on the  
grounds of public safety and cleanliness. Why  
wouldn't our Parks Department be exempted to given  
that they're facing a 12 percent PEG this round?

JACQUES JIHA: Because we face a budget gap of \$7  
billion. We have to make tough choices.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I would submit  
before my final question that there's no doubt  
choices need to be made but it's shocking the choices  
that you all have chosen to make. That's the  
problem. And again, it's contradict- let me finish  
sorry, that's it's contradictory to state the  
rationales of public safety and cleanliness and cut  
from our Parks Department the way you're doing. It  
is contradictory to say this Administration invests  
in workforce development programs and cut this very  
program.

My final question shifting topics is just about  
our cultural institutions in particular. They

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generate revenue for the city. They contribute to  
the tax revenue for the city as well. They raise  
much revenue through tours and in programming. This  
Administration again, going back to my first point  
about contradictory with the fiscal policy, funded  
and we worked together to fund our cultural  
institutions that are now facing cuts again with this  
PEG, not less than six months later.

Did OMB do any cost assessment of how these cuts  
will impact our arts institutions and cultural  
institutions that are still recovering from the  
pandemic?

JACQUES JIHA: We exempted these organizations in  
prior rounds of PEGs, every single one of them okay.  
But this time, the magnitude of the problem is such  
that we have to put everything on the table and they  
were included this time as part of the PEG. So, we  
understand the importance to the city but as I said,  
this is a crisis okay and as part of the solution to  
the crisis, we're asking everyone to contribute.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: If only that were true  
because I don't seem to be — that does not seem to be  
the case when it comes to which ones are exempted,  
which cuts are made and where. This is a choice and

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3 the Administration has chosen very poorly. Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council  
6 Member Hudson.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you Chair. The  
8 November Plan includes a PEG of \$13.5 million for  
9 older adult centers in Fiscal 2027 only. Older adult  
10 centers are a vital resource and lifeline for many of  
11 our city's older residents and we're concerned about  
12 the impact of a funding reduction for these programs,  
13 especially given that the population is rising.

14 The city's population of older adults, which  
15 currently represents 20 percent of our entire  
16 population will only grow as the baby boomer  
17 generation ages. A 2021 CUNY Graduate Center Study  
18 reports that population of adults ages 65 and older  
19 in New York State will soar 25 percent between 2021  
20 and 2040, compared to just three percent growth in  
21 the general population. And in the city alone, the  
22 number of older adults is expected to jump 40 percent  
23 by 2040, especially as people are living longer. How  
24 does the agency plan to achieve these savings?

25 JACQUES JIHA: These savings basically escalated  
for Fiscal Year 2027 and the goal here is to work

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3 with the agency to right size the program to bring it  
4 in line with participation. Uhm, visiting levels at  
5 those centers are 80 percent of what they were pre-  
6 pandemic level. So, you have a capacity issue okay  
7 and the capacity is much more than people going into  
8 those places, so therefore we have to try and find a  
9 way to match but you know, the uhm, uhm,  
10 participation wait okay with the capacity that we  
11 have and again, we're going to work with the agency.  
12 We have sometimes, we have a long one way.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Which senior centers or  
14 older adult centers have reduced capacity?

15 JACQUES JIHA: It's overall. I'm talking about  
16 overall but if you want a breakdown, I could give you  
17 the breakdown.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: I would love to see the  
19 breakdown because I hear from constituents from my  
20 district and other districts about uhm wanting more  
21 programming, more resources, going to their older  
22 adult clubs all the time and we've heard from older  
23 adult club providers who don't have - who are over  
24 run with older adults who keep coming in, so I'd be  
25 curious to know where -

JACQUES JIHA: Okay, we'll provide you the  
breakdown.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: How will older adult  
center capacity be impacted by the funding reduction?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said the uhm we will  
be working with the agency to try to find ways to  
plan this. As I said, we have a long one way because  
we're talking about Fiscal Year 2027 okay and to  
create something that makes sense. Again, the goal  
is not to hurt seniors. Okay, to provide them the  
resources that they need but again, our goal is to  
try to right size the programs to make sure we don't  
inefficiency as we implement going forward. But  
again, we're working with DFTA to make sure that you  
know things are done properly.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Will this reduction  
impact future RFPs?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, in a sense of the overall  
budget probably be lower. In that sense it would be  
but in general, you know it's probably different  
models that we're going to look to implement but I'm  
not expecting that to have you know besides the  
overall budget, I'm not expecting too much of an  
impact.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Do you know when the next  
RFP for older adult centers will be released?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, I don't have a sense because  
this doesn't go into effect until the Fiscal Year  
2027. So, you know I don't know for sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay and then I think I  
asked this question of you last year. I'm going to  
ask again hoping that maybe the answer might be a  
little bit different but do you use population growth  
or studies to inform fiscal policy?

JACQUES JIHA: Of course, yes we do.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: So, are you aware of the  
statistics that I shared where the older adult  
population in New York City is going to increase by  
40 percent by 2040?

JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And so, how are the  
budget cuts that you're proposing for the Department  
of the Aging going to support the population growth  
that we're going to see over the next several years?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, you're going to see a lot  
of uh - we're dealing with a crisis and as I said, we  
have to reallocate resources. A lot of the things  
that we're doing, we don't like them either, okay.



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2 Alright, it's just that we're facing a crisis. We  
3 don't have a revenue stream to fund \$12 billion.

4 When you put that in your mind, \$12 billion  
5 dollars -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: I think it's fair to say  
7 that it's in all of our minds and that's why we're  
8 here and we're trying to work with you to come up  
9 with other solutions. I think the way that you all  
10 have approached the budget deficit is certainly not  
11 the way that the Council would approach the budget  
12 deficit. And so, that's just a you know, a differing  
13 of opinions. It doesn't mean that we're not thinking  
14 about it and that we don't understand the  
15 implications.

16 JACQUES JIHA: Yup, so as I said, it's - we're  
17 making tough decisions and so therefore even you know  
18 it's very -

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: When you have agencies  
20 like Parks that has less than one percent of the  
21 budget, like the Aging that has less than one half of  
22 one percent of the budget, those are not the agencies  
23 that we should be cutting from. I think that's  
24 really the point that we're trying to make. We can  
25 cut from other agencies that have an excess of

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3 billions of dollars in their budgets like the NYPD.  
4 Those are the places that we should be looking first  
5 to cut from, not from the places that are actually  
6 providing the resources and services that so many  
7 people particularly our older adults rely on but I'm  
8 just going to continue with my questioning if I may.

9 JACQUES JIHA: Sure.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: A November Plan includes  
11 a baseline PEG for NYC Aging of \$500,000 starting in  
12 Fiscal 2024. Due to the hiring freeze, there was no  
13 change to agency headcount associated with this PEG.  
14 How is the savings amount determined?

15 JACQUES JIHA: It's basically driven you know  
16 leaving the vacancies unfilled.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And how many positions  
18 did the savings relate to? Which areas or programs?

19 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, let me see, I don't think I  
20 have it. I don't have that information. I'll get  
21 back to you on that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay and how will the  
23 hiring freeze impact provision of services to older  
24 adults?

25 JACQUES JIHA: So far it has not impacted  
services, okay.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: But you just said that –

3 JACQUES JIHA: We're talking about down the road.  
4 We're talking about Fiscal Year 2027. That is the  
5 PEG for this. We're talking about 2027. We're not  
6 talking about now. That's what I mean, it has not  
7 impacted services.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, so future services  
9 will be impacted?

10 JACQUES JIHA: Future services will be impacted.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Future services will be  
12 impacted when the population is even larger than  
13 it is now?

14 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, our goal is to continue to  
15 work with the agencies okay to right size the program  
16 in a way that minimize or do not impact – or do not  
17 have meaningful impact on services.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, the November Plan  
19 includes a baseline PEG for NYC Aging of \$1 million  
20 starting in Fiscal 2024 relating to OTPS  
21 expenditures. How will the OTPS savings be achieved?

22 JACQUES JIHA: It's basically coming from central  
23 administrative expenses.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: And what programs or  
25 agency functions do these savings relate to?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: It's basically out of travel, out  
3 of town travel. Some central course such as p.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Such as what?

5 JACQUES JIHA: Painting.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Oh, painting.

7 JACQUES JIHA: I think when digital options are  
8 available. So, these are the areas impacted.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay and then let me just  
10 ask you one other question. In what ways if at all  
11 does the Administration account for the NYPD's abuse  
12 and violence against New Yorkers and the additional  
13 burden on NYC's budget of related litigation and  
14 refusing to fire officers for years after they've  
15 killed or brutalized New Yorkers when proposing the  
16 NYPD's budget and working with them on PEG savings  
17 cost plans?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, NYPD participates in the plan  
19 and the PEG program fully, providing us five percent  
20 of savings. Uh, and NYPD currently is working to  
21 comply with the requirement of the Federal Monitor.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Ayala.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you. Good morning,  
25 good afternoon.

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3 JACQUES JIHA: Good morning.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good afternoon, it's  
5 afternoon now.

6 JACQUES JIHA: Good afternoon.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I know it's been a long  
8 one. So, I have two questions but very important  
9 questions albeit. Prior to April 2022, the shelter  
10 system was already overburdened and the unanticipated  
11 influx of asylum seekers only further tasked an  
12 already strained system. One of the proven  
13 strategies that the city can employ to address  
14 housing instability is the provision of rental  
15 assistance vouchers. The Council has repeatedly  
16 called on the Administration to increase baseline  
17 funding for City FHEPS vouchers to align with actual  
18 spending more closely to and to ensure that HRA has  
19 adequate staffing to support the efficient  
20 administration of those vouchers. The Council has  
21 also called on the Administration to fund HRA's  
22 budget to meet the requirements of the package of the  
23 legislation that the Council recently passed to  
24 expand voucher eligibility, which will become  
25 effective on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

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To date, no additional funding has been added for  
this legislation. The budgeted funding for rental  
assistance for school year 2024 is \$401 million. The  
good deal left than the \$516 million HRA actually  
spent on rental assistance in Fiscal Year 2023. Why  
hasn't funding been added to the HRA's budget to meet  
the requirement of the Council's voucher bills? And  
is the Administration expecting to add funding for  
the bills in the preliminary plan?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, we continue to work  
diligently to face the ever-growing asylum seeker  
crisis as taxpayers unfortunately continue to  
shoulder the financial burden of a national crisis.  
With limited state and federal aid, the city has been  
forced to undertake this difficult task and as a  
resort, we have to find savings throughout the budget  
to fund, to balance this budget. Again, once this  
crisis is over, we will seek to work cooperatively  
with the City Council and look for ways to fund  
future iteration of the program moving forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: So, are you saying that  
the city has no intention of leading their mandate of  
adding the additional vouchers and complying with the  
law on January 9<sup>th</sup>?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: The concern right now is trying to  
3 fund the asylum crisis. That's what we have, this is  
4 why we have the program, right? But once the crisis  
5 is over, we will work with the Council.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: That sounds like you're  
7 saying -

8 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, once the crisis is over  
9 we'll work as best as we can with the Council but to  
10 fund this - but right now, as I said, we're trying  
11 to-

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I get it, look, I get it  
13 and I'm very sympathetic to the Fiscal you know  
14 climate. However, we found that this bill actually  
15 aided in finding cost savings and we were able to  
16 shift families from shelter to permanent housing. So  
17 it is a way of decreasing the amount of dollars,  
18 public dollars that we're spending every single night  
19 to house a family in shelter, which is very  
20 expensive. As you know, I don't have to share that  
21 with you so the Council passed this bill and we're  
22 expecting it you know this law to go into effect on  
23 January 9<sup>th</sup>. And so, it's very not only  
24 disheartening but alarming to hear that there is from  
25 what it sounds like there's no intention or -

JACQUES JIHA: It's not the intention, there's no intention. It's just that we're dealing with the crisis of this magnitude and currently, we have 11,000 people, about 11,000 households in the shelter system with vouchers waiting to leave and they can't find places. So, it's not like you know, we're not saying you know we want to send the logic of people with vouchers more than not and therefore we have more room to put more folks but we currently have 11,000 folks with households with vouchers in the system right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Well, that leads me to my next question because and I know that you're the money man, right? So, you're not doing the day to day?

JACQUES JIHA: No, you are.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: But you're not doing the day to day right? You're not in the agencies trying to figure out and so, you state that you know we have 11,000 people with vouchers in the shelter system that can't find you know available units but I think that many of us here could share stories on the number of folks that are calling you know our offices that have an apartment, that have been waiting and



the problem is not on finding the unit but rather getting the agency to process documentation on time and to be able to do the inspections in a timely basis so that people are actually moving out faster. As a matter of fact, because of that level of inefficiency, people have lost available apartments.

So, that leads me to my other question regarding staffing because that's been a huge concern for us. These are safety net programs and so, when we're looking at efficiencies, when we're looking to cut the budget, we're looking at where the fat is, right? Where is the funding that you know things that could wait for later, things that we're not spending money on. But when we're talking about safety net you know programs that keep New Yorkers fed and housed. That is of great concern to me and uhm, and so we've seen that staffing has not been at the levels that we would need them to be in order not only to process vouchers but to process SNAP applications, to be able to process benefit applications, Medicaid, you know Medicaid obviously is transitioning but what is the Administration planning to do to address considering that we're adding new PEGs and hiring freezes to address the shortfalls in staffing.

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2 JACQUES JIHA: We actually, we have great news  
3 when it comes to regarding the SNAP and cash  
4 assistance program. I believe uh, the SNAP program  
5 has addressed all the backlog that they have so far  
6 and the cash assistance program is I believe is also  
7 getting by next year, by I think early next year,  
8 February. They should be able to get back to the  
9 federal target of I believe of like 4,300 or 4,400  
10 targets that they have. So, they're making  
11 significant progress. We hired over 700 new staff at  
12 the agency because we provide them the resources that  
13 they need because we know how critical this is for  
14 New Yorkers, particularly those who are struggling.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Those were hires that were  
16 made through the hiring halls?

17 JACQUES JIHA: I don't know for sure if they are  
18 all from the hiring halls, probably some of them,  
19 probably.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, do we know how many  
21 people are currently on staff at HRA that administer  
22 rental assistance vouchers? And how many of these  
23 positions are vacant?

24

25

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I don't have it with me  
3 actually but I will follow up with your staff and  
4 provide them the uh-

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay and I would also like  
6 to know if any of the voucher positions are exempt  
7 from the hiring freeze and if so, how many?

8 JACQUES JIHA: Okay I will provide you all this  
9 information.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you and I have  
11 another question on the share program. So, on  
12 December 14, 2021, the Governor announced that a \$100  
13 million allocation for the New York State Rental  
14 Supplement program. Of which \$68 million was  
15 earmarked for the city. Uniquely, this new source of  
16 state funding permitted localities to provide  
17 assistance regardless of the recipients immigration  
18 status. Many undocumented long term DHS clients  
19 struggle at the shelter system as they do not qualify  
20 for rental assistance and most public benefit  
21 programs.

22 These funds were added to HRA's budget in the  
23 November plan. Why did it take the city nearly two  
24 years to start this program and add the funding to  
25

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the budget and when will HRA start accepting  
applications for the new Share program?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, this was subject to a state  
approval, so we secured recently the approval from  
ODTA, so that's the reason why it takes so long. DSS  
is finalizing the application process and we expect  
that to stop at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2025.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, wait, the beginning  
of 2025?

JACQUES JIHA: 2025 yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, well, uhm the  
funding added in the November plan totals \$45.4  
million across the plan period. Why was the entire  
\$68 million awarded by the state not added to the  
plan and when will additional \$22.6 million in state  
funding be added to the budget?

JACQUES JIHA: This would be added in the  
November plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: It will be added in the  
November plan, okay.

JACQUES JIHA: Hmm, hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, uhm, and can you  
tell us how will the application process be managed  
and where will clients be able to apply?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: This would be by uh, the DSS  
3 central unit.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, do we know — so, not  
5 homebase?

6 JACQUES JIHA: Hmm, hmm.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: No, okay. Do we know how  
8 many vouchers the Administration estimates the  
9 program will provide for fiscal year?

10 JACQUES JIHA: I think it's 650.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: 650.

12 JACQUES JIHA: 650.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, uhm, I have one  
14 final question. The November plan includes a PEG of  
15 \$31.7 million in Fiscal Year 2025, \$30.1 million in  
16 Fiscal Year 2026, and \$24.6 million in Fiscal Year  
17 2027 related to anticipated savings from the  
18 implementation of the Share program. OMB has  
19 indicated that the savings relate to a reduction in  
20 shelter expenses. How were the savings calculated  
21 and why do the amounts vary from year to year?

22 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, the program is funded by the  
23 state and as these people are currently in the system  
24 and as they exit the shelter system, that's how the  
25 savings has been generated because that is covering.

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2 So, on a year over year basis it is extremely  
3 difficult to predict the exit numbers. So, as we  
4 move closer to each year, we'll provide you the  
5 amount of -- get a better sense of the savings.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay so my next question  
7 would have been how many clients are predicted to  
8 exit in Fiscal Year 2025, 2026 and 2027. And based  
9 on your previous response --

10 JACQUES JIHA: It's not fully clear, you know  
11 exactly.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Okay, okay, alright, thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Dinowitz  
15 followed by Rivera.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. It's a  
17 packed house, I'm sorry for my presentation right  
18 now. It's good to see you. Uhm, you're cutting  
19 funds from CUNY. Funds are being cut from CUNY.  
20 These will have detrimental impacts to programs like  
21 ASAP or Academic Advisors and CUNY Reconnect. From a  
22 Fiscal perspective, right I think, I would hope  
23 everyone here agrees that a student, whatever age  
24 they are completely agree is right support to give to  
25 any student. But from a Fiscal perspective, these

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are — programs like ASAP are programs that have  
incredible returns on investment of \$3.00 to \$4.00  
per dollar invested.

CUNY Reconnect, we just had a hearing last month,  
lifetime earnings estimates of \$1.9 billion for the  
students engaged in that program. Students bring in  
federal and state funding. Given the incredibly high  
return on investment, why is CUNY and their academic  
advisors, programs like ASAP, ACE and Reconnect are  
proposed to be cut in this plan?

JACQUES JIHA: As you know, we are committed as  
you are to higher education and we really do  
appreciate the quality education that CUNY provides.  
Uhm, CUNY savings uh will not impact classrooms.  
Headcount of programming at CUNY per se. There were,  
we estimate of fringe benefits, okay and all the  
savings include uhm, restoration of funding in Fiscal  
Year 2024 only, and we have \$1 million for unused  
ASAP lease renovation funding, okay? So, we added  
resources to CUNY actually okay? We added \$14  
million for the [INAUDIBLE 02:12:52] engaging study  
program. We at CUNY Reconnect, we funded at 5.8  
instead of 4.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Pardon me Mr. Director,  
3 that's all being cut. I mean, that's kind of the  
4 point is in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, they were  
5 budgeted. Those were big important wins for ASAP,  
6 ACE and CUNY Reconnect and those are on the chopping  
7 block due to these cuts. There's no increase in  
8 funding in this plan for CUNY.

9 JACQUES JIHA: CUNY Reconnect is and I always say  
10 that - I always thank the Speaker for that idea and  
11 it has been a very successful program. We added  
12 resources for CUNY Reconnect. We're not cutting CUNY  
13 Reconnect.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: The advisors of these  
15 programs are being cut due to the proposed cuts for  
16 this plan and I think the point is that's going to  
17 have a detrimental impact on our students ability to  
18 stay in school, to reconnect with school, but it's  
19 going to have long term fiscal impacts. These are  
20 well documented benefits to these programs that the  
21 city is going to suffer in the short and long term  
22 and our students are going to suffer in the short and  
23 long term. They're going to be paying significantly  
24 more. We're going to see reduced funds coming from  
25 our Federal Government, from our State Government and



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we're seeing long, we're going to see long term  
impacts of reducibility for our would-be students who  
would otherwise have stayed and reconnected with  
school to positively contribute more to our city.  
And so these cuts are going to significantly  
negatively impact our students in the future of our  
city more than the dollars that are being "saved" by  
these PEGs.

JACQUES JIHA: So, we're just chewing our budget  
to projects, it's not a reduction in academy  
advisors. The fringe benefits we see, the savings in  
November, we're just chewing up our budget to  
projections. Did not reduction in academic advisors.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You told me the same  
thing at our last budget hearing earlier this year.  
And you said, no, no, no, no, they're not cuts to  
CUNY, it's just fringe benefits and of course they  
were cuts and they were struggling with programs like  
ASAP and ACE. They were struggling in those programs  
to get all the students the support that they needed.  
I'm hearing the same thing now that they're not  
really cuts, they're just cuts to fringe benefits.  
It doesn't count as a cut. That's what you told me  
last time. It didn't pan out last time. It's not

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2 going to pan out now. Chair Brannan, thank you very  
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Rivera  
5 followed by Narcisse.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you. Good  
7 afternoon everyone. As part of MOCJs PEGs for the  
8 2024 November plan, alternatives to incarceration has  
9 been reduced by \$6.7 million. Reentry services were  
10 reduced by \$8 million and supervised release programs  
11 were cut by \$13 million in Fiscal Year 2025 due to  
12 re-estimates. In order to close Rikers within the  
13 next few years, the city must reduce the population  
14 at Rikers by half. So, please explain why these  
15 programs were cut when they could potentially help  
16 the city reach this goal and can you please clarify  
17 what specific programs have been cut by the PEGs?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, these are underfunding,  
19 underspending okay savings, so it's not specific  
20 programs, specific staff being cut. It's - uh they  
21 underspend their budget because this program  
22 historically have had underutilization, so the  
23 program we budgeted for x-number of folks who will be  
24 in all of the programs and the actual number is that  
25 much lower. So, historically we have you know

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2 underspending of these programs. This is what  
3 they're taking as savings from this program.  
4 Basically rightsizing the program, weighing the  
5 forecasted, the projected level down to what they're  
6 currently spending.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I do think the ATI and  
8 ATD programs would disagree that they have an  
9 experience underspending when they are stretched  
10 very, very thin but similarly as part of the PEG  
11 requirements for the Department of Probation, the  
12 Arches program incurred a baseline reduction of \$1  
13 million and the Next Steps program saw a reduction of  
14 \$2.2 million in Fiscal Year 2024. Can you explain  
15 why funding has been reduced so significantly when we  
16 know that they produce such positive outcomes for  
17 their participants and can potentially lower the  
18 incarcerated population at Rikers?

19 JACQUES JIHA: This is a savings that was  
20 submitted by the agencies, by the agency and again,  
21 it's basically lining up spending with actual with  
22 reality. In other words, again the part where we  
23 have underutilization of these programs, you project  
24 you know high in the moment than you currently have.  
25 This is what this is also all about underspending.

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2 This has nothing to do with the program, you know  
3 they overbudgeted the program, for the program. It's  
4 underspending.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: So, let me ask a question  
6 because alright, so you're saying this is  
7 underspending. You also have made a very big claim  
8 as to the differences in these next Fiscal Year's  
9 budgets because of asylum seekers. And we have these  
10 numbers, \$7 billion, \$12 billion in mind, we have the  
11 tough decisions. This is all in our mind, so we can  
12 put that speech aside for right now. Do you have a  
13 comprehensive assessment of the job skills of the  
14 newly arrived populations? Are there efforts to  
15 match that population with industries in the city?  
16 And I know that we have delays in work authorizations  
17 but have you tried exploring worker cooperatives,  
18 other forms of collective ownership models for  
19 employment?

20 JACQUES JIHA: I would have to defer to the  
21 specifications just because we don't deal with this  
22 percent, this issue percent. So, I would have to  
23 defer to the agencies particularly Office of Asylum  
24 Seekers Office. I know for sure they are providing  
25 OSHA training to asylum seekers but uh you know and

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3 they ask to see them with work authorization. But I  
4 don't have details with respect to whether or not  
5 they deal with some kind of assessment of the skills  
6 that these folks come in with. So, I would have to  
7 defer to them.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: And we're happy to ask  
9 that the relevant agencies -- we just figured you know  
10 this is the reason why you're coming in with the cuts  
11 and so, there has to be I would say better  
12 interagency communications to answer our questions in  
13 such an important hearing. But I want to thank you  
14 for your testimony and I thank the Chairs for the  
15 time.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have Council Member  
17 Narcisse followed by Council Member Lee.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Should I say good  
19 afternoon? Thank you Chair. Uhm, you know when  
20 you're healthy, hospital isn't important until you  
21 get sick, you know how important your health is. So,  
22 uhm, this is very important. The usage of temporary  
23 nurses has brought about additional issues with  
24 staffing. Our hospitals as temporary nurses are paid  
25 higher than H+H nurses. In addition, the hiring of  
temporary nurses is also resulting in a higher level

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3 of expenses. How many additional temporary nurses  
4 have been hired since adoption and what is the  
5 current total? Has the number been impacted by the  
6 hiring freeze? How much have you spent on traveling  
7 nurses since Fiscal 2024 adopted? In comparison,  
8 have you now analyzed how much funding the city will  
9 save if hired permanent nurses instead?

10 Hold on, I'm going to try to read them. Keep up  
11 with me. Do you foresee the city relying more on  
12 temporary nurses in the near future and if so, why?

13 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, H+H is not -- we don't have  
14 oversight over H+H.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I do. I do understand  
16 that but I still you know --

17 JACQUES JIHA: We will have to send over the  
18 information to give you the exact number of temporary  
19 nurses that they hire.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, you don't get the  
21 report because when we have them here, they're always  
22 saying that they have to get to OMB and OMB have to --  
23 I'm not saying you directly impacted what they do but  
24 they give you a report.  
25

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2 JACQUES JIHA: They – we don't you know we  
3 probably – we could get that information for you and  
4 the hiring freeze does not apply to H+H.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, very good.

6 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, again our goal, our aim, is  
7 always to try to hire permanent nurses. And because  
8 we understand exactly your concern because they cost  
9 more and as part of and this is the reason why we had  
10 I think a very fair good deal with the nurses and  
11 unions basically is trying to make sure that we make  
12 the city a very attractive place for nurses to work.  
13 And so therefore when H+H once you could attract  
14 people to work permanently, you don't have to rely on  
15 these temporary nurses.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I got you. Thank you.  
17 Can you answer be heard PEGs, is that possible?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Which one? Say that again.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Be Heard.

20 JACQUES JIHA: Be Heard.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Can you answer those  
22 questions?

23 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm....

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: The Fiscal 2024– I'll  
25 try, if not you let me know.

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, we are not cutting you know,  
3 we're just delaying the expansion of the Be Heard  
4 program. We're not cutting.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You're not cutting  
6 anything and about FDNY within Be Heard? So, can I –  
7 let me ask you the question and then you answer as  
8 much as you can. Does Fiscal 2024 November Plan  
9 introduces two separate things under Be Heard's  
10 budget. H+H has a reduction of \$700,000 right while  
11 FDNY has a reduction \$2 million and 20 positions.  
12 Can you provide some information on why Be Heard's  
13 Budget reduction is so much larger in the FDNY than  
14 it is H+H? Why does FDNY have a reduction of 20  
15 positions and H+H does not?

16 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, the uh November plan PEG was a  
17 re-estimate of projected Be Heard spending in Fiscal  
18 Year 2021. The most recent PEGs impact Fiscal Year  
19 2024 and the outyears. Uhm, there are no specific  
20 plan for future reductions to be at funding but  
21 again, in the current fiscal crisis that we are,  
22 everything is on the table. Everything is on the  
23 table at this point and time.

24

25



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. You're not  
3 anticipating any additional funding reduction for Be  
4 Heard, that's what you said right.

5 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, one of the things  
7 that I want to ask, for the contract, when you as a  
8 former business person, I'm trying to understand,  
9 what would you give contracts to private corporation  
10 outside of our city. Would it benefit economically  
11 to our city?

12 JACQUES JIHA: Our goal is to always try to bring  
13 local for profit or not-for-profit.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: For nonprofit?

15 JACQUES JIHA: For non-for-profit to do this  
16 work. As I said earlier, the challenge we have is  
17 the scale and the scope of the problem is so big that  
18 the local non-for-profits, they don't have the  
19 financial wear with all. Can you imagine a non-for-  
20 profit advancing the \$6 million, okay and then  
21 waiting for the city to pay to them three four months  
22 later?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I've been in business,  
24 I know.

25

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JACQUES JIHA: It's a huge burden on them. So,  
they don't have the financial wear with all okay to  
deal with the crisis overnight. So, therefore, we  
have to rely on companies, avid providers that had  
the balance sheet to basically be able to advance the  
city the resources okay, spend the resources on the  
city and then the city would pay them back. As I  
said going forward, now that we have the one way  
okay, our goal is to pivot to non-for-profit. And  
we're going to start with moving the small HERRC's,  
the small hotels, to non-for-profit providers. And  
as we issue more RFPs, okay and do outreach through  
the not-for-profit to make sure that they respond to  
those RFPs and one of the suggestions that I heard  
from Council Member is to make sure that H+H design  
the RFP in a way that make it easy for the not-for-  
profit to apply. We will work with H+H to see if it  
is possible.

COUNCIL MEMEBR NARCISSE: Uhm, so why in October  
public hospital system in the late October approved  
\$324.7 million in contracts for private security  
services in the city's humanitarian relief centers  
for migrants, right? Can you provide a detailed

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3 breakdown of the \$324.7 million approved for security  
4 services at the Humanitarian Relief Center?

5 JACQUES JIHA: They are as I said earlier, no  
6 contracts have yet been awarded okay to any  
7 providers, okay. These are not to exceed amount.  
8 That is you put the number in an RFP not to exceed.  
9 This is the cap but right now we're negotiating in a  
10 process, H+H is in the process of negotiating with  
11 the different providers okay. So, they could come  
12 back down to a price that makes sense for the city  
13 and for the providers. So, there are no contracts  
14 yet provided to anyone.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. I got you. So,  
16 one last thing is I want to understand, why the  
17 forecast from the city and OMB is such a huge gap  
18 between those two? I can never understand that.

19 JACQUES JIHA: You mean the Council and OMB?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Hmm, hmm.

21 JACQUES JIHA: It's a different methodology. We  
22 usually come - and timing. Sometimes you know they  
23 come after us and once you come after you know a  
24 forecaster, you have the benefit of time. You see  
25 that more information, more data point that you could  
use. So, we have not yet had it forecasted since

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last May, last executive budget. So, we're about to  
issue our forecast uhm and we'll see whether or not  
the Council is as close as we are or whether or not  
we're going to exceed the Council, whatever it's  
going to be.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, \$1.45  
billion that's standing there for the yearly reserve.  
Before you cut, cut, cut, think about the people and  
all the work that we have to get done for the City of  
New York to bring it in a more positive place. I  
understand the migrant, everything I'm hearing about  
migrant but yet we have to understand the City of New  
York. We have to hold it together.

JACQUES JIHA: I definitely agree with you. At  
the same time, I keep reminding folks that even after  
the PEGs, even after we added almost \$800 million to  
the November plan, we still have \$7.1 billion to  
close. Meaning that \$1.45 billion that is a reserve  
is not going to be enough, okay to close the gap.  
Okay and by law, we have to balance the book. It's  
not like we have a choice, by law we have to.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I understand sir.

JACQUES JIHA: So, \$1.45 is not going to be  
enough. So, I'm hoping okay there is more revenues

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than the City Council but again, our plan, we cannot  
rely on hope. We have to come up with a plan as one  
of the tools that we have.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. I  
appreciate you. Thank you.

JACQUES JIHA: Okay, is the PEGs because we  
cannot rely on the hope as our plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, alright, thank  
you so much for your time. I appreciate you.

JACQUES JIHA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member Lee  
followed by Schulman.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you. I'm over here.

JACQUES JIHA: It's a full house.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I know, yes it's a full  
house. I'm on this side. Just to your last point, I  
just want to say as someone who ran a nonprofit,  
there's a lot of small but mighty and medium but  
mighty nonprofit organizations out there that would  
be able to do a lot with that funding, especially if  
the contracts were registered on time as well as if  
we gave higher advances upfront. So, I just wanted  
to put that out there because there's a lot of  
amazing work that they can do with that funding. So,

1 just wanted to make that point. Uhm, and as we know  
2 we are in a mental health crisis and this is you know  
3 largely in part due to years and years of  
4 disinvestment from our mental healthcare system in  
5 the past. And so, just wanted to go over some  
6 questions about the PEGs that I see here and just for  
7 clarifying questions for the record.  
8

9 So, I know that the November Plan does include a  
10 reduction of 25 positions, vacancy reductions and  
11 just wanted to know in general, aside from those 25,  
12 across DOHMHs mental health programs, how long  
13 generally would you say that these positions have  
14 been vacant and also, will these vacancies be  
15 reinstated and if you could provide the general  
16 titles, department salaries of these reduced  
17 positions, that would be great too.

18 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, uhm, these vacancies, these  
19 reductions are not associated with long term  
20 vacancies that Department of Health have had you know  
21 trouble feeling for a long time. And uhm, you know,  
22 we work with the agencies to you know come up with  
23 ideas and typically what the agencies do is the  
24 simply look at their own operations and say you know  
25 what? We want the operation as is now. If we have a

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lot of long-term vacant positions, we have not been  
able to fill, the first thing they give up as part of  
the savings plan is you know at those positions. So,  
that is what this is.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And I know that some of the  
PEGs have been implemented due to underperformance on  
both the public health and the mental hygiene sector.  
I just, just out of curiosity, how do you define  
under performance related to the contracts?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, it's uh, you know it's what  
the agency you know when they work with the providers  
and they realize if the providers are not meeting  
their targets. This is something that I would defer  
to the agencies you know because every agency has  
their own set of criteria in terms of how they  
evaluate these.

So, I would leave it you know up to them because  
you know currently to what use by agencies you know  
and uhm they basically do their own review based on  
their own criteria as I said. You know we don't have  
specific guidelines.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

JACQUES JIHA: In terms of what the goal about  
what they use and how they come up with their review.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, I guess I just wanted  
3 to clarify. So, I just want to make sure that this  
4 does not include the actual negative impact of  
5 potential performances, under performance of delayed  
6 contracts, right? Because sometimes, if the  
7 contracts are delayed in registering, that can impact  
8 the ramp up or the start-up period for these  
9 programs. And I just want to make sure that that's  
10 not what's —

11 JACQUES JIHA: I doubt that would be the case.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, so if you could —

13 JACQUES JIHA: I could double check but I doubt  
14 that would be the case.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Uhm and then my other  
16 question is, I know that for the Mayor's Mental  
17 Health Plan which he laid out, there was a \$12  
18 million allocation for Fiscal Year 2024 and are any  
19 of the — you know which include the maternal mental  
20 health and creation of the newer clubhouses. Is  
21 there going to be any cuts for the mental health plan  
22 due to PEGs on the Mayor's side?

23 JACQUES JIHA: In general, we're not looking at a  
24 cut to mental health, okay as part of the PEG.

25



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, uhm, and then also  
3 when it comes to — I noticed that in the public  
4 health side, the vacancy reduction — it says uhm,  
5 it's a reduction of 24 positions at the Thrive NYC.  
6 So, we all know that Thrive folded during De Blasio's  
7 term and it has become the Mayor's OCMH, Office of  
8 Community Mental Health. So, just out of curiosity,  
9 were any of those positions transitioned to OCMH or  
10 were those just complete eliminations?

11 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I don't know for sure but I  
12 would have to come back to you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay, if you could let us  
14 know that would be great.

15 JACQUES JIHA: Okay.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Uhm, and then also just  
17 shifting a bit topics because uhm, I wanted to ask a  
18 couple questions about early childhood. Uhm, my  
19 younger one is the beneficiary of the universal Pre-K  
20 program. Uhm, in the November plan there was \$25  
21 million in savings in personnel services accruals for  
22 Fiscal Year 2024. But are these PS accruals savings  
23 from DOE providers or CBO providers?

24 JACQUES JIHA: I thought that they were from DOE  
25 because as CBO's we only provide MOTPS funding.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: So, not the personnel  
3 service funding?

4 JACQUES JIHA: No.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay uhm, and what positions  
6 did these accruals result from? Was it pedagogical  
7 positions or other full-time positions?

8 JACQUES JIHA: I would think this is a re-  
9 estimate of PS costs of DOE in the early childhood  
10 education.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay.

12 JACQUES JIHA: It's not teachers, you know it's a  
13 re-estimate of costs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Even though there  
15 was, okay. Uhm, sorry let me come back. The  
16 November plan also includes, reduces the early  
17 childhood education budget by \$120 million for Fiscal  
18 Year 2025 and the outyears. So, if you could outline  
19 what services are being reduced by this \$120 million  
20 PEG each year and also how many Pre-K, 3K and head  
21 start seats are impacted by this reduction and  
22 what types of seats are they and where are they  
23 located? I know that's a lot in one but trying to  
24 consolidate.

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3 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, as part of the  
4 consolidation, as we always say for folks, every year  
5 a student who want to sit will continue to get a seat  
6 in the program. Our goal is to uhm consolidate to  
7 make sure that -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh sorry, I meant  
9 consolidating my questions, I'm sorry. Not the  
10 actual seats. Hopefully that's not the case but just  
11 if you could in the budget of \$120 million reduction.  
12 Talk about what actual services are being reduced and  
13 how many seats that result in Pre-K, 3K and Head  
14 Start.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have to move on after  
16 that Council Member Lee.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah.

18 JACQUES JIHA: Our goal is not to reduce our  
19 services. We currently have 37,000 unfilled seats  
20 that the city is paying for, 37,000. So, our goal is  
21 basically to consolidate okay to make sure that we  
22 don't have that many number of - such a large number  
23 of unfilled seats that the city is paying for. So,  
24 we'll be working with DOE okay, currently working on  
25 a plan to know exactly. I want to make the  
adjustment okay but service, there won't be any

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3 impact on service. Any kids who want a seat will  
4 continue to get a seat.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay for time sake, I'll  
6 leave it there but I think we have a discrepancy on  
7 that in the past with Council hearings but yeah,  
8 thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we don't have OMB for  
10 a long time today, so we're going to have stick to  
11 Chair Speaker.

12 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: The Chair just said we  
13 don't have you for a long time. We were told of a  
14 hard stop at one but we do expect you to stay until  
15 all of our questions have been asked. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, we have Council Member  
17 Schulman followed by Ossè.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Alright, thank you. I  
19 have uhm a very brief statement and two questions.  
20 Good afternoon.

21 JACQUES JIHA: Good afternoon.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Uhm, first, I just want  
23 to say that I don't believe that we can cut our way  
24 out of a deficit. I think we need to invest in our  
25 city. I realize that there's a gap and I realize  
that we have to have a balanced budget but the cuts

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that are being proposed are being placed squarely on  
the backs of the working class and the city who  
recent studies shows them moving out, so that's not  
something that uhm, that's very good. Anyway, I have  
two questions. It's been shown that composting can  
help mitigate the rat population. I'm asking  
questions based on my being Chair of the Health  
Committee. Mitigate the rat population in urban  
areas, so why are we getting rid of neighborhood  
composting programs that operate through the  
Sanitation Department and impact our green markets  
operated by Grow NYC? That's one.

The second is that I'm hearing different reasons  
for the program going away. One is that there was a  
grant that has expired and the other is that this is  
an actual cut, so if you could explain that that  
would be helpful.

JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, uhm, community composting is  
a very small scale and very inefficient. That's the  
reason why we moved to other citywide program and the  
citywide program is only delayed okay in Staten  
Island and the Bronx. Okay, our goal is to continue  
the program going forward but uh you know it's given  
that the scale of the program, how small it is and

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how inefficient it is, okay we thought, I mean  
Sanitation agrees that it would be better to use that  
as a savings instead of use something else that would  
have more impact. So, therefore that's the reason  
why the community composting was submitted as a  
savings by the Sanitation Department.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, it is being – is it  
an actual cut because of the PEGs or is it being cut  
because uhm there's a grant program that went away?  
That's what I'm confused about.

JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, it's – you could say it is  
both. It is because you know you have a citywide  
program and if you have a small set, a small subset  
of a program that is very inefficient and when you  
have a very efficient program, so that's the reason  
why. The PEG basically is a trigger, okay that  
caused Sanitation to submit this as a proposal.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: So, my next question is  
about the budget for Department of Health and Mental  
Hygiene. Uhm, the November Plan reflects savings of  
\$35.8 million in Fiscal 2024 and \$38.5 million in  
Fiscal 2025 for DOHMH. Of this total amount, public  
health funding was reduced by nearly \$19 million in  
Fiscal Year 2024 and \$22.2 million in Fiscal Year

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2025. Two of the large reductions come from two PEGs  
totaled OTPS efficiency and vacancy reduction. Now,  
in addition, the Fiscal Year 2024 November Plan has  
numerous PEGs that reduce the amount that the city  
spends on services. Several PEGs are established due  
to underperformance by the agencies and there's a  
contract reduction of nearly \$7 million at DOHMH due  
to underperformance. So, I'd like to know the  
difference between the underperformance and the  
efficiencies, if there is a difference.

JACQUES JIHA: Yes, uhm, the underperformance is  
you know, it's because I mean you have these  
contractors. Again, as I said, it's - I would have  
you know I would have to defer to the agency  
themselves because they have their own criteria that  
they use to uh, uh, review the performance of  
different contractors. Uh, but my assumption is here  
is the efficiencies, there's a waste in the program.  
You know it's a program that is not operating  
optimally. That is one thing but another thing is if  
you have underperformance because the program cannot  
perform period. It's a total different issue.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, I mean at some point  
I'd like to have a breakdown because while it's - for

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2 example, HIV and AIDS is going down in general.

3 There's been an uptick, that's number one and number  
4 two is that that was just an announcement which I was  
5 a part of of Healthy NYC, diabetes reduction and all  
6 of that that's going to require resources. So, I  
7 just wanted to make that point. Thank you very much  
8 Chairs and Madam Speaker for this important hearing.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council  
10 Member Ossè followed by Nurse.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you Mr. Chair and  
12 good afternoon Mr. Budget Director. Listen, as a  
13 person, human to human, I like you. The fact that  
14 OMB is only giving us three hours to speak about a  
15 budget that's going to impact violently hundreds of  
16 thousands of New Yorkers is completely disrespectful  
17 and I would hope that you guys could stay at least a  
18 couple more hours to discuss this budget that is  
19 going to have grave implications on our city as a  
20 whole, right. And if not, maybe you could go over to  
21 the other side of City Hall and tell the Mayor to  
22 come and speak about his budget to us himself.

23 I do want to speak about the library. So, under  
24 the Mayor's proposed PEGs, the libraries face cuts to  
25 critical services and programming. The most notable



being the end of weekend services, which I do believe starts this Sunday. The Admin says that the PEGs are necessary for the influx of asylum seekers and that the city has no money and savings are needed. Yet the Admin will spend, as they've announced, around \$400 million for upgrades to the NYPD radio system while implementing PEGs to libraries that will directly impact access to critical services for asylum seekers.

The library's total budget makes up less than one percent of New York City's entire budget. Any five percent cut to the already small library budget will be immediately felt by New Yorkers. So, I want to ask, what is the Admin's rationale behind this particular PEG? Why is there a cut here when there can be cuts elsewhere that won't be felt as harshly by New Yorkers?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, the city gave uh libraries a subsidy and the libraries choose to allocate the city's funding. And they could have made different choices, okay? That's the choice that they you know.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: They could have made different choices?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: They could have. They could also  
3 make different choices.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Hmm, hmm, smart choices  
5 right?

6 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, we give them the funding and  
7 they choose to use the funding as they choose, you  
8 know. We don't tell them what to cut okay, we just  
9 give them a subsidy okay, and they use the funding as  
10 they see fit okay and they make their choices but  
11 they could have made different choices.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: I think with that rational,  
13 I think the Administration could have made different  
14 choices, right?

15 JACQUES JIHA: Of course.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Harder choices that would  
17 have allowed them to not receive these cuts that are  
18 going to impact services while also spending money on  
19 new projects in the next fiscal year.

20 JACQUES JIHA: Trust me, I understand and if you  
21 listen to it around this table, everyone including  
22 you, cut this, don't cut this, cut this, don't cut  
23 this, cut this, don't cut this, cut this, don't cut  
24 this. That's what you're going to hear.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Sure.

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2 JACQUES JIHA: And our job is to come up with a  
3 plan okay, we have no choice to say you know what,  
4 I'm not going to cut this. I'm going to cut this.  
5 I'm going to cut this. We don't have that luxury.  
6 We have to come up with a plan.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Sure.

8 JACQUES JIHA: In 37 days okay to close a \$7.1  
9 billion gap. So, if you have some better  
10 alternatives, as I said, I'd be more than happy to  
11 entertain you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: I think we've been listing  
13 out many different alternatives, especially when it  
14 comes to new allocations of an encrypted radio system  
15 but I digress.

16 DCLA is one agency where 95 percent of the budget  
17 goes directly into the community through the CDF or  
18 cultural development and the cultural institutions  
19 group. These funds are critical to the  
20 sustainability and survival of our cultural sector,  
21 which brings in about \$8.8 billion to our economy.  
22 We keep hearing from the Admin that our city needs  
23 money and we need to recover from COVID and we need  
24 revenue. If that is the case, why is the Admin  
25 cutting from a sector that will bring the city that

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revenue, especially when the DCLA budget only makes  
up less than one percent of the entire city budget.

JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, we just provide  
a subsidy through the cultural institutions like we  
do the libraries and they allocate it as they see  
fit.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: And does OMBs need for \$9  
million in cost of savings outweigh the revenue being  
generated by the arts and culture sector?

JACQUES JIHA: I'm sorry, can you repeat the  
question for me?

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Sure. Does OMBs need for  
\$9 million in cuts that will result in savings for  
the city outweigh the revenue being generated by arts  
and cultural groups?

JACQUES JIHA: I understand what you're saying  
but the point we're trying to make is, we have some  
needs and we understand that the arts create,  
generate, a lot of revenues for the city and that was  
one of the reasons why the first fourth, three rounds  
of PEGs, they were exempted. This is the first time  
the scope of the problem is so big that we're asking  
everyone to make contribution, okay. So, we  
understand that they contribute significantly okay to

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2 the city. We're not denying that but the only thing  
3 is, we're dealing with a massive problem and we're  
4 asking everyone to please make a small contribution.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Right, I know my time is  
6 up. Thank you Chair for letting me speak. I would  
7 love if you guys could stay a couple more hours to  
8 answer more questions about this, this budget. It's  
9 a very important subject as I'm sure you can see.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Nurse  
11 followed by Stevens.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you Chair. Just  
13 circling back to Sanitation questions. Uhm, in the  
14 PEG we see that there's a cut to a consultant  
15 contract for doing the Solid Waste Management plan.  
16 Who is going to do that work if not the consulting  
17 company?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, I believe the -- they're not  
19 cutting the entire. It's basically bringing it in  
20 line I think with uh, what they're expecting to  
21 spend.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So, are you saying the  
23 deliverables will be different or it's just  
24 downsizing the contract or?

25

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2 JACQUES JIHA: No, I think they probably find  
3 that it's going to be done cheaper.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: You found one that's  
5 cheaper?

6 JACQUES JIHA: I think we're asking them to do it  
7 at a cheaper price I believe.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, for the outreach and

9 —

10 JACQUES JIHA: And also they'll probably do it in  
11 house.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Right but a lot of the  
13 people who have previously done the swamp in the past  
14 are now no longer there. So, we're losing some of  
15 that institutional knowledge, which is why it's  
16 really important for an outside support to help with  
17 that because it's going to inform the strategic plan  
18 for the department.

19 Uhm, a question about the communications and  
20 outreach. You have pretty big programs coming online  
21 next year. You have your first commercial waste zone  
22 and then you're obligated to do significant outreach  
23 for over 60 days for bringing online, Staten Island,  
24 the Bronx and Manhattan for curbside. Who is going  
25 to do that work?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, again the Sanitation is and I  
3 have full faith in the Commissioner, as I believe she  
4 can manage her resources appropriately.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So, will it be done in-  
6 house?

7 JACQUES JIHA: She would basically manage her  
8 resources in a way to make sure that they do as best  
9 of a job they can do with outreach.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I understand that as an  
11 intention but I just wanted to be clear. Will all  
12 that outreach for massive reform projects be done in-  
13 house with the civilian staff that Sanitation has?

14 JACQUES JIHA: That's exactly.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay and then just one  
16 final question about the litter baskets. Repeatedly  
17 throughout our hearings with Sanitation, there's  
18 really been a failure to provide a satisfactory  
19 answer on why certain litter baskets get removed and  
20 in fact, most of the Council Members who have come to  
21 that hearing to express concern, are coming from the  
22 poorest districts in the city. And so, how are you  
23 going to guarantee that that cut will be done  
24 equitably so that the outer boroughs or low-income  
25 communities don't feel like they're losing out?

Their baskets are being removed; they're having  
litter everywhere which we still had when we were in  
better financial times.

JACQUES JIHA: Again, we will work with the  
agency to make sure to address some of these issues  
but at the end of the day, it's until they have a  
plan and come up with a plan. How are they going to  
prevent the PEGs? I cannot give you a guarantee  
which area is going to be you know, it's going to be  
impacted you know. I don't have that -

COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: And just to clarify, just  
to clarify, right now you don't have a citywide  
curbside program. You have a two-borough curbside  
program and so, cutting the community composting  
programs that would be - and 100 workers that would  
be filling the gap between now and the end of fall, I  
think is very short sighted and misguided. So, how  
are you going to - and you've cut the outreach and  
communications money. So, how are you going to get  
all of these people online? That's three full  
boroughs.

JACQUES JIHA: It is uhm, the program is delayed  
and the community composting program as I said, very



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3 small, very inefficient and we moved to a citywide  
4 program okay.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Not inefficient but –

6 JACQUES JIHA: I understand. I understand from  
7 your perspective okay. Uh, what we're doing is  
8 basically trying to – we expanded programs citywide.  
9 The only difference you're going to have right now  
10 with dealing with the program by a couple months  
11 okay, but the program will be up and running, okay as  
12 recommended by law and I believe would be as  
13 effective as it would have been.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I disagree. You're  
15 bringing on three boroughs plus commercial waste  
16 zones. You're bringing massive reforms online.  
17 You're cutting your outreach in community budget.  
18 You're cutting the workers who are going to do that.  
19 So, I don't understand how you plan to get three  
20 boroughs online efficiently and effectively. Thank  
21 you Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going to take  
23 questions from Council Member Stevens and then we're  
24 going to take a ten-minute break and you'll come back  
25 alright, okay.

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COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello. I'm over here in  
the corner. All the way over here. How are you guys  
doing? I know it's been a long day and just before I  
even ask my questions, just a couple of things. I'm  
really happy to hear Jacques that you said that you  
are - you guys are going to be willing to work with  
us and listen to the suggestions that we have because  
I have a whole bunch of suggestions and really want  
to work in collaboration because we know we are in a  
budget crisis and so, we want to make sure we're  
working together, not against each other because  
we're not enemies. We're on the same team. So, I'm  
really excited about that because you said that and  
I'm going to hold you to that. But just another  
statement around the nonprofits. I just want to say  
you consistently said that the nonprofits couldn't do  
it because of the reimbursement but that is clearly a  
flaw in our system that we should be addressing right  
and when we're in crisis, it's time for us to look  
for ways to be more efficient and clearly the way we  
are funding nonprofits are a problem because the  
groups that show up consistently to do the work, we  
are not making sure they are able to access the  
funding that they need to survive. So, definitely

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want to make sure we're also using this time to look  
at those inefficiencies as well.

And my last statement is, when we're talking  
about the asylum seekers, I want to make sure that  
these funds that we are using to help asylum seekers  
are being adequately spread out through the city  
because I was at a number of mosques in my district  
this weekend where they are literally having asylum  
seekers stay in their mosques and they are not  
getting any support or help. And so, definitely want  
to hear how we are making sure those funds are being  
adequately spread out to everyone who is coming into  
the city and making sure that they're being  
distributed equitable.

JACQUES JIHA: I will be more than happy to get  
the information of that mosque and share with folks.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, I already  
sent it to them but I'll give it to you as well.  
Uhm, so my question and I know you're going to tell  
me go to the agency but I'm going to ask it anyway.  
So, there's a number of programs that's being cut  
with DYCD and we have - that's on the chopping block  
to be reduced in funds which is SYEP, Work, Learn,  
Grow, the confidence in all of them receive the

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number of plagues. Could you talk about what the  
matrix are? They're using other than attendance to  
say that these programs should be cut in this way  
because using attendance just isn't good enough form  
of a matrix, especially when our juvenile justice  
system is at 95 percent capacity.

JACQUES JIHA: Yes, again it comes down to  
historically, we have had you know low  
underutilization of these programs.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Not historically. Don't  
do that.

JACQUES JIHA: No, listen, listen. What we're  
doing -- every year at the end of the fiscal year, OMB  
always take the savings between what we budgeted and  
what the actuals are. Anything we're doing right is  
take the savings offline. Every year, you know we  
have savings from these programs because they're  
underutilized.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, maybe they're  
underutilized because we aren't doing a good job at  
like making sure we're reaching the young people that  
need to be reached. Because our jails are at 95  
percent capacity, so clearly, those things aren't  
matching.

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2 JACQUES JIHA: There is that too but what I'm  
3 saying to you is in reality, that's what we're  
4 thinking okay is the underspending savings.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, what happens when we  
6 need the spending back?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Because they're not using it.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, but let's say we use  
9 it this year, we already took the money so what  
10 happens?

11 JACQUES JIHA: What happened to what?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Because with recruitment  
13 it changes from year to year with young people and  
14 things like that. So, what happens when we actually  
15 give the numbers up to you know before the savings  
16 and they're already gone?

17 JACQUES JIHA: If circumstances change and  
18 there's a demand for the program, we will address  
19 funding appropriately.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I love that you said  
21 that because when I come to you for more money, you  
22 can't say that it's not there, right? And just  
23 another question before I get out of here. Uhm, just  
24 thinking about the Office of Neighborhood Safety and  
25 it's just transitioned over to DYCD and they're also

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receiving a \$5.5 million PEG as well. My issue with  
that especially just going to DYCD and although this  
has been around for a number of years, then receiving  
this type of cut, how do you expect DYCD to now  
manage this right? You know you moved it from the  
Mayor's Office to now DYCD and this is going to be a  
huge issue when now they're going to be reducing  
services. Especially again, I'm going to say it, we  
have young people who are entering our juvenile  
justice system at alarming rates. And so, thinking  
about this time, how do we get here? Because you  
can't say that one with savings upfront because we  
need to be supporting these programs.

JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, these are supplemental  
programming's such as legal services, transportation  
and outreach that will be impacted.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, you feel like legal  
services is a supplement?

JACQUES JIHA: It's part of a supplemental  
program.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I think it should be  
part of the main part of programming because  
especially if we have young people encountering the  
legal system, they need legal representation and

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transportation when we think about people who are  
consistently picked up because they hopped the train  
and things like that, those things are more mandatory  
than a supplement.

So, definitely we should be thinking about what  
that looks like.

JACQUES JIHA: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And making sure that  
we're, especially when we're giving agencies bigger  
portfolios that we then are giving them support that  
they need to actually roll them out correctly. And I  
look forward to working with you on ideas on how we  
can make sure this budget is equitable for the city.

JACQUES JIHA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going to hear  
from Council Member Barron and then we're going to  
take our break.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Uh, thank you very much  
Mr. Chair. I do notice your change in tenner the  
last time you were here. I see you learned the  
importance of humility. You feel a lesson in  
humility but also, you still are evasive, inaccurate  
and not prioritizing the people over the profits of  
for-profit corporations. You know we're not falling

off of a financial fiscal cliff. We're falling off a  
fiscally conservative cliff. Prioritizing cuts over  
revenue raising and we don't have 37 days to close a  
\$7 billion gap. That's not going to happen in 37  
days, so every time somebody asks you a question, you  
reminded us that we have a \$7 billion gap next year.  
Well, first of all, people question that. That still  
can be in question. The accuracy of that and every  
year I've been in this Council for 14 years, there's  
always been a wrong projection of the deficit,  
including last year and the year before that when we  
had these big deficits but all of a sudden we had a  
\$4 billion for two years unexpected revenue increase  
from Wall Street. That happened.

So, how do we, how do we get you and the Mayor;  
by the way, you said the Mayor was very good in your  
migrant. You know he said you're a danger to the  
city. What did you say to him when he said that?  
Uh, but the bottom line is that you are blaming the  
migrants for the fiscal crisis of the city when we've  
had these same issues every budget year prior to the  
migrants even being an issue that was always a  
problem.



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3 Will you join with us as we fight the state? One  
4 of the things the Mayor didn't do is fight against  
5 the lack of revenue raising from the state. Why  
6 don't you join us in fighting your fiscal partner in  
7 crime, Governor Hochul and fighting for the revenue  
8 that we can get from the state, the Stock Transfer  
9 Tax? That's close to \$14 billion. You rebate it  
10 right back to Wall Street. If we took half of that,  
11 we'd have \$7 billion. A millionaires tax. None of  
12 this is for you, just fighting for pied-à-terre tax  
13 on the wealthy homes of the rich. Those tax. What  
14 about all of these \$30 billion to \$40 billion tax  
15 package that can come from Albany that you don't  
16 support and the Mayor doesn't support and you allow  
17 Hochul to get away with that. She has a \$229 billion  
18 budget. I'm wrapping up.

19 A \$229 billion budget and \$22 billion of that is  
20 unrestricted money. Some in a reserve account, \$13  
21 billion and another \$11 billion unrestricted. Yet  
22 she does nothing for the migrants upstate. Are you  
23 all doing all of this so you can put pressure on the  
24 feds and the state to give you more money that we  
25 should have? But in the event they don't, you're  
having the people of the city suffering. When you

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3 don't allow vacancies to be filled, every agency  
4 services are going to be hurt because they can't hire  
5 people to continue to do the services needed.

6 My colleagues as you all excellent questions. I  
7 thought the answers were insufficient on all of the  
8 agencies. They did a great job but the bottom line  
9 to my colleagues, we got to use the power of the City  
10 Council in January when we start this budget  
11 negotiations, the Council passes the budget, not you  
12 and not the Mayor.

13 So, the good thing about all of this, we see your  
14 hand. You're showing us your hand beforehand. We  
15 know where you're going but it's up to my colleagues  
16 to say, you're not getting there with this City  
17 Council because we are not going to pass a budget  
18 that has budget cuts that are not necessary and  
19 looking at the \$8 billion revenue from the city, I  
20 know you partially answered it. The \$2 billion in a  
21 rainy day. Well, it's raining today.

22 And also the \$6 billion for our retirees. Take  
23 care of the retirees. Take care of our retirees  
24 because they took care of you when they were working  
25 and you got a lot of revenue from them. Our retirees

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3 should be protected. Their Medicare should be  
4 protected and not privatized to ETNA.

5 So, I'm hoping that the City Council fights hard  
6 next year. I'll be outside of the Council but I'm  
7 going to be fighting you so hard, you're going to  
8 campaign for me to come back in. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Council Member.  
10 Okay, we're going to take a ten-minute break and  
11 we'll resume okay.

12 JACQUES JIHA: Okay.

13 [BREAK 03:02:55]-[03:16:27]

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet on the floor please.  
15 Quiet on the floor. Ladies and gentlemen, please  
16 find your seats. Once again, ladies and gentlemen,  
17 please find your seats. We shall begin shortly.  
18 Once again, please find your seats, we're getting  
19 ready to resume.

20 [03:16:39]- [03:16:51] Quiet on floor please.

21 Quiet on the floor. Folks, please find your seats so  
22 we can resume. [03:16:56]- [03:17:14].

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sergeant, we're ready to  
24 go? Okay. Okay, we're back. We're going to start  
25 with questions from Council Member Abreu followed by  
Carr.

COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you Chair Brannan  
and thank you Speaker Adams and thank you Mr.  
Director for being here today. I don't want to beat  
a dead horse but composting is the big issue in my  
district. Taking away composting is like turning  
back time. We put a lot of time and effort into  
educating people about composting and people have  
made changes to their lives and changed their  
routines so they can engage in this process that is  
so important for our environment.

By removing access to composting, we're basically  
telling people to unlearn good habits and we're also  
killing jobs. Why does this Administration feel like  
this is a necessary cut?

JACQUES JIHA: As I said, we are doing the  
implementation of the citywide program [03:18:14] but  
uhm as I said, the program would be fully implemented  
by October 7<sup>th</sup> and so, we're not expecting - this is  
nothing to learn because we're still going to  
implement the program. The only thing removed is the  
small inefficient community composting program  
because our goal is to expand the citywide program.

So, it's just dealing the program and the program  
will be fully implemented.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: I'm hearing from  
3 constituents from the upper west side up to Morning  
4 Side Heights and Harlem that when they go to drop off  
5 their composting at green markets, that that program  
6 will be continued. Is that correct?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, the community program would be  
8 — had been PEG but the citywide program remains in  
9 place.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: How many jobs are  
11 currently retained under that program?

12 JACQUES JIHA: I don't know because these are  
13 private providers. You know this is not city  
14 sanitation. Sanitation workers won't be impacted by  
15 this, so I don't know.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: But the contracted  
17 programs, how many employees?

18 JACQUES JIHA: I don't know how many employees  
19 they have.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: I will say that killing  
21 jobs is not efficient. I will say that taking away  
22 composting, which is so important for our  
23 environment, it allows people to contribute in their  
24 own ways in just small acts in the aggregate really  
25 add up and that culture of excitement that we see

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with composting is something that we are at least at  
the administration is fighting against and this  
Council continues to fight for it because we know  
it's very important. Thank you so much. I yield  
back my time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Carr.

COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair. Director,  
good to see you and your team. Earlier you mentioned  
that there was about \$1.9 billion with a B in state  
aid for migrant services for this fiscal year and  
\$159.9 million with an M from the Federal Government.  
That's all from Fiscal Year 2024 or that's all  
support to date?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, this is uh the state is part  
of it is relating back to Fiscal Year 2023.

COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay.

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, but the federal is Fiscal  
Year 2024.

COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: So, given that you know  
\$4.7 billion for migrant services in the November  
Fiscal Plan, if you were just downward for the  
outside subsidies that you referenced, that's still  
about 79, 80 percent of the \$3.43 billion that the  
Administration is looking to save through the 15

percent PEGs. And you said \$6.1 billion projected for migrant services in FY25 out of a \$7.1 billion budget gap that's about 86 percent of that. So, to me this debate or this discussion on whether or not expenses related to the migrant crisis are the primary driver of the budget crunch roll here discussing today is self-evident.

So, I guess my question to you is, do you agree with that assessment that it is the primary driver of our budget difficulties for this fiscal year and the one that's upcoming and I guess the question following is why are we looking at cutting all of these services, all of these programs, all of these budgeted positions for programs that people rely on and depend on and have for so long. There's a lot of fear in this city, right? There's fear among the civil service about positions that they work with now not being filled when they are vacated. There's concern about layoffs in the future.

So, given all of those concerns, when are we going to start focusing on reducing that \$4.7 billion and \$6.1 billion for the following year? These unanticipated, unexpected costs that the city should have never had to bear, especially when you consider

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that we already have a court case that says that the  
right to shelter does not apply to migrants or asylum  
seekers.

So, I guess that's my question to you is when are  
we going to start looking at those expenses and  
reducing those expenses, rather than the ones that we  
actually plan and budget for year after year?

JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, uhm, as you know we issue a  
notice to agencies and to every that involve in the  
migrant management and to them that the migrant  
budget would be PEG 'ed at 2 percent, 20 percent I'm  
sorry. At 20 percent.

The goal again is to manage the census and to  
reduce the per diem costs and to better manage the  
capacity that they have. And as you indicate and I  
said it earlier, managing the census is a critical  
piece of this because if we don't bring down the  
population over time, it's going to be extremely  
difficult for the city because currently, we are over  
relying on PEGs to fund this crisis. So therefore,  
our goal is to manage down the population and then to  
manage down the cost as quickly and as best as we can  
because ultimately, we don't want to keep PEG'ing  
ourselves out of this problem.



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Director. I  
3 agree with you. Thank you Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member  
5 Sanchez followed by Hanks.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you Chair and good  
7 afternoon. Thank you so much for staying. In fact,  
8 I really appreciate being able to ask these  
9 questions. So, I'm just going to ask them rapid fire  
10 and hopefully you can get to all of them. So, five  
11 questions. First, across Fiscal 2025 and 2026, the  
12 plan reflects a \$4.5 million cut for supportive  
13 housing. Why does the city determine that there will  
14 be no need for this \$4.5 million in rental assistance  
15 payments when 7,000 individuals are waiting for  
16 supportive housing and placement?

17 I did ask a version of this last week. HPD  
18 called it rightsizing but I see it as  
19 underperformance. I want to understand OMB's  
20 perspective.

21 Two, as a follow up to the Speaker's questions,  
22 how does the Administration's asylum seeker census  
23 calculations take into account the decreasing number  
24 of migrants in the system due to the 30- and 60-day  
25

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3 shelter rules, given you mentioned only 16 percent  
4 are reentering?

5 Three, as a follow up to Majority Whip Brooks-  
6 Powers question on the \$26.4 million expense to  
7 capital funding for the Home First Down Payment  
8 Assistance program, I understand that this swap is  
9 possible because of the state's new affordability  
10 plus legislation, which we are happy to support the  
11 Administration in seeking from the state. However,  
12 the purpose of Affordability Plus is to create more  
13 affordable housing and homeownership opportunity, not  
14 just switch funding that we already had dedicated  
15 from expense to capital. So, in what other ways is  
16 the city planning to use the new loan authority from  
17 Affordability Plus?

18 Four, I told you it was a lot. Uhm, four, just a  
19 clarification on DOB inspectors. We received  
20 information that DOB inspectors are going to be  
21 exempt from the cuts but earlier today you mentioned  
22 that they may be subject to reductions, so I just  
23 want to get clarification on that.

24 Five, regarding the NYPD. The NYPD technically  
25 participated in a round of PEGs. Will the agency --  
but the agency will be made whole via additional

federal funding. So, is the Administration going to ask NYPD to reduce their budget by more than five percent?

And lastly, this is regarding existing commitments the Administration has made to communities. In 2017, our community in the West Bronx, Jerome Avenue, we took a leap of faith and supported the rezoning but to date, only 13 of 59 commitments have been completed, representing hundreds of millions of dollars that were promised to a low-income community in exchange for accepting additional density. So, will the Administration commit to maintaining funding in these commitments especially the Automotive Grant program? Thank you.

JACQUES JIHA: Okay, it is a lot. Uhm, the supportive housing. That question relate again, it's uhm the original budget was based on a very aggressive construction and timeline. So, basically what we're doing is a re-estimate okay to bring them in line with the number of unit that we expect to have.

Regarding the 60-day notices, while we are very encouraged with the experience, the pilot that we've been doing so far, we have not yet expanded to the

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3 population and we're going to have a long experience  
4 with that policy. So, therefore it's going to be  
5 hard for us at this point and time. We have to wait  
6 for the data to get as much as possible over time to  
7 see what's going to be the impact on the population.

8 What was it the one? The Down Payment Assistance  
9 is a swap?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yes and the funding  
11 swap.

12 JACQUES JIHA: It's a funding swap and [03:27:48]  
13 basically an HPD capital program because HPD has a  
14 huge capital program and this is very small for this.  
15 NYPD, I don't know what you're referring to by what's  
16 going to be made the goal by federal funding. I'm  
17 not aware of any such federal funding coming to back  
18 up for what we are removing from NYPD. And the  
19 rezoning, you said there was some DOB inspectors.  
20 They are exempted, as far as I know okay from the  
21 hiring freeze, okay. And regarding the 13 and 15  
22 commitment regarding the rezoning, I would have to  
23 come back to you and see what's going on. Why only  
24 13 of 15 commitments were made?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah, great. That's why  
you're the Director. Just in terms of the asylum

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seeker census and not taking into account the 30-to-  
60-day rule impact on the census. You know this is  
our concern that we keep reiterating about over  
budgeting and then you know facing unnecessary cuts.  
So, we'd look forward to you know recalculation's  
based on that and I will follow-up regarding the  
Jerome points of agreement.

JACQUES JIHA: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

JACQUES JIHA: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Hanks.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much Chair  
Brannan, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon. In the PEG  
letter, the Administration issued a directive to have  
the four uniform agencies implement an overtime  
reduction initiative. What initiatives have been  
implemented to reduce overtime spending?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I think the program has been  
going very well. I believe so far, three of the four  
agencies are on target in terms of the overtime  
target that the agencies agreed to do. The challenge  
we're having is with NYPD because since October 7<sup>th</sup>,  
you know attack in Israel, we have a lot of protests  
in New York City and therefore, NYPD had to incur a

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lot of overtime. So, you know that is the only area  
of concern that we have but the three other uniform  
agencies have continued to meet the target.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Yes, but I mean thank you  
for that but previously to October 7<sup>th</sup>, we still had  
an issue with overtime and we just want to know like  
how much overtime spending has you know has been  
reduced since the implementation of initiatives you  
know prior to October 7<sup>th</sup>.

JACQUES JIHA: I believe the target was 15  
percent? Yes, the target for the agencies I believe  
was uh, uh, 16 percent or 15 percent. Uhm, and uhm,  
so 20 percent for in term of ours and 18 percent in  
terms of the amount of money that we're expecting to  
save.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. Do you have an  
estimate of the increased amount of overtime that  
will spent due to class, cancellations and attrition?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, no not yet. As I said, this  
is -

COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Why wouldn't we have that  
information yet?

JACQUES JIHA: Because our goal is to continue to  
work with NYPD because basically that public safety

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3 is a critical piece of the center of about the  
4 current development in New York City. So, therefore  
5 it's not going to compromise public safety. So, uhm,  
6 our goal is as we move forward is to work with PD to  
7 see whether their needs are and if we have to address  
8 quickly to make the appropriate adjustment at that  
9 point and time.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. In the PEG  
11 letter, agencies were asked to reduce costs by five  
12 percent in the November plan. NYPD cut approximately  
13 \$132 million in FY24 or 2.3 percent. Falling short  
14 of the \$278 million target. Will NYPD be held to the  
15 PEG target and will there be any future reductions or  
16 plans to reduce — uhm, have any more reductions to  
17 hit the target?

18 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, PD has met its target. We  
19 continue to work with PD but PD has as an agency has  
20 you know, has met their target.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: So, the estimated  
22 headcount of NYPD officers is expected to fall below  
23 30,000 by Fiscal 2025. How will the Administration  
24 ensure public safety with the decreased numbers of  
25 officers to deploy?

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2 JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, public safety is  
3 a priority of the Mayor and we will continue to work  
4 PD as we are the plan. The goal is not to have  
5 public safety compromised okay? And as I said that  
6 we will work with PD and work closely with PD and  
7 continue to monitor the strength of the force to see  
8 if further adjustments are warranted or needed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. So, NYPD PEG  
10 includes savings from the cancelation of police  
11 academy classes. Yet, the uniform headcount remained  
12 unchanged throughout the plan. When did the  
13 Department resume academy classes? How will the  
14 agency increase its headcount to the budgeted size?

15 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, we have a temporary freeze on  
16 hiring. We assume that when they resume hiring they  
17 could be as aggressive as they can beginning Fiscal  
18 Year 2026. That's the assumption that again, we're  
19 going to do major outreach to make sure that when  
20 they resume in Fiscal 2026, they are as aggressive as  
21 they can in terms of recruiting for the new class.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: And has there been any  
23 challenges in recruitment?  
24  
25



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2 JACQUES JIHA: There has been challenges in  
3 recruitment lately but again, as I said, our goal is  
4 to -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Is there any reason in  
6 particular that you want to share as to why uhm?

7 JACQUES JIHA: It's a very difficult job, as you  
8 know and uh it's not as easy to have people. But  
9 again, with the new settlement we just did with new  
10 agreement we just had with PBA and raising the  
11 salaries, entry salary level of the police force, we  
12 hope that will be you know an incentive to attract  
13 people to the NYPD.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. Speaking of  
15 collective bargaining agreements, the estimated cost  
16 for PBA, CBA was \$5.5 billion and the costs were said  
17 to be fully covered by the labor reserve. What was  
18 the cost of the PBA collective bargaining agreement  
19 and was it fully covered by the labor reserve?

20 JACQUES JIHA: Okay.

21 KENNETH GODINER: The \$5.5 sounds like the  
22 regular magnitude and it was fully funded in the  
23 labor reserve, yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. Were the costs  
25 for the uniform coalition economic agreement, which

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3 covers the additional 11 uniform unions and were the  
4 costs fully covered by that labor reserve?

5 KENNETH GODINER: Yeah, the labor reserve  
6 contains funding for uniform patterns, for all the  
7 uniforms.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. Uh, I know my  
9 colleagues, some of my colleagues have touched on  
10 this.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Last question please.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Oh, sorry, I'm done thank  
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: No, you can ask one more if  
15 you want.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Okay. Thank you Chair, I  
17 appreciate that. In the November Plan we saw a  
18 reduction of 322 school safety agent positions,  
19 additionally in the FY24 Preliminary Plan we saw a  
20 reduction of 282 school safety agent positions. With  
21 the reduction of the 604-school safety position over  
22 the last year, how is the Administration working with  
23 NYPD to ensure students are safe while attending DOA  
24 schools? And we saw that there was a class that was  
25 added after that cancelation.

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3 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, we added uh a class. It  
4 wasn't as big as we generally predicted but we assume  
5 a small class in Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025. So  
6 again, we're trying to work with as best as we can  
7 with NYPD to make sure that we have appropriate level  
8 of safety agents in the school so that the school  
9 remains as safe as possible for our children.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you for your  
11 indulgence Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay we have Council Member  
13 Cabàn followed by Menin.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Thank you. Thank you for  
15 being here to testify. I am going to start with some  
16 yes or no questions and I'm going to request your  
17 cooperation in that. So, to start, are you aware  
18 that New York City is the wealthiest city in the  
19 world?

20 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: And are you aware that 136  
22 New York City is home to more than billionaires than  
23 any other city in the world?

24 JACQUES JIHA: Yes.  
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: And are you aware that  
3 there are additionally 724 New Yorkers worth over  
4 \$100 million?

5 JACQUES JIHA: I don't have the data in front of  
6 me but you know if you say so, I'm assuming it's  
7 correct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay and are you aware  
9 that there are other cities in the world that despite  
10 being less wealthy provide adequate and even  
11 excellent funding for public schools, public parks,  
12 public transit, public sanitation, and other vital  
13 pillars of public safety and health?

14 JACQUES JIHA: Again, I don't have the  
15 information in front of me, I can't say yes or no.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: I can assure you that we  
17 do or there are. Are you aware of the New York Times  
18 Report from that from 2020 to 2022 New York State on  
19 net gained 15,100 millionaires in that last year on  
20 net more than 65,000 residents making between \$32,000  
21 and \$65,000 left to New York City.

22 JACQUES JIHA: Again, I don't have the data in  
23 front of me, I can't say yes or no.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay, well we can get you  
25 the New York Times Report. Are you aware that we

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currently have a near record high amount in reserves?

I think it's around what a little over \$2 billion and  
to give a comparison to the Bloomberg eras of around  
\$300 million, correct?

JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: Okay, and so, what would  
you say to New Yorkers who are embarrassed or who are  
humiliated, who consider it a pathetic lack of  
integrity for the government of the richest city in  
the world to pretend to be broke in order to  
undermine public health and safety and wreck the  
quality of life of every day New Yorkers?

JACQUES JIHA: I have a big issue with the  
apprentice of the question but because we're facing a  
significant challenge and as I indicated, we have  
reserves and we intend to use a portion of those  
reserves. But the reserve, the other two pieces of  
the reserve, one is to address a recession and the  
third one is to be used against a liability that we  
have which is \$100 billion. So, we only have \$5  
billion against that \$100 billion.

So, therefore again, we cannot use the entire  
reserves that we have okay but because we have to be  
careful, the worst, my worst nightmare is to have the

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3 combination of a recession and at the same time have  
4 to fund the migrant crisis.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: I mean there's been a  
6 bunch of fiscal analysis that shows that one, that  
7 that doesn't seem like that is the direction that  
8 we're going in and time and time again, you all have  
9 come up with overly conservative numbers where there  
10 are other, our own and other financial institutions  
11 that are saying no, you are way wrong on this. But  
12 let me go back to something that you testified on  
13 earlier. You said that everyone is doing their fair  
14 share. And so, I want to ask when it comes to the  
15 NYPD, which went over their approved budget by an  
16 average of \$332 million per year and in addition,  
17 NYPD abuse is expected to cost taxpayers more than  
18 \$100 million this year in costs alone. Why are there  
19 no consequences for NYPD overspending including  
20 overtime and ballooning settlement costs and what  
21 specific planning and oversight measures has the  
22 Administration implemented to ensure that the NYPD  
23 doesn't exceed their approved agency budget, if any  
24 at all?

25 JACQUES JIHA: Uh, we continue to monitor NYPD  
but as you can imagine, they have certain

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3 circumstances that arise that are outside of their  
4 control. And like we have protests almost every week  
5 and they don't plan for these things or when these  
6 things happen, they are added to their budget and as  
7 a resort, they sometimes come over budget.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: You know I'm going to just  
9 finish up my statement by saying that that is wholly  
10 unconvincing testimony and you also testified that  
11 the Mayor would not compromise public safety. We  
12 know that the NYPD is not the sole source of public  
13 safety in this city and so, if it were true that we  
14 were not willing to compromise public safety, we  
15 would not be cutting schools. We would not be  
16 cutting Sanitation. We would not be cutting  
17 libraries. We would not be cutting Pre-K.

18 JACQUES JIHA: I hear you but we have a \$7.1  
19 billion budget that we have to close, budget gap that  
20 we have to close and what we're doing is basically  
21 reallocating resources from certain areas to other  
22 areas. Trust me, I wish there was an easier way to  
23 close the budget gap that we're dealing with.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÀN: I mean our Speaker and the  
25 Finance Chair at the very least have proposed some

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different ways where we could be closing that gap.

Thank you again for the questions.

JACQUES JIHA: You're welcome.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Quiet please, thank you.

We have Council Member Menin followed by Farias and  
we've been joined by Council Member Bottcher.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair.

These proposed draconian cuts to Education,  
Sanitation, Libraries are going to complete decimate  
our city. And so, my questions have to do with why  
the Administration is not considering alternate  
approaches. Speaker and the Finance Chair talked  
about a number of these approaches. I want to  
mention two additional ones. I served as  
Commissioner of several city agencies. I know first-  
hand that many other agencies have programs where  
there aren't data metrics to support them. Thrive  
for example, is one perfect example but there are  
many others. Why isn't the Administration going in  
with a scalpel to these other agencies and cutting  
those programs? That's my first question.

And the second question is we have another tool  
available to us and that is the newly created



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3 healthcare accountability office. We passed this  
4 bill, the Healthcare Accountability Bill, it will  
5 allow the city for the first time ever to rain in  
6 skyrocketing healthcare costs. The skyrocketing  
7 healthcare costs are currently ten percent of the New  
8 York City budget, as you know, \$11 billion. Just  
9 five years ago, they were \$6 billion. It's estimated  
10 and a 32BJ study show that we could save up to \$2  
11 billion by cutting healthcare costs.

12 So, my question is why isn't the Administration  
13 using either of these two alternate approaches?

14 JACQUES JIHA: We, I will be honest with you, we  
15 really appreciate your effort in creating that office  
16 and we believe that office is a good tool in terms of  
17 bringing transparency to the way the hospitals bill  
18 and we believe over time, that would lead to  
19 significant savings for the city as we manage  
20 healthcare expenses.

21 We are currently working with DOHM and H+H to  
22 operationalize this office and responsibilities and  
23 we're looking to see whether or not --

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: But has the Admin met with  
25 any of the hospitals since we had the hearing, where  
the hearing showed that the City of New York, the

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3 hospitals had refused to meet with them. Has - the  
4 City of New York is the second largest purchaser of  
5 healthcare in the State of New York. Has the  
6 Administration met with any of these hospitals and  
7 tried to drive cost down?

8 JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, we will continue  
9 to operationalize the office and then over time, that  
10 office will use it as a leverage to discuss. We have  
11 discussed with our hospital. We have done that in  
12 the past and have not [03:44:25] in terms of our  
13 discussion with the hospitals. But again, as I said,  
14 this is something that we are in process. We are  
15 discussing with the unions and partners to see our  
16 best we could manage to save from the billing.  
17 Because we all know we have challenges with the way  
18 the lack of transparency on the part of the hospitals  
19 in terms of how they invoice the city and so on and  
20 so forth. But again, I don't know Ken if you have  
21 anything you want to add to it?

22 KENNETH GODINER: Just that we remain in talks  
23 with the MOC to rebid our active and Pre-65 retiree  
24 health plan looking to come up with cost savings in  
25 that area. We've been working very diligently for a  
very long period of time. We hope to be getting

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close to the end of that process and we expect to see  
very substantial savings on health spent.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, it's an area clearly  
where we could save up to \$2 billion. I think it's a  
paramount importance that this office is created,  
that it's well funded, and that we use it to harness  
the city's purchasing power and once and for all,  
drive the cost down. Thank you.

JACQUES JIHA: That's our goal.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Council Member.  
Now we have Council Member Farias followed by  
Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Good afternoon. Thanks  
for giving us a little bit more of your time. I'm  
just going to get right into it in terms of some  
questions around the Economic Development  
Corporation. Since expanding the NYC EDC'S Ferry  
Ridership Discount program, has this had any impact  
on ridership and revenue numbers?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, can you repeat the question  
again?

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Since expanding the NYC  
EDC's Ferry Ridership Discount program, has this had  
any impact on ridership and revenue numbers?

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3 JACQUES JIHA: Oh, oh, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We  
4 um, I believe ridership is at the highest level. It  
5 has a 30 percent increase I believe, 23 percent  
6 increase from uh, fiscal year 2022. There were like  
7 550,000 riders per month. So, that has been a very,  
8 very, very successful program since we launched it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: And do we know how  
10 revenue has increased or if that's — are we seeing  
11 that?

12 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I believe it's at \$6 million  
13 more than we had in terms of Farebox. We have \$6.6  
14 million to providers in Fiscal 2023. So, it's a  
15 major improvement over what we had prior to the  
16 pandemic.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay great. And then NYC  
18 Ferry operates with higher-than-average subsidies as  
19 we all know. What is EDC and OMB doing to reduce the  
20 subsidies needed to operate providing services for  
21 New Yorkers and generate any additional savings?

22 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, the uh, unfortunately the  
23 subsidies have been reduced subsidies by nearly 30  
24 percent.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Hmm, hmm.

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2 JACQUES JIHA: But it would be reduced by 2025.

3 So, we have that increase in the in ridership at the  
4 same time that we have reduced subsidies  
5 significantly.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. How will OMB and  
7 the EDC work together to pinpoint and target areas to  
8 help develop economic activity in the coming fiscal  
9 year? Does the November plan make any changes to how  
10 EDC will maximize city dollars to generate the most  
11 revenue this fiscal year?

12 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, we will continue to work  
13 with EDC on business attraction and double up with  
14 initiatives as we are supporting things like life  
15 sciences on account of those issues.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay and has OMB worked  
17 with EDC to re-evaluate any of its projects or  
18 investments to generate additional savings or  
19 additional revenues for the city in Fiscal Year 2024?

20 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, we'll continue to work with  
21 agencies to identify additional revenues and savings.  
22 You know this is a big piece of the PEG exercise that  
23 we're currently doing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, and the PEG  
25 included one initiative to recoup \$3.8 million in

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unspent funding for vaccine incentives. Has OMB  
explored any other revenue generating proposals or  
underspending for additional savings this fiscal  
year?

JACQUES JIHA: We always look for underspending  
savings and we'll continue to do so.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. Chair, I have two  
more? Thank you. The MMR shows that the number of  
unique customers and businesses served was just over  
23,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 for our small businesses.  
The number of services provided to help navigate  
government increased by approximately 67 percent from  
Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2023. And SBS served  
nearly 90,000 people in workforce development  
programs in FY23. Considering the increased demand  
for small business services, does the Administration  
believe that despite the PEGs, the Department has  
sufficient capacity to meet the needs of New York's  
rebounding small business sector?

JACQUES JIHA: Uh, yes, SBS uses resource in a  
way to meet the needs of the small business community  
in New York City. The recent PEGs that we have are  
basically rightsizing of programs and they don't  
impact basically program reduction to implement

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3 programs so we expect SBS to continue to provide the  
4 services to New York City businesses, New York City  
5 businesses, small businesses.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. And lastly on  
7 November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the City Council passed Intro. 1083  
8 which established the Office of Night Life within  
9 Department of Small Business Services. We did not  
10 see this reflected in the November Plan. Will we see  
11 the transition in the Preliminary Plan?

12 JACQUES JIHA: Yes, you will.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, thank you so much.  
14 I'll follow-up with anything outside of that.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Uhm, Director, really  
16 quick. So, I know before we talked about the state  
17 had committed \$1.9 billion for to help offset migrant  
18 cost. How much, I got a text from a legislator  
19 saying that the state is only paid out \$338 million  
20 because the city hasn't provided receipts for the  
21 rest.

22 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, the way the system works and  
23 by law, the city has to submit liquidated invoices.  
24 So, so far, we have and we only get 29 percent credit  
25 okay against a claim, so far we have submitted close

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3 to \$1 billion of claims, okay but we only get like 29  
4 percent credit against it.

5 So, it's liquidated claims, alright and we  
6 submitted \$1 billion okay. The only reason they're  
7 getting so much credit because it's 29 percent credit  
8 against a claim that we submitted.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, of the \$1.9 billion  
10 that the state committed, how much of it have we  
11 actually received?

12 JACQUES JIHA: We receive an advance of 250 and I  
13 believe another \$30 million so, is that about \$280?  
14 Yeah, about that much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: What's the total?

16 JACQUES JIHA: 250 advance and another \$30  
17 million for case management and legal services and  
18 another \$10 million. So, it's about like maybe \$290  
19 million we receive. But again, it is the way the law  
20 is written. The law is written that we have to you  
21 know submit all liquidated expenses, invoices and we  
22 only get 29 percent credit against the claim because  
23 the city is only paying us 29 percent of the total  
24 spending on asylum seekers.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, alright we have  
Council Member Restler followed by Gutiérrez.



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3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chair  
4 Brannan and thank you Madam Speaker for the move of  
5 keeping this one going. We appreciate it and thank  
6 you OMB team for being willing to stick around.

7 Uh, in FY24 we were facing prior to the November  
8 plan a \$1.5 or so billion gap. We have \$1.45 billion  
9 in reserves. Council has identified an extra \$1.2  
10 billion in revenue, conservative estimate at that.  
11 There is no need for cuts in FY24. The Mayor and  
12 OMB's stunning commitment to austerity in this moment  
13 is baffling. Composting, libraries, schools, we've  
14 all heard it. Why make these clearly unnecessary  
15 cuts today?

16 JACQUES JIHA: Okay, let me give you the  
17 rational. When the budget was adopted in June, the  
18 budget was balanced okay. As you can remember last  
19 August, we revised our forecast of the asylum seekers  
20 expenses. Initially we thought that it would cost us  
21 \$2.9 billion and based on the significant increase  
22 higher than anticipated, we see the numbers. We had  
23 to revise our forecast and as a resort, we had to add  
24 resources in Fiscal Year 2024 and revise our forecast  
25 and added resources in Fiscal Year 2025, okay.

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2 So, because of the additional expenses that we  
3 had, so we had to find ways to fund it, okay? So,  
4 what we're doing is basically saying okay we put in  
5 place a PEG, even after the PEG, okay we managed to  
6 close in Fiscal Year 2024, but we expanded the Fiscal  
7 Year 2025 from \$5.1 billion from \$7 billion.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I completely appreciate  
9 Director Jiha.

10 JACQUE JIHA: So, the point I'm making to you is  
11 the notion that you don't need to cut anything when  
12 you're dealing with 37-days, we have to close a \$7  
13 billion gap, assuming the City Council is correct.  
14 Okay, you have -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We haven't had a  
16 financial forecast from you all in eight months, so I  
17 mean, we'd like OMB to catch up with us.

18 JACQUES JIHA: We will, we will. Assuming that  
19 you're correct, you have \$1.5 billion revenues. You  
20 have a reserve of \$1.4 billion and this is after the  
21 cut, after the PEG, we have a - after the PEG -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We still have \$1.45  
23 million in revenue that we could have used to cover  
24 those gaps. It is still sitting there ready to be  
25 utilized to have avoided these extremely harmful

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cuts. The Mayor and OMB are pursuing a shock in all  
campaign to try to try and pursue the most outrageous  
cuts that you can to try to shake the tree in  
Washington and Albany. We all know what you're  
doing. We wish instead you would work with us  
responsibly to govern the City of New York instead of  
imposing these deeply harmful cuts that are  
undermining the health and the safety and the  
wellbeing of our communities. The cuts are not  
necessary.

If I may, just two brief questions here. I will  
say the idea that August, 45 days after there was a  
handshake agreement and this Council voted on a  
budget, you needed to show radically reevaluate the  
estimates on asylum seekers is baffling. The migrant  
crisis had been going on for quite some time. We  
understood the costs that were being faced and I do  
not believe it was appropriate. It showed you either  
weren't serious about the estimates that you provided  
serious or were not working with integrity with this  
Council in providing in being able to determine what  
the real costs were that we were facing. I think  
that there's a credibility gap. I do want to ask  
about 13,000 vacancies that are city funded. There's

a hiring freeze. Those positions are not being filled. Why do we not claim the savings, recognize that \$1.3 billion that we're not spending for these 13,000 vacant positions with a hiring freeze.

JACQUES JIHA: Council Member, why do you always refer to credibility gap when it comes every time we come in to testify in front of you? Why? Why do you have to refer to lack of integrity? Why? Why? Why do you go there? Why can't we ask a question simply? Why do you have to make comments?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Because the answers are not clear.

JACQUES JIHA: Because if you're going to attack my integrity, my credibility, okay, I come here, I volunteer to come here not for you to be — not to be insulted okay. Not to be insulted.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The Council deserves real answers.

JACQUES JIHA: If you have an issue, if you have an issue, if you have an issue, okay alright, if you have a question, ask a question but the minute you start attacking our credibility and integrity, it's personal okay. It's not —

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It's not intended to be  
3 personal. We're concerned about the facts and my  
4 concern here is that 45 days after we adopted a  
5 budget, you come back to us with extremely new  
6 estimates. The Mayor announces in early September a  
7 five percent cut and with 15 percent cuts pending,  
8 enormous cuts to the city's budget.

9 JACQUES JIHA: I went in front of the entire  
10 world with a press conference, we'll review, we'll  
11 brief all boards, all the leadership of the City  
12 Council, okay on what transpired last August. Okay,  
13 we show, we came here, we show, we forecast and the  
14 deviation from that forecast okay and we said at the  
15 time okay, our expectation okay were for us to spend  
16 a certain amount of money based on a certain amount  
17 of people coming to the city. And since then, we saw  
18 a major deviation and as a resort, we would have to  
19 update our forecast.

20 Which we did because we changed our forecast.  
21 This is the first time in the November Plan that we  
22 have an opportunity okay, to reflect that forecast in  
23 the financial plan. Okay, so which we did, alright.  
24 You may not agree with the decisions that we are  
25 making, okay? We don't have a monopoly in wisdom,

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3 monopoly in judgement but you have no right okay to  
4 attack my integrity, to attack my credibility.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm not attacking your  
6 personal integrity or credibility; my concern is  
7 about the facts and the figures that we're getting as  
8 a Council and I have to say I want to come back 45  
9 days after we had a budget handshake. 45 days after  
10 a budget was adopted, we get radically different  
11 estimates and I'm concerned about the mismanagement  
12 that's occurring in city government and the extreme  
13 increased in costs that we're seeing with the asylum  
14 seekers. It's well over twice as much per night to  
15 house an asylum seeker tonight as it was a DHS family  
16 before this crisis began and there are big open  
17 questions that we need answered on how we're going to  
18 get those costs under control.

19 But I'd like Director for you to come back to the  
20 13,000 vacancies. Why not recognize the savings for  
21 those \$1.3 billion of funds that are not being spent  
22 as a result of a hiring freeze?

23 JACQUES JIHA: Because if do, there wouldn't be  
24 any teachers left. There wouldn't be any position  
25 open for Fire Department, for cops, for anybody.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But there's a hiring  
3 freeze in place.

4 JACQUES JIHA: Okay, so but we also exempt those  
5 critical okay public safety health positions, so  
6 therefore, we let the agency submit to us.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: For a one-to-one  
8 replacement for those positions.

9 JACQUES JIHA: We let the agency submit to us the  
10 proposal our best to see for them to manage their own  
11 agencies. How best they're going to manage the  
12 agencies using the resources that they have  
13 available? If they believe that submitting vacancies  
14 is part of the solution, we work on them but we don't  
15 propose the agencies how to manage their budget and I  
16 mean any vacant position that they give us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Lastly on community  
18 composting, for the \$3.5 million that are being cut,  
19 a negligible sum of money. I was at a site yesterday  
20 in my neighborhood, in Green Point that's collected  
21 200,000 pounds of food scraps in the last two years.  
22 Much of that's going to go into the waste stream.  
23 It's going to be sent to Pennsylvania. We're not  
24 going to get the processed compost from community  
25 composting facilities to help keep our street trees

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3 healthy and to support our community gardens all  
4 throughout the city. Have you thought about the  
5 unanticipated costs that will be generated as a  
6 result of this negligible cut?

7 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, curbside organics has not  
8 been cut, okay. The expansion has been delayed. We  
9 are looking –

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The Community Composting  
11 program has been cut.

12 JACQUES JIHA: We're looking at the small problem  
13 that was very inefficient because we have a larger  
14 program citywide and so that's the perspective that  
15 was used as the decision was made. We're expanding  
16 this program citywide and there was no need to have  
17 these community composting programs, so therefore  
18 that's the reason why it was removed. The Sanitation  
19 Department submitted it as part of the PEG  
20 submission.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Many thousands of New  
22 Yorkers rely on that program and it's going to be a  
23 huge loss if this cut moves forward. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Gutiérrez  
25 followed by Velázquez.



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chair. Uhm,

3 I just want to touch very briefly on the community  
4 composting because I know you keep saying that's  
5 inefficient but we here disagree because there will  
6 be unintended costs. Community composting is the  
7 only guarantee that we have that composting is  
8 staying in our communities that there's actually a  
9 cycle. So, I just want to uplift what Council Member  
10 Restler said is we do have curbside organics which  
11 was also part of a movement for a long time but  
12 there's no guarantee through the Brown Bin program or  
13 even the RH Bid program that your scraps will be  
14 composted. It could very well also just continue to  
15 be trucked out of state and so, that is contradictory  
16 to our food waste reduction goals. So, I just want  
17 to make that clarification.

18 My questions are related to uhm, the support for  
19 asylum seekers through OTI or still DoITT, I know  
20 that it's interchanged, hoping you can answer some of  
21 these questions. Uhm, my understanding was that  
22 there was — the November plan included an adjustment  
23 of nearly \$89 million in FY2024 and \$81.3 in Fiscal  
24 Year 2025 for cost related to the asylum seekers.  
25 Can you tell us which specific technology services

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3 for asylum seekers these cost cover? Do you have  
4 specifics about I guess I'm trying to understand if  
5 this is a lot of money for this agency to support  
6 asylum seekers because they are tech related. So,  
7 can you explain to me what that money – what those  
8 budgets cover?

9 JACQUES JIHA: It's largely to monitor the  
10 operations.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

12 JACQUES JIHA: And we have connectivity at sites.  
13 I could give you a list of all the services that they  
14 currently provide.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

16 JACQUES JIHA: And we believe that the resources  
17 that we added to the budget is appropriate for the  
18 kind of services that they currently provide to the  
19 asylum seekers but again, I would provide you a list  
20 as a follow up of all the services that are provided.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. And if you  
22 could also specify in that list if the cost per  
23 facility, whether it's a HERRC or a shelter. If that  
24 cost for connectivity is sustained or does that cost  
25 for example, like if they're setting up  
infrastructure for internet and Wi-Fi, does OTI

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continue to pay that out or is that then a part of  
like the requirement for the social service provider  
for example. If you could specify that whenever you  
prepare the –

JACQUES JIHA: Yes, yes, I will.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay and then do you  
have a sense if the OTI is working with any  
subcontractors to provide any of those services?

JACQUES JIHA : Let me find out for you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay and if you do can  
you also let us know who those folks are.

JACQUES JIHA: Yup.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Uhm, my next questions  
are related to just savings around  
telecommunications. I have that in FY24's November  
Plan included savings of \$9.5 million in FY2024 and  
\$8.6 in the outyears from various citywide  
telecommunication savings. Sorry, I'll be one more  
minute. How are these telecommunication savings  
being calculated?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, I would have to come back  
to you when I reach out to the agency.

COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay and if you could  
also specify these savings are the result of

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2 contracts that have been renegotiated, extended and  
3 if there's any way that you could also specify  
4 savings associated with specific stuff where uhm,  
5 like Microsoft for example.

6 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, we will provide you all the  
7 detail.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay and then can I  
9 just ask one question Chair? Council Member Joseph  
10 had asked, I'm not sure if you answered on the number  
11 of school safety agents. Were you able to answer the  
12 specificity of what the number is for how many school  
13 safety agents? Because I know that there was a  
14 freeze but in this November Plan, there seems to be  
15 an increase.

16 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: That the city is  
18 proposing. What is that finite number?

19 JACQUES JIHA: I think it's a 130 something.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: We've heard various  
21 numbers.

22 JACQUES JIHA: 135.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: 135, okay and the –  
24 that's it actually, I'll be respectful. Thank you so  
25 much. Thank you Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member  
3 Velázquez followed by Aviles.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÁZQUEZ: Alright, thank you  
5 Chair and thank you for staying. We appreciate it.  
6 Very quickly, in the November Plan, the Admin  
7 baselined cuts. These cuts effected the annual  
8 taxies and prep provided by the Office of Financial  
9 Empowerment. The extension of this program was added  
10 and baselined in Fiscal 2024 Executive Plan. This  
11 expansion has now been cut. From Fiscal 2022 to  
12 Fiscal 2023, the financial counseling needs increased  
13 23 percent. With a demand for the program growing,  
14 what is or the reason behind this cut?

15 JACQUES JIHA: The rational is we are only  
16 cutting the expansion of the program okay. With the  
17 existing program itself will continue to be funded.  
18 It's only the expansion, again because of the nature  
19 of the crisis that we're dealing with, so to the  
20 extent that you know a program that is about to  
21 expand, if we could save you know – those resources  
22 away and apply them towards something else. That's  
23 what we're doing. But the existing program is  
24 funded, it's just the extension of the program that  
25 we are taking the savings from.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: So, such as if for the  
3 \$1.4 million investment, how much does the average  
4 New Yorker get in extra and in return and is it  
5 greater than the \$1.4 million?

6 JACQUES JIHA: I don't have that information.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Okay, can you get us -  
8 yeah, alright well hopefully you'll get back to us on  
9 that. Uhm, what were experiences, ultimately doesn't  
10 this seem counterproductive that all this money that  
11 we do get returned could be back into our local  
12 economy into our working families?

13 JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, the current  
14 program is funded it's just the expansion. You know  
15 things that you have not yet you know so it is - I  
16 see your point. I understand the concern but again,  
17 we also have to balance it against the other choices  
18 that we have to make.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Okay, so uhm an  
20 additional question is, at adoption the Council  
21 called for additional funding for the Board of  
22 Correction to hire 27 new positions on their  
23 monitoring staff. However, the adopted plan  
24 reflected an increase of \$360,000 to fund the  
25 addition of four positions to the boards budgeted

headcount. Upon reviewing the November Plan, two of those new positions have been cut to meet the city's PEG requirement. With the budgeted headcount dropping the 35 positions at adoption to 30 positions in Fiscal 2025. The current ratio of Board of Correction budgeted positions to the Department of Correction uniform budgeted positions is 0.46 percent. The ratio for the Civilian Complaint Control Board is 0.65 percent when compared to NYPD's budgeted uniform headcount. Given that both of these are oversight agencies, why is the BOC's ratio so much lower than CCRB?

JACQUES JIHA: The uhm, CCRB headcount is uh mandated by the Charter. BOC is not. They have different responsibilities, so we believe BOC has the appropriate resources to conduct its functions.

COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: How is the BOC expected to properly monitor or provide oversight when their resources are continuously limited?

JACQUES JIHA: Again, as I said, we believe that BOC is able to do the work. They work effectively with their current headcount. We encourage conversation with them and if there's a need, we will be happy to discuss with them.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Additional question  
3 is, the November Plan includes a city funds new need  
4 of \$120.3 million for election funding in Fiscal 2024  
5 only. How is the amount of funded added determined?

6 JACQUES JIHA: Say that again, for which agency?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: The funds of \$120.3  
8 million for election funding in Fiscal 2024.

9 JACQUES JIHA: Oh, oh, oh, yeah, Board of  
10 Election. I believe it was like two elections we  
11 budgeted for and there was three in reality, so  
12 therefore we had add resources for the third  
13 election.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Which expansions does  
15 it cover?

16 JACQUES JIHA: It covers everything.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Does the new need  
18 include the cost of early voting and if so, for which  
19 elections, both?

20 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: What is the current  
22 amount of baseline funding for elections and how many  
23 elections are included in the baseline of each fiscal  
24 year?

25



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2 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I don't have it here in front  
3 of me but let me see. We have \$145 million in Fiscal  
4 Year 2025 and \$146 million in Fiscal Year 2026 and  
5 out, okay? This was set for before early voting was  
6 enacted and you know so, that's uh what we have here.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: So, it doesn't include  
8 early voting?

9 JACQUES JIHA: No.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER VELÀZQUEZ: Okay, thank you.

11 JACQUES JIHA: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have Council Member  
13 Aviles followed by Holden.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great, thank you. I'm  
15 going to uhm, just make two short comments and then I  
16 have a ton of questions. First, I think it's just  
17 really important to acknowledge that the many  
18 contracts that we provide as a city to our nonprofit  
19 providers in the human service field are often  
20 inadequate and actually do not pay for the full level  
21 of services that many nonprofit providers are in fact  
22 offering.

23 So, I just want to remind us all that while I do  
24 believe our nonprofit providers will provide a much  
25 better culturally competent level of service to both

migrants and any other New Yorker, uhm and will do it  
at a much more reduced rate, it is important that we  
hold our nonprofit providers and not get them on the  
cheap. And I think it's important to acknowledge  
that in these discussions.

Uhm, you noted that the PEGs will not have a  
programmatic impact, yet as you've heard from every  
Council Member here today, uhm that is not what we  
are seeing and hearing on our communities. It is not  
what you will hear from potentially hundreds of  
people that will testify later on. I just need you  
to make it make sense to me.

Are you aware of the unfiled mandate and serious  
service gaps for children with disabilities in New  
York City public schools?

JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, again as I said -

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: I guess you are. Are you  
aware of those service gaps and unfilled mandates in  
New York City public schools? It's just a yes or no.

JACQUES JIHA: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: I assume you're aware of  
it. I assume you're aware of it.

JACQUES JIHA: Yes.

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: We understand that DOE is  
4 proposing a cut of \$97 million from District 75  
5 schools to adhere to these PEGs, which would cut  
6 para's that help children, our most vulnerable  
7 children get to schools and have medical visits that  
8 absolutely they need.

9 To me, this is unconscionable. Can we get a  
10 commitment from this Administration that it would not  
11 cut services to the most vulnerable? It would direct  
12 its Department of Education to make sure that these  
13 children are protected when they are already not  
14 serviced appropriately.

15 JACQUES JIHA: The PEG is at \$3 million and it's  
16 coming from underspending.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Well, I guess like many  
18 of my colleagues said earlier, the underspending  
19 looks like underperformance when we know we have  
20 outstanding needs and children are not being serviced  
21 and so, I think we need to look at that very closely  
22 and I'm adamantly opposed to cutting any services for  
23 children with disabilities in our schools, among  
24 other things. Can we take, I want to take a quick  
25 segway to NYCHA.

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2 A major PEG in November Plan relates to the  
3 critical yet challenged vacant unit readiness  
4 program. Chair, if I may just complete the question.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: The program helps prepare  
7 rehab NYCHA units and turnover placements from  
8 homeless shelters, transfer, emergency transfers and  
9 the NYCHA's general waiting list. It seems despite  
10 our housing crisis; this program is a persistent  
11 target of the Administration.

12 The November Plan swaps \$37.5 million in expense  
13 for capital funds over four years. We understand  
14 that this program has been paid exclusively out of  
15 expense funds so far. How will the transition to  
16 capital funds impact the program?

17 JACQUES JIHA: We would have to go zero and back.  
18 Just a swapping of funding.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: So, if it's a swapping of  
20 funding, are you suggesting that there is no  
21 regulatory elements for capital expenditures versus  
22 anything funded by expense funding?

23 JACQUES JIHA: This is a capital eligible  
24 expenses.  
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Okay, so there is a  
3 caveat for capital eligible?

4 JACQUES JIHA: No, it's not.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: No, so there are no  
6 strings. This is the same thing that can be done.  
7 When can we expect NYCHA and OMB to produce the  
8 necessary certificate to proceed, which will enable  
9 the use of capital funds for the Vacant Unit  
10 Readiness program?

11 JACQUES JIHA: OMB and NYCHA are currently  
12 working on a CP for the capital portion of the  
13 program.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: When? Can you clarify  
15 for the record when we can expect that?

16 JACQUES JIHA: And can't give you that but  
17 they're currently working on it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Okay, well an equivalent  
19 amount of capital funding be added to the capital  
20 budget in January?

21 JACQUES JIHA: No, it will be set funded given  
22 the size of NYCHA's capital program compared with the  
23 program that we have. NYCHA has \$4 billion over a  
24 ten-year period and it is a very small program, so it  
25 will be set funded.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Yes, it is a very small  
3 program and NYCHA currently is sitting with over  
4 5,000 vacant units that we need to fill with great  
5 urgency. Could there be any delays in keeping the  
6 funding flowing so that this program that rehabs  
7 precious affordable housing for NYCHA as quickly as  
8 possible?

9 JACQUES JIHA: There shouldn't be any delay in  
10 terms of the funding source itself, it should not  
11 cause delay. There is a delay in something else.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Okay, do you know how  
13 many units have been rehabbed in this program this  
14 year?

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: This will be the last  
16 question.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Yes, thank you sir,  
18 sorry.

19 JACQUES JIHA: Uhm, I'll get back to you on that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great, thank you. Thank  
21 you. Thank you Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member Holden  
23 followed by Paladino on Zoom.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair. Thank  
25 you Director for being here and uhm, let's talk about

one of the smallest agencies, the Department of  
Veteran Services. Uhm, could you clarify the  
rationale behind including smaller agencies like DVS  
in the broad application of the PEGs, because with a  
\$5 million budget, this agency has to serve 220,000  
New York City Veterans. They have 33 employees.  
That, I mean, that's a very, very small agency that's  
understaffed, woefully understaffed. So, the fact  
that we're treating them just and everybody across  
the board, is kind of insulting. Can you just like,  
where are the discussions where certain agencies  
couldn't be cut because that they're so woefully  
understaffed?

JACQUES JIHA: I understand Mr. Holden, Council  
Member Holden. The challenge again as I said we  
have, is the size of the problem and we made a policy  
decision to ensure that every agency okay contribute  
equally to the solution of the problem. And the  
savings from veterans office, comes from vacancy and  
OTPS. OTPS savings and a couple of vacancies that  
they had that we do as savings. So, it's not a lot  
of resources and I hear you but again, we're trying  
to —

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But you realize the  
optics on this. With the people that served our  
country.

JACQUES JIHA: I understand. I understand.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, the applications, let  
me just talk about a staff here. Nationally,  
veterans apply for disability about 25 percent of the  
veterans apply for disability nationally, the  
national average. In New York City, it's 15 percent.  
That means there's so many veterans that are not  
getting the services that they should get. So, and  
we're talking about a very small amount of money here  
in the whole picture. So, that's what I'm concerned  
about. That we need to do more because obviously  
there are gaps in communication. So, and in one of  
the questions and it's about the migrants but what  
progress has been made in securing work authorization  
for migrants as part of the Administration's efforts?  
Because additionally, can you discuss the actual  
economic impact of these authorizations? Because  
many had said that it would boost our tax revenues,  
so.

JACQUES JIHA: We all agree the Mayor had met his  
business from the get go, from day one. We want to



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3 make sure that the migrants that they all have work  
4 authorization and has been pushing the White House  
5 and the Washington DC to provide work authorization.

6 And I believe the TPS were granted to the  
7 Venezuelans. TPS working with the Venezuelans and I  
8 would provide you the exact number of cases that –

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because that's  
10 important. How many have actual work authorizations?  
11 Are we making progress or is it –

12 JACQUES JIHA: This is critical because uh we  
13 want these guys to be added to the tax revenue base  
14 as they become workers and they make contribution to  
15 the city. So, this is our ultimate goal. We will  
16 provide you the information in terms of how many of  
17 them have applied and how many of them were granted  
18 TPS.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. Thank you  
20 Director. Thank you Chair.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, uh Council Member  
22 Paladino and then Ariola will close us out.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon. Thank  
24 you very, very much. I want to say thank you to the  
25 Director for your patience and a lot of  
miscommunication here today. You know we could go

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back to you know six months to a year ago, this was  
all projected that this was going to happen and what  
shocks me with my colleagues is that they don't  
understand that they can't have their cake and eat it  
to. When we said okay to the migrant crisis, then it  
became a crisis. When we first allowed the migrants  
to come in and welcome them with open arms, we did  
not expect it to balloon into what it ballooned into.  
Approximately a year ago, eight months ago, the Mayor  
did state quite clearly that this was going to cost  
our city over \$4 billion and over the course of three  
years, \$12 billion.

So, I ask my colleagues in Council, where did you  
think this money was going to come from? Did you  
think if we go out and pick it off -

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member, Council  
Member, we're questioning OMB, not your colleagues.

COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Excuse me, what's that?

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We're questioning OMB. If  
you want to talk to your colleagues -

COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Well I don't have -  
excuse me Council Member Brannan, this has what to do  
with why we are in the situation that we're in. He

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2 HEALTH AND THE COMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS 211  
3 has tried very hard to explain to everyone why these  
4 cuts are being made.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Did you have a question?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I have a question. Not  
7 really. You know me, I have more of a statement.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, well if you want to  
9 forward your resume to OMB you can.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Uh, that's very funny,  
11 very funny, very funny. That's why the budget will  
12 never be balanced in the City of New York because you  
13 and others refuse to understand what we actually have  
14 on —

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay, thank you Justin,  
17 very unfair what you're doing today.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member  
19 Ariola. Questions for OMB. Council Member Ariola  
20 are you there? Council woman Ariola, going once.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Finally, I'm here.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, go ahead.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay, thank you Chair.  
24 Thank you Madam Speaker. Of course the Director and  
25 his team and the entire members who were sitting  
there for so long.

Director, I'd like to talk to you about the cuts to the FDNY's long term staffing separations which will affect about 190 uniformed members of service and I'm going to bundle my questions in an effort to save time since I'm the wrap up.

So, of the 190 individuals, how many does the Administration anticipate will be subject to potential separation. Two, to be unable to return to full duty and how it will be determined. Next, the Council was informed that the FDNY would make offline positions to those subject to separation. What types of roles would be made available and would they receive the same rate of pay?

Three, what will become of the members of service who are unable to return to full duty and are considered forwarded internally? Will they be terminated and if so, how much notice will they be given?

KENNETH GODINER: The employees that are subject to this proposal have already been determined to be unable to return to duty to the extent that they have reasonable accommodations and we have physicians that fit. They'll be given positions that fit their reasonable accommodation to the extent they do not.

It would be reasonable to assume that they would take disability retirements because they've already been found to be disabled and not able to return to the job. Uhm, in terms of the rate of pay they have when they're on assignments off the line, that's covered by the labor contract won't change because of their assignment. I don't know if I got all of your questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: So, we're going to take people who are injured, saving someone's life or going into a fire and now have become light duty and have been doing a job for the FDNY that was a value and have reasonable accommodations and will now -- will they be given the only option is disability? Or they will be also given some other option or the only option is disability?

KENNETH GODINER: The policy is in line with --

COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: It's pretty unfair and it also seems that it could be litigated.

KENNETH GODINER: This policy is in line with what we're doing, what we do in the other uniformed agencies and my understanding is about half of these individuals are actually eligible for a service retirement. Uhm and could then also apply for a

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3 disability pension after that. We're not terminating  
4 people who have RA's or who fill a slot that's in RA.  
5 It's for a persons for whom there is not a RA  
6 position that would fit with their disability.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: But this would not be an  
8 option for them? They would have to retire, go on  
9 disability because they would be terminated, correct?

10 KENNETH GODINER: People who cannot have been  
11 found unable to return to full duty, when there is  
12 not a position right where they could fulfill duties  
13 in an RA, those people would be terminated.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Okay and just uh, you  
15 know we've heard a lot of my colleagues, they were  
16 all talking about their own specific committees and  
17 mine of course being Fire Department and all the  
18 budget cuts that are so severe. So, my final  
19 question is, estimate. Now, you said the budget gap  
20 right now is \$7.9 billion. If the city was not  
21 shouldering the lion share of the financial cost of  
22 migrant services, what do you think the approximate  
23 budget gap would be? If we were getting the right  
24 help from federal and state government?

25 JACQUES JIHA: I can't give you exactly what it  
would be at this moment and time but as when we

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adopted the budget, a good example was the budget gap  
for Fiscal Year 2025 was slated to be about \$5.1  
billion, okay. So, uhm, you know so you could infer  
from that and that also included an appropriation for  
the asylum seekers. So, you're talking about  
something south of that \$5 billion. Typically around  
November, we have a budget gap within you know what  
we call manageable level. This is the first time  
we're going to have a budget gap growing from  
adoption to now. And again, as I said, it is because  
of the unexpected costs of the asylum seekers that we  
have to bear for about a year and a half without  
getting assistance from the federal government or  
little assistance from the federal government in  
general.

COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you so much  
Director. Thank you Chair. Thank you Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Gale Brewer  
for two minutes then we're going to close out this  
panel.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I  
have two questions. One is hiring halls. I know  
that we had them, so I wanted to know how many were  
hired? What agencies? What was the total? How many

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in each borough? And how will the hiring freeze  
effect the continuation of these events? I have to  
say in some cases I've heard at testimony during the  
last couple of months, that agencies are planning to  
have hiring halls. I've also heard other agencies  
say they're hiring even though there's a freeze.  
Kind of strange but I wanted to know are there still  
funding in the budget for the hiring halls? That's  
question number one.

Question Number Two, I'm very concerned about  
oversight Department of Investigation and I wanted to  
know from the DOI's perspective, uhm, I know the  
budget included two new need for DOI. I appreciate  
it, an asylum seeker integrity mentorship and a  
borough-based jail integrity monitorship but there  
was also no funding added to increase their vendor  
integrity unit and that unit is to benefit the city  
as a whole through funding and I think there's a need  
for them. We've obviously talked about vendors here  
quite extensively today. So, those are my two  
questions. Hiring hall and vendors for money for  
DOI.

JACQUES JIHA: The hiring hall because of the  
crisis was put on hold.



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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, you should know  
3 that people come here as agencies and say they are  
4 scheduling them. I am here and I hear that.

5 JACQUES JIHA: Okay, they are put on hold. We  
6 currently, we had about 2,000 offers were made from  
7 you know at the hiring halls, with 41 mayoral and  
8 non-mayoral agencies participating. If you want a  
9 breakdown of where these offers, which agencies, we  
10 will provide them to you.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank you.

12 JACQUES JIHA: and the second question was  
13 regarding the –

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The DOI vendor –

15 JACQUES JIHA: Integrity.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I need as much  
17 oversight of the Administration as possible and that  
18 would be one place where they need funding for that.

19 JACQUES JIHA: Yeah, uhm, we provided DOI as you  
20 have mentioned resources. Basically we believe that  
21 there is a need to oversee the huge –

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The vendors.

23 JACQUES JIHA: The huge spending we're doing on  
24 the migrants so therefore, we want to make sure that  
25 DOI is there to monitor what's going on. And also,

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with respect to the borough-based jail, regarding the  
Vendor Integrity Unit, I don't believe - I don't  
believe we added resources but again, this is a -  
they play a critical role and we should also revisit  
that issue.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, you will fund them?

JACQUES JIHA: I will revisit that issue to see  
exactly whether or not they need to be funded.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, when will you make  
that decision?

JACQUES JIHA: As we go through the budget cycle.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, alright, thank you.  
Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Speaker Adams.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Thank you so much Mr.  
Chair. Uhm, Mr. Director and team, thank you so much  
for staying for the duration of questioning by my  
colleagues of the Council. We really do appreciate  
your time and you staying. I would also like to  
reiterate the fact that the budget gap was not  
created by the asylum seekers because the budget gap  
would exist regardless of asylum seekers coming to  
New York or not. We look forward to collaborating  
with OMB on a continuing basis to reach reasonable

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3 solutions for the benefit of all New Yorkers. Thank  
4 you all again for your time. Chair Brannan.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Speaker Adams.  
6 We're — OMB we are not in denial about these budget  
7 gaps. We want to work with you to close them and you  
8 know continue our partnership heading into January.  
9 So, we thank you for your time.

10 JACQUES JIHA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have the next  
12 panel is going to be our Organized Labor Panel. We  
13 have Henry Garrido, Michael Mulgrew, Melissa Cahn,  
14 Joyce Mulvaney, and James Davis. So, DC37, UFT, PSC  
15 CUNY, thank you. And then after that we will hear  
16 from IBO. [04:33:35]—

17 [04:34:21]. And Louis Cholden-Brown. [04:34:22]—  
18 [04:35:50].

19 Okay, we're going to start the second panel of  
20 this hearing, we'll start with UFT President Michael  
21 Mulgrew.

22 MICHAEL MULGREW: I want to thank the City  
23 Council, Speaker and all the Chairs for holding this  
24 hearing. As we have heard today already from many  
25 people, these cuts are just not necessary. We have  
record reserves. We are running a massive surplus

for this year and we are still here discussing cuts.

And I want to be clear, the agency that just testified, this agency that just testified over the last three years in the budget process has underestimated revenue by \$30 billion and over estimated the cost by \$3.5 billion. That means they screwed up by \$33 billion. And we're going to take their numbers at face value. I am not here to you know questioning someone's integrity but I'm here to say this agency has constantly been way off when it comes to our budgets.

Blaming these cuts on the asylum seekers is just reprehensible. We all know that this comes down to whether we believe the cost that the city is projecting for the asylum seekers themselves. We heard about the money that the state has put aside in a pot and the fact that the city has only been reimbursed for \$250 million. You could do the math on that. That would mean all in total expense, total expense for the city for housing for the asylum seekers would be under \$1.4 billion.

So, where are we coming up with a \$7 billion problem? It just doesn't add up and when I have to sit here now and talk about the issues that we're

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dealing with in terms of the fact that thousands of  
parents are going to be forced with not being able to  
have access to 3K and PreK. Tens of millions of  
dollars being cut from District 75 of needy students  
when we already are under a corrective action plan  
from the State Education Department and the fact that  
once again, parents and teachers will be going to  
Albany this year to advocate and lobby for money for  
education and the only question we have to answer for  
every politician we deal with is, "well, why does the  
Mayor keep taking -- took over a billion dollars of  
money from schools that we sent to New York City?"

So, in the end, this really is about what I call  
gross mismanagement, gross incompetence, and  
political gamesmanship. Because when we add up these  
numbers, it just does not make any sense. And not  
expanding programs that we know have been very  
effective. You know the program that allows people  
to move from shelters into permanent housing. Why is  
that not being expanding when it has proven to be  
very effective? Why are we not offering that to  
asylum seekers?

These are the questions that this Administration  
needs to answer because if you're managing this

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correctly, you'll be doing those things. Why are we  
putting so many of our families in the state  
facilities and not in the city facilities and putting  
individuals in the state facilities? If you did that  
because of the reimbursement formula, it would save  
the city hundreds of millions of dollars.

So, when OMB sits here and says that there's  
nothing we can do about it, first of all, your  
numbers don't add up. You have a track record of  
proving that your numbers don't add up. Your  
projections are grossly inadequate and wrong every  
year and yet we sit here today discussing removing  
services from across this city for all of our  
communities. And I am standing here, I'm sitting  
here and I will stand with City Council to say, "we  
will not allow this to happen." Because this city is  
mismanaging this entire process and we need to hold  
them accountable. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Mr. Garrido.

HENRY GARRIDO: Good afternoon Madam Chair,  
Chairman Brannan, Madam Speaker. It's good to see  
all of you. We are submitting testimony for the  
record but I want to use this opportunity to speak  
very specifically and follow up what my brother

Michael mentioned about both the mismanagement, the exaggeration and the fact that this proposed PEG program which reduces about 2,500 positions is not only unfair, unjustified but it really makes a mockery of the process that we have of the counterbalances of government in the City of New York. Where the City Council and the Mayor negotiated budget collectively and then to be doing by a program for things that you wanted to do under the excuse of the asylum seekers number, I think it really violates the whole principle with that democratic process and I wanted to start with that.

I will say this to you. Of some of the worst things that we've seen in this budget process has been the fact that they are looking to cut the job training participants. Not by five percent, not by ten percent, not by fifteen percent but a hundred percent and replace them with contract services. Not to mention the fact that many of those positions as we speak are being replaced by consultants. IT consultants that are in fact last week, if you just check the city record you will see the number of contracts, the difference this time is that instead of being contracting this work through the agencies,

it's been done directly through OMB. Which not only violates Local Law 63, another democratic law that was approved and assigned by this body but also bypassing all terms of procurement, all you know RFP requirement. And I don't know how you can make the case that 100 percent of the 1,200 middle class workers work in both Sanitation and in parks is not 100 percent displacement when you're using contractors to do the work.

I want to talk about libraries. I want to talk about parks, all those costs. But above all, I want to talk about something that's a fundamental principle of what we do which is in a budget crisis, you never cut revenue producing titles, never. That has never happened. If I go through the list of vacancies that I have in the Department of Finance for the cost of employees who produce and capture revenue sometimes ten and twenty times. It is completely Ludacris the way that this city is approaching that. We want the City Council to do what it was hired to do, which is be a counter balance to this in any administration and to do so, I think this budget process has made a mockery of that process and we are standing with you in questioning



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3 and pushing back these cuts that are not draconian  
4 are unnecessary. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Mr. Davis.

6 JAMES DAVIS: Good afternoon Madam Speaker, Chair  
7 Brannan, Members of the Finance Committee. I'm James  
8 Davis. I'm the President of the Professional Staff  
9 Congress, the union that represents 30,000 faculty  
10 and professional staff at the City University of New  
11 York.

12 We are grateful to the Committee for holding this  
13 hearing and grateful for your ongoing support for  
14 resources for CUNY students. We appreciate the  
15 opportunity to remind this Council of CUNY's economic  
16 and cultural impact on the city but this body already  
17 understands this. Thanks to your efforts to restore  
18 \$32.4 million, CUNY's community colleagues were  
19 shielded from the worst of the Mayor's cuts in Fiscal  
20 2024. So, it concerns us that the Mayoral  
21 Administration is using mid-year budget modification  
22 as a political tool to herd his alma mater with a  
23 proposed cut of \$23 million additional dollars  
24 through the program to eliminate the gap.

25 CUNY students, as you know are not typical  
college students. Nearly half are the first

1 generation in their families to attend college. Half  
2 of them come from households with annual incomes of  
3 \$30,000 or less. 36 percent have reported food  
4 insecurity, 35 percent were born in another country  
5 and 88 percent are people of color. The city should  
6 be focused on supporting these New Yorkers, not  
7 defunding the higher education system that supports  
8 them.  
9

10 The PEG report this time around cites reductions  
11 to the ASAP program. ASAP is a nationally recognized  
12 landmark program that provides one on one guidance  
13 and financial support to participating community  
14 college students to jeopardize any part of the ASAP  
15 program is both cruel and short sided.

16 We do not have an enrollment crisis at CUNY, we  
17 have a retention crisis. The Mayoral Administration  
18 should prioritize programs with a demonstrated record  
19 of retaining students through to graduation.

20 As we speak, the CUNY Administration is in fact  
21 cannibalizing the budgets of its own colleges in  
22 order to cover operating cost to the tune of nearly  
23 \$128 million over the past two fiscal years. My own  
24 campus, Brooklyn College has been asked to find an  
25 additional \$3.5 million in savings in this fiscal

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year and another \$4.5 million in savings in the next  
fiscal year after already having had to save \$6.6  
million demanded from the University Administration  
in the current fiscal year.

There is a hiring freeze. We have 62 fewer full-  
time faculty members this year at Brooklyn College  
than we had before the pandemic in 2019. So, these  
are unsustainable trends that will drive students  
away.

I'll just wrap up by noting that the middle class  
is the backbone of the city. As my colleagues have  
been pointing out, the proposed PEG cuts directly  
target us. Our members, our students and all New  
Yorkers benefit from a robust, social program and  
safety net and a well-managed set of city services.  
Essential services like those mentioned benefit all  
New Yorkers. Cutting them is short-sided and will  
have a lasting impact on our communities and we  
certainly deserve better than what the Mayor has  
proposed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. My colleagues  
have questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I have a question.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Ayala.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah, this question is for  
3 the UFT regarding the 3K program. So, we've heard  
4 from OMB repeatedly that we don't have the number of  
5 students enrolled or waitlist pending that would  
6 justify keeping those dollars in place. Is that an  
7 accurate assessment?

8 MICHAEL MULGREW: It's accurate the way they're  
9 running it because before they took over, we moved  
10 the seats every year. You're not guaranteed a  
11 definitive number of three-year-olds in every by  
12 every school. So, there was a process where the  
13 seats would be moved every year based on the need.  
14 The teachers who are working those programs know that  
15 and it was something we did for years. So, when they  
16 say, "Oh, we can't keep these seats when no one is  
17 filling them, that's because they didn't move the  
18 seats to where they were needed. That's the problem  
19 and now, they're acting like oh, that's a good reason  
20 to cut the funding for it. You could imagine every  
21 year, it's both for Pre-K and 3K, seats move across  
22 the City of New York.

23 I don't think we are in a place where we live in  
24 a society where we guarantee everyone doing certain  
25 things so we have enough children for every three

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3 years coming into our school system but it really is  
4 about how you manage it and it has not been managed  
5 correctly. We have other places where the seats are  
6 full and there's waitlists because they didn't move  
7 seats to areas where there were less three-year-olds  
8 over there.

9 If you look, we had a process where we would look  
10 at records of births and hospitals, things of this  
11 nature and there is some judgement calls being made  
12 but there was a very rigorous process of moving seats  
13 around on a yearly basis for both three-year-olds and  
14 four-year-olds. And if you did that, we would then  
15 right to eliminate the number of families who would  
16 be on waitlists and wouldn't have an opportunity for  
17 the seats because we do have a lot of people on  
18 waitlists.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Do we know what that  
20 number is?

21 MICHAEL MULGREW: I could get you that. I don't  
22 have it right now but I can get you that number.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I'd appreciate that.  
24 Thank you.

25 MICHAEL MULGREW: No problem. And you know that  
has a massive effect, not just on the child, who we

1 want as early as possible. We know that leads to  
2 better outcomes but it's become you know it's such an  
3 important place for a family to have access to that  
4 because that's usually those are working parents.  
5 So, it has a real negative effect on everything about  
6 for our economy, for our city and most importantly on  
7 a family itself.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Uhm, President Mulgrew,  
10 there's something that puzzled the Council for a long  
11 time that it's very hard to believe that there could  
12 be 30,000 families who wouldn't love to be connected  
13 to an early childhood education.

14 MICHAEL MULGREW: You are correct. And I know  
15 the answer but I'd like to hear your take on it. The  
16 outreach that happened under de Blasio versus the  
17 outreach under this Administration. It seems there's  
18 a big gulf there and I think parents don't know that  
19 these seats exist. It's hard for them to access  
20 them.

21 MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah, there was a definitive  
22 change in the running of the program between the two  
23 Administrations. Obviously, the de Blasio  
24 Administration thought this was their most important  
25 thing that they did as an Administration was to

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3 create a 3K, Pre-K program. So, there was constant  
4 outreach. It was everywhere and they had a team in  
5 place that actually was not inside of the DOE. They  
6 worked outside of the DOE who did all of the  
7 outreach, did the enrollment, moved the seats around.  
8 We don't have that same structure at this point. And  
9 that's why we get a lot of complaints from families  
10 who announce saying, "well, I want to seat but I  
11 can't have one and in other areas where we're seeing  
12 that there's no one in a seat because it's a  
13 combination of bad outreach and not moving seats when  
14 it was the appropriate time to move them to another  
15 area.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Krishnan  
17 followed by Holden.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you Speaker Adams  
19 and Chair Brannan. This question is for President  
20 Garrido DC37. Uhm, the Mayor is making sweeping cuts  
21 to the Parks Department. As you mentioned earlier, a  
22 12 percent PEG or cut when you consider everything.  
23 The elimination of the POPs program among other  
24 things. Your members are cleaning our parks every  
25 single day and caring for them and we're very  
grateful to them for their service. Can you talk a

1 bit about how this massive cut will affect your  
2 members, our parks workers? And what are your  
3 members telling you? What are their concerns that  
4 they're sharing with you in light of these sweeping  
5 cuts?  
6

7 HENRY GARRIDO: I will say this, this goes into  
8 the category of broken promises. The effect on New  
9 Yorkers first. Garbage will be piling up. The  
10 ability to provide services in three services in  
11 parks facilities, in lifeguards the board won't allow  
12 us to open the beaches. Won't allow us to open  
13 sections into our sections. The amount of vacancies  
14 that we have already is mindboggling but to also  
15 disproportionately cut the POP program that you  
16 mentioned in both Sanitation and Parks at a time  
17 where we're battling with rats and battling with you  
18 know sanitation issues. I think it affects the  
19 quality of work, life in the way that New Yorkers use  
20 parks and I want to thank you for your leadership for  
21 speaking up about that. I just want to go back to  
22 the idea of the process. This was a hard-fought  
23 battle during the budget process where the  
24 Administration had to as any give and take, agreed to  
25 make some concessions, so that the Council only to



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find out three months later, that they want to  
institute the very same thing they wanted to do in  
the process of the budget. That undermines this  
democratic process at a time I might add that the IBO  
came in with today with a process that we are going  
to end up conservatively with a \$3.8 billion surplus.

To me, that is you know, that cries in the  
integrity that was raised earlier of the process, not  
on the individuals but integrity of the process. And  
I'm hoping that you can help us push back because  
your constituents are going to be the ones that are  
most effected.

COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. Thank you  
all for your testimony.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Holden  
followed by Joseph.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Mr. Davis, thank you for  
your testimony. As someone who was saved by CUNY and  
actually taught for four decades, in a budget crisis,  
CUNY is always the first to take the hit, which is a  
disinvestment which doesn't make any sense for  
recovery. Could you tell me the impact to the  
community colleges especially? In the faculty, full  
time faculty versus adjuncts because the full-time

1 faculty actually helps certainly mentor on a full-  
2 time basis the students and actually can keep them in  
3 the college, can keep them working, can work with  
4 them. Tell us the impact that these cuts might have  
5 on the faculty at the schools.  
6

7 JAMES DAVIS: Thanks for the question Council  
8 Member. Uhm, the impact of the cuts overall on full  
9 time staffing at the city level alone has been a  
10 reduction of upwards of 350 faculty and staff  
11 positions combined. The current staffing levels at  
12 CUNY are that we have roughly 7,000 full-time faculty  
13 across the system and over 11,000 adjunct faculty.  
14 And I wouldn't for a moment criticize any of those  
15 adjunct faculty. Many of them are excellent  
16 teachers. It's not a model that best supports  
17 students for the reason that you just pointed out.  
18 It's very difficult in this moment when the state has  
19 in fact invested additional funds to increase the  
20 ratio of full-time faculty to students at CUNY. It's  
21 very difficult to see that we are barely breaking  
22 even in that ratio because of attrition and  
23 retirement. So, the state despite tens of millions  
24 of additional investment, uhm has barely changed the  
25 equation that you're describing between the full-time

1 faculty and the students and at the same time, we  
2 find at the city level, the Mayoral Administration  
3 willing time and time again to put the CUNY budget on  
4 the line.  
5

6 So, in the current PEGs, there's \$23 million in  
7 additional reductions. It's gratuitous, it's  
8 unsustainable, it doesn't help the ratio that you've  
9 been describing and it also is going to draw down the  
10 student services that are outside the classroom that  
11 will help support the students to graduation.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Joseph  
14 followed by Aviles.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. This question  
16 is for President Mulgrew. How do you know, what  
17 method did you use to move around the seats to know  
18 where the seats were needed and how were students  
19 placed in those seats? Because according to the  
20 Administration, they had hired Accenture I believe at  
21 \$1 billion to tell them where there seats were.  
22 Until today, the Council has yet to receive the  
23 report. It's been four months. So, tell us what's  
24 the process and why, how come early childhood  
25

providers cannot register children at the site  
themselves?

MICHAEL MULGREW: There used to be a complete  
team that would look at the number of children and  
the age in each geographic area. And that's how they  
were moving from one place to another. We don't have  
that team anymore, so then they went to an outside  
contract. That's not working out so well for them  
from what I understand because nobody moved. It was  
just that simple. The team that ran it and set it up  
originally, they are not there. I mean, all of them  
are not there. So, it was taken over by a team from  
inside of the DOE and if you remember, we've had some  
difficulties with them to say the least. Yes, the  
ideal system of course, you want to make it as easy  
for a parent as possible. They should be able to  
register either online or at a site itself. The  
whole idea is to make it accessible, not putting up  
any deterrents for a family to access the service.  
So, we've had major issues with the new folks who are  
running it since they came into place is how I will  
say it right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: What about the report  
that we're supposed to locate the seats, that report?

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2 MICHAEL MULGREW: The seats did not move, so I'm  
3 assuming the report didn't come in on time but they  
4 should be answering. Those are the questions they  
5 need to be answering because there are thousands of  
6 families who need childcare in the city and they just  
7 don't have access to it because of the lack of  
8 management by the Department of Ed to move into the  
9 right places.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Because the Council on  
11 the record so many times had told them the outreach  
12 that was in place before is no longer there.

13 MICHAEL MULGREW: It is not. That's just a fact.  
14 That just is not even close.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Aviles.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great, thank you so much  
18 for your testimony. Thank you for being here. What  
19 we heard over and over again for the past several  
20 hours from the Administration is that there's a  
21 crisis. There's a \$12 billion gap. There's a  
22 whatever billion gap. We need to close the gap.  
23 We've only seen kind of uh a one hit wonder here of  
24 cuts and no talk of revenue generation. I'd like to  
25 know given the expense of your membership, have you

heard this Administration actual pursue any type of  
revenue generation tools beyond asking the federal  
government for resources, which we deserve and we  
should get. But any actual proactive revenue  
generation discussions or tools that have been  
pursued? And any of you can answer that.

HENRY GARRIDO: Yeah, so if you don't mind I'll  
take this. We represent the lion share of the people  
in the Finance Department for instance and I see it  
as an advisory member of the IBO. There were several  
recommendations on vacancies that we have on  
auditors, tax auditors. We are leaving millions of  
dollars on the table. I think it was Councilwoman  
Gale Brewer who requested from IBO an analysis that  
show over one billion in potential revenue that we  
should be capturing but we don't have the people to  
do it. So, I can tell you that as of last week, we  
have 60 vacancies on the traffic device maintainees.  
Those are the people who install the meters. We are  
way behind, 60 positions there we have traffic  
enforcement agents. These are the people who work in  
the towing of illegally parked cars and things of  
that. We are 32 percent vacancy there. Every time  
that you have a position there, the amount of money

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that generate is ten times the amount of cost that it  
would be to hire them.

Uh, we have inspectors who issue fines on  
environmental violators. We have 22 percent vacancy  
there. The Department of Building, we have a huge  
backlog on building permits that could not be  
processed which has a tremendous effect because not  
only can you not hire folks to do the job,  
construction goes down, tax revenue goes down and so,  
those are being frozen as well. I can go on and on  
the number of positions that generate revenue that  
the Administration is literally cutting out of this  
program. That is wrong.

MICHAEL MULGREW: I'm going to jump in for one  
second. Just even if we say we took that ridiculous  
undocumented, unvalidated number of \$7 billion. Say  
we take that number. That would require a three  
percent growth in the city's revenue to eliminate.  
And I'm talking about the taxable revenue. I'm not  
talking about the cameras and everything else that's  
generating hundreds of millions, billions of dollars.  
Anyone who drives in New York City loves getting a  
little envelope, the orange envelope in the mail.  
You know, that's an [INAUDIBLE 05:01:16] You're

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3 talking a three percent growth would eliminate \$7  
4 billion. We don't have a \$7 billion problem. I  
5 don't care what they say. They can't prove it.  
6 Their own numbers prove them that its wrong.

7 So, in the end this is just getting ridiculous  
8 and the fact that OMB is only projecting a 1.6  
9 percent growth for New York City when anybody else  
10 projecting growth for New York City is over three  
11 percent. So, it's like weapons of mass destruction  
12 again. We're just trying to come up with some reason  
13 to do something -- a government to do something it  
14 shouldn't be doing.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: And more particularly  
16 what I was getting at is not necessarily the fines  
17 and fees that would be collected on every day New  
18 Yorkers who are suffering already but I'm talking  
19 about taxing the rich. I'm talking about transfer  
20 wealth tax. I'm talking about no discussion of  
21 millionaires tax. What we saw in a New York Times  
22 article just a few days ago is you know who is  
23 growing in New York City? The billionaires. You  
24 know who is leaving New York City, working class  
25 folks.



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3 And yet this Administration does zero advocacy.

4 I want to know if you all have seen anything because  
5 I certainly have not. Any advocacy around generating  
6 that revenue that would actually save the services  
7 that are important to New Yorkers, so thank you.

8 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you and for us, in  
9 Education, it's going to be a very difficult year for  
10 us at the state level because the state is facing  
11 some challenges that New York City is not when you  
12 look at its revenues and its projections except for  
13 what you heard here today and they're getting sick  
14 and tired of sending extra money to the school system  
15 of New York City only to have this Administration  
16 supplanted you know plunder it, whatever word you  
17 want to use and put it into their general reserves.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going to pause  
19 and take testimony from Andrew Ansbro, the President  
20 of UFA who is on Zoom. Andrew are you there?

21 ANDREW ANSBRO: I'm here. Can you hear me?

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

23 ANDREW ANSBRO: Oh, thank you Justin. I'd  
24 appreciate the opportunity to speak today. I'd like  
25 to thank Michael Mulgrew for coming to this hearing  
with that wonderful information about how this budget

1 crisis is a farce. The scariest part that I've heard  
2 today is how we are hearing about these massive  
3 surpluses. In relation to what it's doing to New  
4 York City Fire Department and the Safety of New York  
5 City residents, it's quite appalling. Recently, they  
6 cut staffing in 20 engine companies around the city,  
7 basically ten percent of the engine companies. Every  
8 fire that we go to, we require multiple engine  
9 companies to go there. So, this basically has the  
10 potential to affect roughly half the fires in New  
11 York City going forward for the next seven months to  
12 save a measly \$7 million.

14 When you remove that additional fire fighter from  
15 the engine company, it's been proven that it takes up  
16 to twice the amount of time to get a hose in place  
17 and put out the fire. So, doing this as the winter  
18 approaches is the worst possible time to cut  
19 staffing.

20 Additionally, as we all know, the FDNY cannot  
21 stop talking about or reporting about the e-bike  
22 fires, which is something we didn't even know about  
23 five years ago. It is when we first started  
24 reporting it. 18 deaths have been related to e-bike  
25 fires alone this year, almost [LOST AUDIO 05:04:34].

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We lost you Andrew.

Andrew, I think you muted yourself.

ANDREW ANSBRO: I'm sorry. Those 18 deaths this year on e-bike fires are the -- it's 20 percent of the loss of civilians. The e-bike fires as we know start out explosively and usually trap residents in their apartments. At the same time e-bike fires become a 27 percent of the losses to civilians and the winter is approaching. These cuts right now are dangerous. The fact that according to other estimates here, we're not really in a budget crisis. What I'm saying is this is an immoral cut. Putting civilians lives in danger as well as fire fighters lives in danger, just to make a point to Washington that money is getting tight.

The staffing needs to be restored. There are other items that the FDNY is going into that were discussed at this meeting by Council woman Ariola. She mentioned that they're looking to excise, basically terminate injured fire fighters, that got injured in the line of duty, terminates the word that I would use but these are members that want to continue to stay employed by the FDNY and they're saying they don't have a spot for them. There's 500

offline positions in the FDNY. They only want to  
classify 125 of them as RA positions. The other 375  
positions they're not budgeted. The only budgeted  
positions we have are for online positions.

So, they want to have unbudgeted positions and  
they don't want to make them RA positions. They want  
to be the people who are temporarily injured or  
people that can work offline. Either way it's  
immoral. You're taking someone whose been injured  
for New York City and telling them we don't have  
enough jobs for you because we only made a quarter of  
the offline jobs for people that are hurt. You're  
going to have to be shown the door.

And as we all know the pension tier has changed  
in 2009. If you're a tier three pension or in the  
FDNY, if you get put off the job due to an injury  
that were to happen off duty, say car accident or an  
illness, these are the positions that should be held  
for you. What would happen if you're a tier three  
member is if you get put off the job as an ordinary  
disability and you are unable to collect social  
security, the pension system will not pay your  
pension. You'll basically be fired and given nothing  
unless you can collect that Social Security. These

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3 jobs should remain for members that get hurt. We  
4 need these jobs to operate the FDNY but they're only  
5 classified and four of them is already positions.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Andrew.

7 ANDREW ANSBRO: Thank you Councilman.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have questions from  
9 Council Member Menin followed by Brewer.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair.

11 Thank you for your testimony today. It was  
12 incredibly frustrating to hear from the  
13 Administration about the decimating and completely  
14 destabilizing cuts that they want to move forward,  
15 particularly when they were not willing to address  
16 one of the biggest reoccurring items in the budget  
17 which is skyrocketing healthcare costs. Can you talk  
18 a little bit about that?

19 HENRY GARRIDO: Yeah, Councilwoman you've taken a  
20 lead. Thank you for doing that. Obviously the cost  
21 of healthcare has exploded, particularly after COVID  
22 right and the cost of providing healthcare for both  
23 actives and retirees 1.3 million people. It's  
24 incredibly high and as you know, we worked really  
25 closely with this Council to create an office to  
bring some level of accountability and to do really

cost analysis that could pay for itself in terms of  
around analysis. Most of the cost overruns what  
we're seeing is hospitals and obviously prescription  
drugs which have a [INAUDIBLE 05:08:24] at the  
national level but we've seen certain hospitals  
charge us 300, 400 percent over Medicaid, which is  
unheard of right for particular procedures. And we  
think that undermining that process that the City  
Council took is not funding the Office the way it  
ought to be funded. Because that itself could as I  
said, more than pay for itself by saving and by doing  
an analysis of the work and the cost associated with  
those hospitals. And with those prescription drugs  
that we have seen that have been exploded and in  
terms of prices. And I think that we are doing  
ourselves a disservice by taking the position that  
this is almost like an open-ended credit card that we  
just keep paying for it without doing the work. I  
mean, as municipal labor committee, we've done at  
least two rounds of savings. We're in the process of  
an RFP or negotiated acquisition for the current PPO  
services that cover 750,000 people. We're doing  
things that are pretty unique in terms of the  
prescription program throughout a pool, cooperative

pooling, as well as doing cover for testing and  
vaccines and all kinds of levels are being done. And  
of course, this Council has already heard plenty of  
times about Medicare Advantage as well, which has  
created controversies of itself. But why not look at  
the cost that we have? Why not look internally to  
see what would be an overcharge for those facilities,  
the hospitals and do it internally where process of  
discounts are already initiated to begin with.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah, I completely agree with  
Henry and we were very – we celebrated the fact that  
you passed this bill. It was signed into law but now  
we're hearing there is no funding for it and this is  
something we need in order to show people that there  
is a better way to do healthcare in our fight with  
the healthcare industry because it is a continual  
fight. It used to be fights with insurance companies  
and healthcare was basically non-for-profit people  
who are willing to – were trying to give care. Well  
now, the entire industry is basically a massive for-  
profit and constantly looking at ways. When you meet  
with hospital CEO's, they always talk about their  
quarterly reports. There should be no quarterly  
reports in healthcare and that's why we're looking

forward to actually using this bill for you to be  
able to use this bill and do what needs to be done  
because the cost in New York City for  
hospitalizations are dramatically more over the last  
ten years than the rest of the country. So,  
something is going on here.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Brewer  
followed by Brooks-Powers.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.  
Uhm, President Mulgrew I know that you were so  
articulate about the early childhood education and  
sort of like penny-wise pound foolish. Well, the  
same thing I think with food because there's a \$60  
million cut to the school food budget and the problem  
with that. It's also DC37 and UFT both I think in  
terms of the workers because there is often federal  
money that comes in but if you don't take that into  
account, in other words, if you make sure that nobody  
knows about breakfast. If the food isn't correct for  
lunch etc., then you're not going to have the kind of  
support that you would have and you bring in money  
when you have that kind of support.

So, I guess I wanted to know how much headcount  
that if you know of that will be involved in terms of



1 this which makes no sense to me and also, if the city  
2 expects to receive federal revenue to offset the \$60  
3 million, why in the world are they talking about  
4 cutting in the November Plan, and also they have more  
5 students now. So, if you have more students you  
6 would have more opportunity for participating in the  
7 food program, which brings in federal money. So I  
8 just didn't know if you wanted to comment on that.

10 MICHAEL MULGREW: I agree, the food crisis, food  
11 insecurity crisis that we're faced with many of our  
12 families and the children in our schools is immense  
13 and we have gone out of the way of a union to change  
14 our own rules. We serve breakfast in the classroom.  
15 We move food all over the building. Whatever we can  
16 do to help a child receive a meal, we will do that.  
17 Uhm, we have— October 31<sup>st</sup> is what's known as BEDs  
18 Day. That is a day where we, with the Department of  
19 Education, is supposed to get, that's the final day  
20 for us to get numbers for our children to qualify for  
21 food at the federal level.

22 We have not seen those numbers yet, so I don't  
23 know the actual impact at this moment. Where they're  
24 cutting the \$60 million from, I just have not seen  
25 the Department of Ed has not shown us any of those

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things but we really, this is something that is a  
very important piece to our schools that really is  
not spoken about enough. Because many of our  
students, this is their access to food is their  
school. So, I thank you for really paying attention  
on this and always focusing on it.

HENRY GARRIDO: And as you know we represent the  
lion share of people in the school lunch program. We  
have over less, over a thousand position less, over  
one thousand positions less in the school lunch  
program that we had two years ago. And we saw during  
COVID that we were not only feeding the kids, we're  
also feeding parents and other folks.

Since that program, my understanding is the \$60  
million is more revenue that is actually coming from  
the federal government that the city is keeping. Let  
me say this, the food service program is a  
reimbursable program. A federal reimbursable  
program. The same thing is happening with Medicaid.  
Money that is coming in with school nurses. The  
thing that seems to happen across the board, we  
talked early about the early childhood education. We  
represent there. There's a COLA coming in from the  
state and a COLA coming in from the federal

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government at five percent, 5.3, 6.4 and yet DOE has  
paid less than 1.8. So, they're keeping this money,  
right? So, the idea is not cut in the sense that  
they are reducing the number by laying off or they're  
just freezing the lines and cutting it and asking our  
members to do more with less. Which in most  
instances, it means overtime. When I have three food  
service lines, I can't split a person three times. I  
don't care how much overtime you can do. Our folks  
are literally, they are exhausted. They can't do it  
anymore. You can't expect somebody to do overtime  
and man three lines at the same time or attend three  
cutting boards. It's not happening. So, to me, this  
is one of the untold stories about this budget cut.  
How people are exhausted from doing the overtime or  
exhausted about being mandated to stay behind. Many  
times not even compensated for that. And I think  
that's one of the biggest tragedies and this school  
food cut is one of those examples. Thank you Council  
woman.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Brooks-  
Powers and close it out with Ariola.

COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I just had a quick question for Mr. Mulgrew. I wanted to ask this question earlier of uhm Mr. Jiha but we ran out of time, so hopefully you could give us some light of sight on it. But uh, we just wanted to have an idea of why the Office of Mayor Budget is proposing a \$547 million education cut when the state has increased its allocation by \$589 million last fiscal year? Because according to the state assembly's mid-year financial forecast, the state allocated just in terms of contacts, the \$589 million for education specifically. So, we're just trying to understand that cut considering the increase.

MICHAEL MULGREW: I mean, this is the part that's mindboggling. Uh, the state and federal government have for the last two years have funded New York City Schools at record numbers and the only governmental agency that has cut has been its own. It's mindboggling. They are supplanting the money. Straight up and it was the \$589 was the base increase that the entire state received plus we received the additional foundation aid, which was \$1.3 billion last year and that is there specifically to pay for our class size reduction. So, this is the - the

bigger issue here is this game, this horrible  
disgusting game is going on in New York City. I'm  
telling you all, it is going to affect us in Albany  
because Albany is going to get sick and tired of  
sending additional money only to have an  
Administration take the money and put it into their  
reserves, and then claim that Albany is not doing  
enough for them.

So, right now, state elected officials are you  
know I get the phone calls. They are doing their  
things like all of you guys do. They're out in their  
communities and they're getting yelled at for doing  
education cuts. The general public doesn't  
understand this. All they know is they hear the  
schools are being cut, so they want to hold every  
elected official accountable. And so, they're  
getting sick and tired of this. So, maybe we should  
all advocate together. We need a greater maintenance  
of effort law in Albany because - or it has to be  
earmarked. You cannot supplant your portion of the  
money out and put it into your reserves and then  
expect somebody else. There is no other school  
district in the state doing this. Taking state money  
and saying, "oh, great so you gave us this amount, so

1 we're not going to spend it over here, we'll supplant  
2 out." And that's what's been going on for the last  
3 two years. So, yes, you should ask him that question  
4 because I keep asking that question and the only  
5 response I've ever seen publicly was when the Mayor  
6 said that's the way these things work.  
7

8 Well, yes, I know there was a previous Mayor, not  
9 the one right before him, the one before that who was  
10 very good at supplanting also but this is  
11 unconscionable that the State of New York is  
12 fulfilling its commitment that we fought for over two  
13 decades for and then we have an Administration  
14 supplanting that money out of our schools. That  
15 money is for the children of New York City. It is  
16 not to grow the reserves of New York City to  
17 unprecedented amounts.

18 I mean even under your own rules, the \$8 billion  
19 surplus, you have to reallocate \$1.5 billion of that.  
20 You have to. This year alone and then next year you  
21 got to do another \$1.5 billion because of the way  
22 your timing and your rollouts go. So, this is just a  
23 big, horrible game where a lot of families are going  
24 to be hurt.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Ariola.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: My question is for Andy  
4 Ansbro, the President of UFA. Hi Andy, thank you for  
5 coming to testify. I know it's been a long day but  
6 it's worth it.

7 So, the FDNY PEG and the FDNY shows separate ways  
8 of savings, right. The Administration showing two  
9 separate ways but they seem to oppose each other.  
10 First, uhm, is to cut overtime. And secondly, it's  
11 to reduce offline staffing and force our members with  
12 reasonable accommodation into retirement. How can  
13 you cut overtime and drastically reduce headcount,  
14 which is already drastically reduced and expect FDNY  
15 services not to suffer? Will FDNY services suffer  
16 and which ones with this plan?

17 ANDREW ANSBRO: Uh, thank you for the question.  
18 I don't know how they're actually going to do that.  
19 There is a lot of conflict here in their PEG. The  
20 first one says basically fill offline position  
21 reassignment. If you're a full duty fire fighter and  
22 you had a special skillset where you were working  
23 offline, be it training or be it at headquarters,  
24 they're going to reassign you back into the field.  
25 They have also determined that up to 190 people they

expect to be separated from their positions, even though they have RA's or long-term light duty positions, they expect them to be removed. So, that's 190 people reduced and then at the same time, they have non-field overtime reduction. So, I don't know how you could cut staff so massively and at the same time cut overtime and expect to continue operating the same way. I have heard there will be cuts to a ceremony unit, unfortunately their overtime has been relatively high as of late, due to the fact that we are going through a massive number of 911 fire fighters are passing away. We're losing three or four a month and the ceremony unit covers a lot of those details. There are all the ceremonial issues that they deal with that they're going to cut those as well. As far as that, I believe they might be cutting recruitment as well, which has been a long-time initiative of the FDNY. They have diverse recruitment from the city.

Other than that, I don't know where they're going to find these cuts and at the same time, cut staffing to the level they are and expect to continue on the mission of the FDNY.



COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: And last question. Just  
uhm, in the last years, can you give me two years  
ago, how many fires there were and for this year, how  
many fires there are. We've seen an extreme uptick  
in fires I know this year and last year just because  
of lithium-ion batteries.

ANDREW ANSBRO: Let me pull up the lithium-ion  
statistics. I have it right here. While we've only  
collected these statistics for the last five years  
because prior to that we didn't know what an ion  
battery fire was, we didn't have them but this year  
alone, there have been 18 deaths with ion battery  
fires. Last year it was six. We've tripled the  
number of fatalities through the lithium-ion battery  
fires. The year prior to that it was six, four, then  
the two previous years, there were no deaths. The  
investigations in the lithium battery fires this year  
was 253, almost one a day. Investigations last year  
was 207, so a 25 percent increase in investigations  
in lithium-ion battery fires this year.

One other issue with these cuts is that they've  
cut the fifth fire fighter from the engine companies  
leaving only four engine companies in the city that  
have five fire fighters. They are the Hastech

engines. So, if there's a lithium-ion battery fire, they have to assign a Hastech engine and because of staffing issues, when they drop below five fire fighters, they'll have to assign two of those companies, so the company showing up at that fire, one will be from your borough and one will be from an outside borough. They start the tour with five fighters but if any fire fighter citywide goes sick, they pull that fire fighter off and reassign them. So, any lithium battery fire we have going forward will most likely have to have two separate companies come. One from the borough you're in and one from an adjacent borough, which causes a problem if your borough, the borough they're being pulled from has another fire. And we do find these fires happening in multiple - you know multiple fires at the same time. We're getting almost one a day. It doesn't happen every day but sometimes you have two or three.

So, we need this kind of overlap and that's one of the reasons why the fifth fire fighter was - uh, one of the other reasons why it was very important. Due to the fact that we go down between 10, 20, 30 fire fighters a day due to injuries, these provide backups. And when those fire fighters are taken

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3 away, they end up pulling other positions off of the  
4 rigs, some of those positions are called the outside  
5 vent person who works at a truck company. They're  
6 the person that actually searches the victims. So,  
7 there's an effect by removing this staffing.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you so much Andy, I  
9 appreciate your testimony.

10 ANDREW ANSBRO: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you all so  
12 much. Thank you. Okay, next up we're going to hear  
13 from IBO, Louisa, Sarita, Logan, and Sarah.

14 [05:25:18]- [05:26:35].

15 Good afternoon IBO. Turn that on. Whenever you  
16 guys are ready.

17 LOUISA CHAFEE: Good afternoon Speaker Adams,  
18 Chair Brannan, Members of the Finance Committee.  
19 Thank you for hosting us today. My name is Louisa  
20 Chafee and I am the Director of the New York City  
21 Independent Budget Office, the IBO.

22 I am joined here today by colleagues Sarah Parker  
23 and Sarita Subramanian, IBO's Senior and Research and  
24 Strategy Officers. Thank you for the opportunity to  
25 testify at this hearing on the November Plan. Is  
that better? Hmm, hmm.

The chair is a little uncomfortable. In accordance with the New York City Charter mandate to enhance official and public understanding of the budgetary process and budget documents, IBO published the fiscal outlook report this morning, which presents highlights of IBO's independent economic forecast and re-estimates of city revenues and expenses across the financial planned years.

IBO projects that the city will end 2024 with an additional \$3.6 billion in surplus above OMB estimates. If the surplus prepays 2025 expenses, IBO projects a \$1.8 billion shortfall next year. Alternatively, any surplus may be used to cover increased spending in the current year instead of prepaying next year's expenses. The Mayor's Office of Management and Budget projects a larger shortfall of \$7.1 billion for 2025. IBO's projections for 2026 and 2027 at \$7.2 billion and \$6.6 billion are higher than OMB's at \$6.5 and \$6.4.

While New York City continues to face major budget challenges, the local economy continues to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. When expected return to pre-pandemic levels of employment in the very near future and a strong outlook for personal

income. Not dramatically different than our  
projections in May, the National Economic Outlook has  
strengthened somewhat since then with stronger GTP  
growth driven by sustained consumer spending, even  
admit high interest rates which are contributing to  
falling inflation. However, substantial risks to  
both the national and local economy remain.

In the November Plan, OMB raised its 2024 revenue  
forecast by \$592 million to reflect stronger recent  
tax receipts and affect the month to month.

Consistent with past practice, OMB did not adjust its  
revenue forecast for 2025 through 2027. IBO has  
reforecast all major tax revenues to reflect the  
present economic outlook, which drives differences in  
revenue projections between IBO and OMB. IBO's tax  
forecast exceed OMB's for almost all taxes,  
particularly for the property and personal income  
taxes. Borrowing an unexpecting change to the  
economy, IBO expects that as OMB revises its January  
projections, excuse me, it's revenue projects for the  
January plan, IBO and OMB revenue totals were much  
more closely inline. Overall, IBO estimates that the  
city will spend \$3.5 billion less than OMB forecast

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in 2024 but \$366 million more than OMB's estimate for  
2025.

So, here are some highlights. One, the cost to  
asylum seekers. IBO has updated its three models of  
cost scenarios and they are on our fantastic website  
published this morning. These assumptions are for  
the projected population as well as daily costs and  
we believe they may decline further from higher rates  
under emergency contracts to lower rates likely to  
emerge from the competitive procurements now required  
thanks to the requirements of the Comptroller.

These scenarios all result in lower expenditure  
than OMB projects for 2024 and 2025 and incorporate  
trends seen through 2023. Whereas OMB's estimates  
reflect trends observed earlier and presented as of  
last August. IBO did not re-estimate costs  
associated with asylum seekers in 2026 and 2027, due  
to uncertainty in future trends.

Another major issue, rental housing vouchers.  
IBO estimates \$200 million in additional annual  
expenditures for future years to match current levels  
for the city's primary housing voucher program known  
as the city, family, homelessness and eviction  
prevention supplement, City FHEPs program. Relative

to OMB's projections through 2025, for 2025 through  
2027. To be clear, this is not including the  
legislative changes.

Another factor, end of the federal pandemic  
relief funding for outyears. New York City received  
\$13.5 billion in federal funding for the pandemic,  
which is ending. Some of these funds were used for  
programs that are ongoing. In the Department of  
Education and DYCD alone, IBO estimates that the  
Administration will need to add over \$700 million in  
each year from 2025 through 2027 to replace the  
expiring federal COVID era funding.

Additional Education Spending, IBO projects  
additional annual expenditures of over \$600 million  
from 2025 through 2027 for Carter Case Settlements  
and implementation of the state class size law.

City Personnel Costs, during the first quarter of  
the calendar year, active city headcount dropped to  
its lowest level since 2015. As a result of the  
reduced headcount, IBO estimate that uniform  
personnel overtime will continue to create upward  
pressure on the budget, requiring additional funds  
totaling \$575 million in 2024 and growing to \$840  
million in 2025. Existing vacancies and hiring

attrition produced by the hiring freeze on known  
uniform staff will produce \$2.4 billion in savings.

Although the city faces fiscal challenges, recent  
economic indicators and tax receipts combined with  
re-estimates of city spending, provide a clearer  
picture of the city's fiscal health in the near term.  
IBO estimates a budget surplus this year and the  
budget deficit for 2025 to be notably smaller than  
OMB's estimates.

There is more uncertainty however, around both  
revenue and expenditures in the later year of the  
financial plan. The city maintains several reserve  
funds which may be a cushion for unexpected expenses  
or to make up for lower than anticipated tax  
revenues. Although the city has not established  
standards for when and where the substantial use of  
reserves would be appropriate. Thank you and we  
welcome your questions.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Uhm, have you  
heard anybody else talking about, still talking about  
a potential recession?

SARAH PARKER: There was —



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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: The reason I ask is because  
3 Director Jiha seems to be the only one who is till  
4 raising that specter.

5 LOUISA CHAFEE: Should we use the short version?  
6 Short version or long version?

7 SARAH PARKER: In May, when we were having  
8 Executive Budget discussions, it was unclear. There  
9 was a lot of questions on whether the federal reserve  
10 in raising interest rates was going to trigger a mild  
11 recession or whether they would hit what's known as  
12 the soft landing. So, controlling inflation while  
13 not materially causing harm to the national economy.

14 Where we sit now in December, it seems largely  
15 that the federal reserve has managed that very fine  
16 line of the soft landing. So, I don't want to say  
17 for sure because any forecaster will never give a  
18 firm and hard answer.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure.

20 SARAH PARKER: Uhm, but given where we sit now,  
21 it seems largely that between May and December, a lot  
22 of that uncertainty has been resolved.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you anticipate that  
24 the federal raise but will do one further rate hike?  
25 There's been 11 right?

SARAH PARKER: I think even as of today, they were being very cryptic and vague on where they will go and I think part of that is they're looking at the jobs numbers. They're looking at where we sit and how consumers respond.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, what do you think is the main reason why the Council's forecast, IBO's forecast, from what I'm hearing the Comptrollers forecast, why are they so different, so wildly different from what OMB is forecasting?

SARAH PARKER: I think there's two pieces to this puzzle. One is on the revenue side. So, IBO and Council and the Comptroller are looking at where the economy is currently sitting and looking at what that economic forecast, which does not include a recession, means for city revenues.

OMB has their revenue forecast. They've adjusted in 2024 but for 2025 through 2027, they're still using revenue forecast based on what their economic forecast was in May, which was on the premise that there could be a recession.

So, that's one of the big drivers in revenue forecasts being different from OMB. And then IBO also looked at expenditures and there are several

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3 major places that Louisa highlighted where we think  
4 expenditures will come in higher or lower than what  
5 OMB has said. And so, between differences on  
6 revenues, how much money you have to spend, but also  
7 differences on the expense side is how IBO ended up  
8 with a gap projection different from OMB.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. Questions from my  
10 colleagues? Okay, thank you very, very much.

11 PANEL: Thank you. [05:37:38]- [05:37:48]

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we're going to  
13 hear from Christine Quinn from WIN and Sandra  
14 Escamilla from Children's Aid. [05:37:56]-  
15 [05:38:16]. Yeah, go ahead. Thank you.

16 CHRISTINE QUINN: My name is Christine Quinn and  
17 I'm President and CEO of WIN, Women In Need and I  
18 don't have to tell the Council but I will say it  
19 again. You know at best; a budget is a statement of  
20 one's vision and one's philosophy for the City of New  
21 York and how government interacts with its citizenry  
22 and how government serves its citizenry. And each  
23 line item in the budget is just implementation of  
24 that vision and that philosophy. At worst, a budget  
25 is a knife wielded in a political manner to hurt  
constituencies or individual people and not really

care what the collateral damage is. I would argue that this November Plan, as part of the budget, is tragically the ladder. That the Mayor has decided that the asylum seekers are the root of most evil. And that they are the ones who are creating the budget gap that he sees. I said he sees, because I agree with Michael Mulgrew that the numbers being put out from OMB are not accurate at all.

So to deal with what he sees is this \$12 billion that it's costing in his take to serve the asylum seekers, which he says the city can't afford, he's going to cut all of the agencies across the board and make a point that the federal government isn't helping us and these folks who in my opinion, are brave and courageous and exactly what we would want in New Yorkers, don't deserve service.

Now, in any budget, even one that isn't being used politically and in a knife wielding way, you want to do smart things and you want to do things that can save money because as the IBO said, we think we know what's to come but you never really know what's to come.

So, here is some ideas that are in my testimony and we've given the Administration. It cost \$383 a

night to house someone, asylum seeker or not in a hotel where you get almost no services. It costs \$182 a night to house someone in a tier two shelter, like the one's WIN runs, and it costs \$72 a night to house a family in permanent housing with a voucher.

If the City of New York began as Mulgrew mentioned to give the asylum seekers and other undocumented people housing vouchers, it could save \$3 billion. So, immediately that fictitious 12 goes down to \$9 billion and a big saving in the budget.

Two, the Mayor should implement, not ignore and then I assume litigate the City Councils FHEPs package. If that was implemented, it would prevent countless evictions of folks who are living in permanent housing, prevent them from going into shelter and costing the city more.

Three, and the conversation I think with the unions really brought this up and it was a little concerning to me the conversation between Council Member Restler and OMB Director. You know these unfilled lines, if they get taken, really can cause problems and one area where we see that is the unit within Department of Homeless Services that processes the FHEPs Vouchers is understaffed and disorganized.

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3 If that was fixed and you would see a united voice in  
4 that from WIN, the Coalition for the Homeless and the  
5 Real Estate Board of New York and CHIPS and RSA.

6 That's how uniform it is. If that was fixed again,  
7 we could get vouchers more quickly, get people out of  
8 shelter. And those are just a few ideas where they  
9 could be saving money in this area and it would make  
10 Department of Homeless Services more humane and more  
11 effective and save money, which is exactly what a  
12 November Plan should be looking for. It should be  
13 looking to you know tinker with and reup things, not  
14 go with them in this slash and burn kind of a way.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead. Hit  
17 it again.

18 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: Oh, there it is. Thank you.  
19 Good afternoon. My name is Sandra Escamilla and I am  
20 the proud child of immigrants, a Native New Yorker,  
21 the benefactor of New York City Public Schools and  
22 Human Services and the Executive Vice President of  
23 Children's Aid. Thank you Chair Brannan and members  
24 of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to speak  
25 on the November Plan.

For 170 years, Children's Aid has worked with children, youth and families in some of the most under resourced and vulnerable communities in New York City. We operate nearly 100 programs and services and education, foster care and health spaces, and employ 2,000 staff who serve 50,000 children, youth and families annually.

During the pandemic, this great city came together to pour in resources to make sure that families remained intact. That they had adequate food and secure housing, receive mental health services, didn't fall too behind in academics and maintained a level of connectedness that was vital to their existence.

It is naive at best to think that families are all of a sudden okay. That the shelf life to their trauma has expired. Well, it's not okay. It's unacceptable to say the least. It's unacceptable to tell us to continue to do more when more is needed with less resources. When the Surgeon General has called a state of emergency on mental health of teens. When we have made only a dent on chronic absenteeism in our schools, from 40 percent to

hovering late 30's. And when more than 50 percent of  
3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not meeting academic standards.

The city cannot expect that a 15 percent slash to  
its entire budget will cut down on waiting lists for  
our afterschool programs or chip away at our chronic  
absentee rates in our schools or teach a child to  
read or how to regulate their feelings or tell them  
that they matter. But you know what will? A  
community school with a fully stocked pantry and  
adults who will galvanize resources. Not only to  
make sure that kids show up to school but who will  
respond to the range of needs of the communities it  
serves. A neighborhood afterschool program with  
enough slots for any child who wants a safe space,  
including asylum seekers to be while their families  
work so that they may grow, develop and thrive.

An early childhood center that could be the only  
place a toddler can get a nap in peace before they  
have to go back to a crowded shelter where their  
family picks them up from after a long day searching  
for work. And of course, as a taxpayer, I am  
concerned with the overall fiscal health of this city  
budget.



But the loss of more than 7,000 early childhood education slots and 3,500 slots with the entire compass afterschool system and the potential, \$10 million for community schools in New York City is simply not a price that we can afford to pay.

I want to go on record and ask that the city increase its investments in human services and contracts and to create a plan of action and advocacy to support the needs of all children in New York City once the federal stimulus dollars expires. And I got to tell you, my father who is an immigrant from Columbia, he taught me how to balance a checkbook and I've got to say to you, this is my first hearing and this is just not making any dollars or cents. But if these cuts do go through, if they do, we call on the city for transparency to meet with the human sector and to give us, give us a chance to help you with this. To lean, give us the respect that we have deserved and earned because this is not a math problem. This is moral equation that will have a compound impact on the people of this great city that I call home. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Questions from my colleagues? Council Member Brewer.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. So,  
3 as head of Oversight and Investigation, we've been  
4 looking at these contracts with the migrants. I'm  
5 very supportive of the migrants but so help me God, I  
6 do not understand why you have to have for-profit  
7 when you have the greatest nonprofits in the world  
8 here in New York City.

9 So, I am always rebuffed when I point this out  
10 and I did today again. So, my question to you is, if  
11 the RFP was written with some input from the  
12 communities and from those of us who have knowledge  
13 about these things, could the nonprofits, whether  
14 it's WIN or Children's Aid or anybody else apply so  
15 that it wouldn't be a for profit but you could do the  
16 job. My question is, could you do the job or could  
17 United Neighborhood Houses or somebody else? That's  
18 my question.

19 Christina Quinn: So, we have 270 migrant  
20 families, 700 children in our tier twos. That was  
21 kind of before the city created a separate system.  
22 Uhm, we reached out to the city and said, we will run  
23 a hotel if you have a hotel for us. That was a whole  
24 process getting to the -- even just getting the  
25 address of the hotel to go look at it. So, we are in

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the process now of negotiating the budget for the  
hotel and we've also said the man who owns the hotel  
is lovely and has another one. So, he may do another  
one but I just had a conversation with the Homeless  
Commissioner a couple of minutes ago, we recently  
were told it would take three months to negotiate our  
contract, which is I don't believe it. Like they're  
putting hotels up you know like that. So, she said  
she would look into it and check and maybe they were  
just giving us a long version you know what I mean.  
I'm thinking the one at the Rose Hotels didn't take  
three months.

So, the way it is now, you can make it work but I  
don't know if you could make it work if you were a  
smaller nonprofit that didn't have the ability to  
compensate financially. That I don't know.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I appreciate that but you  
Children's Aid and I could name others are big.

CHRISTINE QUINN: Yes. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And so, I didn't ask him  
about the small ones. I'm asking you; I think I know  
them all, the big ones.

CHRISTINE QUINN: Right.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And it seems to me you  
3 could do a better job than DocGo.

4 CHRISTINE QUINN: Right and hopefully -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank God you're doing  
6 it.

7 CHRISTINE QUINN: Yeah, hopefully we'll be sooner  
8 than three months.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Speaker Adams.

11 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Speaker to speaker. Hi  
12 Chris. It's good to see you by the way.

13 CHRISTINE QUINN: Thank you.

14 SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: I know the answer but  
15 I'm going to ask it rhetorically. Do you see any  
16 barrier from the Administration working to complete  
17 our legislation that caused an override of a veto?

18 CHRISTINE QUINN: An aggressive veto if you can  
19 say that about it. You know, I don't think they're  
20 doing anything. I do not think they're doing  
21 anything to implement the bills. You know Local Law  
22 35, which you all passed with Erik Bottcher, you know  
23 is the prime sponsor. Mental health, we are having  
24 ongoing meetings, good conversations, fair questions.  
25 Uh, you know the Council Members involved in that.

When we've said to them, when can we start having meetings you know about the Council's package, oh, we'll get back to you. Oh, we'll get back to you and I said you know are you going to sue and they were like, "we can't really comment on that." And we all know when you can't comment, it means yes, right? It's like temporary in government means permanent. You can't comment, means yes. So, I think they're going to put up a big fight, which is really unfortunate because I mean I always thought this. When I was Speaker, you don't understand why they can't balance their checkbook and I agree with you but I never understood you know what a veto was a veto and you overrode the veto and things are supposed to forward, not be ignored. But that's what I think they're doing.

SPEAKER ADRIENNE ADAMS: Thanks very much.

CHRISTINE QUINN: Yup.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Any other question from my colleagues? Okay, thank you both.

CHRISTINE QUINN: Happy Holidays everybody.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Ah you too, thank you.

We're going to take a two-minute break and we'll hear from our next panel. [05:51:10]- [06:01:11]

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Could I have your attention  
4 please. Ladies and gentlemen, please find your  
5 seats. Please find your seats. Quiet on the floor.  
6 Quiet on the floor. Please find your seats so we can  
7 resume. [06:01:18]- [06:01:52]

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Serg, we're good? Okay.  
9 Okay, next panel we have Joseph Reece, Margaret  
10 Gibson, Donald Nesbit, Deborah Allman, and Joyce  
11 Mulvaney and Ralph Baselice. Sorry, I can't read it.  
12 [06:02:16]- [06:02:45]

13 Okay, you want to go left to right? Just say  
14 your name, your organization and begin.

15 JOSEPH REECE: Joseph Reece, Vice President of  
16 Local 374 and Manhattan Electrician for New York  
17 Public Library.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Right on, go ahead. No,  
19 give your testimony.

20 MARGARET GIBSON: Oh, we are not testifying.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh, you're just here to -

22 MARGARET GIBSON: We're not testifying, yeah  
23 we're just supporting.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh, you're just supporting  
25 Donald. Okay cool, Donald, go ahead.

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3 DONALD NESBIT: Good afternoon Finance Chair  
4 Brannan and distinguished members of the Council. I  
5 am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local  
6 372 and I'm presenting testimony on behalf of the  
7 24,000 members of Local 372 under the leadership of  
8 President Shaun D. Francois.

9 Mayor Adams recently issued his financial plan in  
10 which we're here to say no cuts. Local 372  
11 represents thousands of workers who provide essential  
12 support services to prepare our close to 1 million  
13 public school children in New York City, including  
14 the 30,000 newly arrived migrant children. The  
15 influx of 30,000 additional children into our public  
16 school system brings significant challenges in  
17 addressing their mental health needs. These children  
18 are likely to be carrying a psychological weight and  
19 trauma of their journey and their process and  
20 relocation.

21 This brings the question of influx in necessities  
22 to be proactive and take a proactive approach to our  
23 public schools in our communities and the wellbeing  
24 and successful integration into our schools.

25 Since 1971, SAPIS have always provided mental  
health services within our schools. Taught essential

emotional strategies and provided services to help students remain learning ready. SAPIS do the Oasis approved evidence-based program, presentations in line with groups and individual meetings as positive alternatives for New York City public school students. SAPIS serve K-12; I'm in all of the 32 districts. Local 372 has long testified to this panel of the devastating affects to cuts to the SAPIS program and a loss of over 200 SAPIS counselors since the year 2006. There needs to be more SAPIS to meet the needs of at-risk children and their families, particularly those in these challenging times.

For more than ten years, the State and the City have maintained an agreement to fund the SAPIS program on a dollar-to-dollar basis. This agreement has been breached for the first time this year. If the \$2 million restoration is not restored, New York City may face a reduction in the already limited amount of SAPIS that we have. The 256 SAPIS that service nearly one million children. This could have a detrimental effect on the safety and wellbeing of our city's residents as well.

In conclusion, school support staff are critical to the functioning school system. Local 372 members



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show up daily to provide essential work within our  
public school system as we did during the pandemic  
and as we have always done. SAPIS are an invaluable  
asset to the New York City public school system.  
Their work is essential for promoting student mental  
health and wellbeing and creating a positive learning  
environment.

On behalf of the Local 372 leadership team and  
over 24,000 members, we thank the City Council for  
seeking resources to improve the central services  
through our city. Our New York City schools, we  
appreciate your commitment to maintaining the success  
about public school system and prioritizing our  
system, I mean our children. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

DEBORAH ALLMAN: Good afternoon. I'm Deborah  
Allman, President of New York Public Library Guild  
Local 1930 and I will be speaking on behalf of all  
the locals represented at the New York Public Library  
and the Brooklyn Public Library and the Queens Public  
Library.

The Mayor's five percent PEG is already having an  
oversized impact on library services and workers.  
This unilateral cut has forced the three library

systems to eliminate Sunday Service in the city.

Families who depend on library services on Sunday's cannot go. All the needed programs people depend on, like story time and the many computer workshops have been eliminating. This unilateral cut has forced the three library systems to cut our materials budget.

We will now buy less hardcover books, less audio books, less e-books, less DVD's, less CD's, limiting the invaluable resources library users need. This unilateral cut has forced the library to cut its maintenance budget. Now, when we have a broken window, instead of replacing with glass, it is replaced with plywood. This is a safety issue for our users and staff.

Now, when a boiler is broken, we do not know when it will get fixed. Given the number of vacancies the New York Public Library will need to freeze, staff from these closed locations are being reassigned to fill some vacant positions at the open libraries. This unilateral cut has forced the three library systems to implement a hiring freeze, impacting the service we provide. At eight New York Public library branches that were closed indefinitely, the community will not have the much-needed services. These cuts

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3 have a direct impact on our customers and your  
4 constituents. They damage our institute and the  
5 trust we have with our customers. Please restore all  
6 these cuts to the libraries. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 RALPH BASELICE: Good afternoon. Ralph Baselice  
9 Vice President Local 983. We represent over 2,500  
10 members in 19 different titles in just about every  
11 New York City agency you could think of. Today, I am  
12 here on behalf of our President Joe Puleo. We're  
13 going to focus on the Parks Department titles. The  
14 Urban Park Rangers, the Associate Park Services  
15 workers, as well as the City's seasonal aids. I  
16 myself have been an urban park ranger for 19 years.  
17 These three titles I just mentioned are very  
18 responsible for free, passive recreational space all  
19 throughout New York City, which I'm sure everyone at  
20 the Council is you know very aware of. It is much  
21 needed. Our Urban Park Rangers, our New York State  
22 Peace Officers, they provide safety, security, they  
23 make arrests, they issue criminal court summonses as  
24 well as environmental control board summonses.

25 In the summer time, they are assigned to our  
beaches and pool area, Rockaway Beach, Coney Island

Beach, you guys know the volume of New Yorkers that flock to these beaches on a hot day in the summertime. Our associate park service workers are required to maintain a CDL driver's license throughout their career because they operate the garbage packers, the beach rakes, any sort of heavy-duty equipment assigned to the park responsible for keeping it clean, so on and so forth. Our city seasonal aids are not only New York State Fire Guards assigned to over 35 rec centers in New York City, they're also our filter plan operators which maintain public pools throughout New York City on a hot day heatwave. So, again, to sum things up, these are very necessary titles. I have to remind everyone throughout the pandemic, there was birthday parties, graduation parties, anything you could think of was free events in the park. People need that. You talk about mental health; folks need to have this free passive recreational space and I'm here to represent the three titles I just mentioned. They need to be refunded. Every year we're here, they need to be baselined. The UPRs, the CSAs and the APSWs, Associate Park Service Workers on behalf of Joe Puleo, I'd like to thank you guys for hearing us out

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3 and you could also go to Local983.com to find out  
4 more about us and the titles we represent. Thank  
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 JOYCE MULVANEY: Thank you. My name is Joyce  
8 Mulvaney, I'm Local 205 Vice President and I work in  
9 Daycare. To Council Member, all the Council Members,  
10 thank you Councilman Brannan for hosting this hearing  
11 on the budget cuts of the Mayor that will have a  
12 tremendous impact on our city.

13 The \$120 million cut will take away from our most  
14 vulnerable people that cannot fight for themselves.  
15 Daycare is vital to our children's formative years.  
16 Education is the key to our children becoming our  
17 next president, becoming an attorney or doctor or  
18 anything that they would like to be. You want to  
19 downsize the libraries, which would not only affect  
20 our children but also the ones that don't have access  
21 to literature and the use of computers and other  
22 services that our libraries offer. Downsizing our  
23 police and fire departments can be devastating to our  
24 city. Daycare and our education system cannot  
25 survive anymore cuts. Mayor Adams, this city cannot  
function properly if you remove 120 million from the

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3 budget. It seems like these days community-based  
4 centers are constantly fighting to stay alive, which  
5 is not fair to the children, to the parents and our  
6 communities we serve. Mr. Mayor, have a heart and  
7 work around these budget cuts. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all  
9 very much and thanks for all you do for our city.

10 JOYCE MULVANEY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Standby a sec. [06:14:20]-  
12 [06:14:27]

13 Okay, we have George Sweeting, Allison  
14 Nickerson, Randi Levine, Gregory Brender, and Nicolas  
15 Casick from Good Shepherd. [06:14:53]- [06:15:12]

16 Okay, we'll go from my right to left. Just say  
17 your name and your organization. Go ahead.

18 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity to  
19 speak with you. My name is Randi Levine. I'm Policy  
20 Director of Advocates for Children of New York. As  
21 an organization that works every day with families of  
22 students who face some of the biggest barriers to  
23 educational success, students with disabilities,  
24 immigrant students, students who are homeless or in  
25 foster care, among others. We are deeply concerned  
about the impact of the \$547 million cut to New York

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City Public Schools this year and the more than \$600 million cut next year. In addition to the concern about cuts to programs like community schools and 3K, we are already seeing the impact of the hiring freeze and vacancy reduction. While central staff is needed to operate the school system for all students, staff working outside of schools are particularly important to support students with the greatest needs. Cutting hundreds of DOE staff members, means it takes longer for immigrant students to get a school placement. For students who are homeless to get a bus route and for students with disabilities to get services. As just one example, we have had calls about families of preschoolers in the Bronx who cannot get services because the blanket hiring freeze has left the Committee on Preschool Special Education short staffed.

The city has legal obligations to these students that cannot be ignored. It is important to note that in addition to the cuts listed in the November financial plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, the DOE has been using around \$1 billion per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief

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funds for important long-term programs that were  
necessary long before the pandemic and will continue  
to be needed long after, such as 3K, Preschool  
Special Education, Summer Rising, 450 school social  
workers, community schools, restorative justice, 75  
shelter based coordinators bilingual staff and the  
list goes on. While this federal funding will run  
out in June, the need for these supports will  
continue.

In addition, there are important programs like  
the Immigrant Family Communication and Outreach  
program, the Mental Health Continuum, Shelter based  
coordinators and additional community schools that  
are funded with one year city funding slated to end  
in June as well. We need elected officials to act  
because without that, we're at risk of seeing cuts to  
each and every one of these programs, cuts that are  
on top of the cuts laid out in the November Plan.  
Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

ALLISON NICKERSON: Thank you Speaker Adams and  
Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance  
for hosting this important hearing and opportunity to  
testify.



My name is Allison Nickerson and I am the Executive Director of LiveOn New York. A membership organization representing aging, home and community-based service providers. Our members include more than 120 community-based organizations that provide hundreds of core service programs that allow older New Yorkers to thrive in communities as we age, such as older adult centers, home delivered meals programs, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and many more.

LiveON New York joins over 225 organizations in the Y15 Campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the city's budget. I want to be really clear on aging. There is no fat to cut. NYC Aging's total budget is \$466.7 million, less than half of one percent of the city budget and cover services for almost 1.4 older New Yorkers. Aging service staff are already some of the lowest paid workers in the city. Older adult centers already are not given enough funding to support their physical spaces and go without HVAC systems and other critical infrastructure needs.

The system has already been cut to the bone and there is no more to lose before the system starts to

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fall apart itself. With such a small budget, these  
additional cuts would save pennies for the Mayor but  
will cost New Yorkers their community, their food  
security and their health and safety. Based on these  
factors, we recommend the following recommendations.

Number one, hold Aging Services harmless in the  
Fiscal budget. Our members have become vaccination  
clinics, housing clinics, intergenerational community  
centers, food pantries, transportation providers, and  
refuges for folks who have nowhere else to go.

Cutting this funding not only threatens the city's  
funded programming and food, but threatens to  
collapse an already precarious service network, uhm,  
service network. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You can finish.

ALLISON NICKERSON: Oh, uhm, my other  
recommendations or our other recommendations are to  
provide an analysis for the Y15 percent cut and why  
it's necessary, be transparent about working with  
upcoming programs and service reductions, establish a  
City Council Committee on nonprofits, and absolutely  
to all the questions that the Council Members asked,  
the city should absolutely be working with

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3 nonprofits. That cannot be stated and underscored  
4 enough. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 GEORGE SWEENEY: Good afternoon Chair Brannan. I  
7 admire your persistence and Councilwoman Brewer. I'm  
8 George Sweeney, I'm a Senior Fellow at the New School  
9 Center for New York City Affairs and thank you for  
10 the opportunity to appear before you. We submitted  
11 written testimony, so I'm not going to read that.  
12 I'll just give you a couple highlights. Uhm, I think  
13 the key thing is you know the budget as proposed by  
14 the Mayor makes it you know, has these very large  
15 outyear gaps. There are certainly things that are  
16 likely to shrink those. I mean, I think the revenue  
17 forecast that OMB is still carrying is uh, you know  
18 for one thing it suffers from not being updated since  
19 May but it's also even then it was quite conservative  
20 and uh you know in the last few days, IBO and the  
21 City Council have come out with forecasts that to my  
22 eye look a lot more realistic.

23 Uhm, the you know but even if revenues get a  
24 whole lot better, the city still faces significant  
25 challenges and I think it's important that we try to  
use all of the tools that are available and that the

city has used in the past. These are carefully  
chosen budget cuts rather than across the board.  
Continuing pressure, continuing to pressure state and  
federal leaders for assistance that they definitely  
you know owe us in the face of the crisis with the  
migrants. We also need to do our spending a lot more  
wisely. I think uh, moving away from some of the  
contracts with for-profit providers on the— as  
they've stood up various emergency services for the  
migrants.

And then I also think we can you know we can be  
thinking about drawing down some of the reserves the  
city has built up. Uhm, and finally, I think it's  
time to consider some tax increases. Uhm, if you  
look in the you know over the past, at least the  
period of time I've been involved with city budget,  
which goes back to the late 1980's, there was — there  
have been several periods where the city faced  
serious fiscal crunch. There was the early 90's,  
when the city had been through a very severe  
recession, than after 911, and then after 2008. And  
in each case, there were a combination of sources of  
relief for the city. There was some state or federal  
aid but the city also uhm, had PEG programs and

1 raised taxes. And so, I think — I don't have  
2 particular ones to recommend but I'll just suggest a  
3 few that I know are in general discussion. One would  
4 be to repeal the Madison Square Garden Property Tax  
5 exemption. Another would be to make the personal  
6 income tax a bit more progressive by adding a higher  
7 bracket at the top. Right now, the top bracket  
8 begins for married couples with an income of \$90,000,  
9 which is you know the state has several brackets well  
10 above that and the city — I mean, it's not an easy  
11 thing to raise taxes but it's certainly something to  
12 think about in you know making the income tax a bit  
13 more progressive would be one to think about and then  
14 finally, uhm, I think there's definitely room towards  
15 trying to negotiate pilot agreements with the  
16 colleges, universities, and perhaps the hospitals,  
17 other than H+H.

18 Uhm, you know any of the — you know some  
19 combination of those things I think would be a way of  
20 getting the city through this fiscal crunch. As I  
21 said, there's you know history is we've dealt with  
22 these level of problems in the past and we've  
23 succeeded by using — making sure we take advantage of  
24 all the tools that are available to us. Thank you.  
25

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

3 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you Chair Brannan,  
4 Council Member Brewer for the opportunity to testify  
5 and for sitting through this hearing and questioning  
6 the Administration about so many of these devastating  
7 cuts.

8 My name is Gregory Brender. I'm from the Day  
9 Care Council of New York. We are the membership  
10 organization of New York City's early childhood  
11 provider organizations. Our member organizations  
12 provide childcare at over 200 sites in all five  
13 boroughs and employ over 4,000 New Yorkers. The  
14 majority of whom are Black and Brown women. The cuts  
15 that are being proposed in the Mayor's November Plan  
16 to Early Childhood are truly devastating and  
17 historic. I've had the opportunity to testify before  
18 the City Council about Early Childhood for over 15  
19 years and we have never seen cuts of this magnitude.  
20 Nearly 7,100 children per budget action would be  
21 losing childcare. Uhm, and that is, these cuts are  
22 on top of the loss of federal funds that Randi  
23 mentioned that are also going to be devastating to  
24 the 3K and Pre-K system.

I wanted to briefly address some of the rationales that the Administration has given for uhm reducing both Pre-K and 3K. They have sighted under enrollment; however, they have, the Administration has known the solutions to under enrollment for a long time. Advocates, Childcare Providers and this City Council have been telling them how to improve enrollment for a long time.

On February 28<sup>th</sup> of this year, 29 members of the City Council led by Speaker Adams and the Black, Latino, Asian Caucus signed a letter with recommendations which included recommendations that will ensure more families can access childcare, including developing a two-prong enrollment system where families can enroll directly onsite with their known and trusted community-based organizations. Ensuring the distribution of Early Childhood care and education matches neighborhood needs, including the increase use of child – emerging childcare funds for Extended Day programs and making it easier for families to access care by investing in a multipronged, multiracial, multilingual enrollment campaign.

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2 Thank you so much for holding this hearing. We  
3 really call on the Council, the Administration, to  
4 make sure that we do not lose the progress we've made  
5 towards universal childcare. That we do move forward  
6 and invest in these crucial early years for New Yorks  
7 children. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Gale, you have  
9 anything? Okay, thank you all very, very much.

10 Thank you. [06:27:31]- [06:27:36]

11 Okay, we're going to take a short break because  
12 we're going to move for the remainder of this hearing  
13 into the Committee Room and we'll resume once we are  
14 settled in there.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Also, a reminder, if you are  
16 here to speak on the - to give public testimony, we  
17 do remind you to fill out a witness slip with the  
18 Sergeant at Arms up front. That's how we know you're  
19 here and how we know to call you up. So, please do  
20 that. Thank you. [06:27:58]-[06:28:13]

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is microphone check,  
22 microphone check for the Committee on Finance in the  
23 Committee Room.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hello, hello? Does this  
25 work? Hello, hello, okay. Okay if you could say,



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we'll go from my right, my left to your right across  
just say your name and organization and then begin  
your testimony.

ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good afternoon Chair Brannan and  
Council and my distinguished own City Council person  
Gale Brewer. I'm Eric Goldstein, New York City  
Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense  
Council. The proposed \$5 million cut that would  
eviscerate the community composting program for the  
remainder of FY94 is short sided and  
counterproductive. Restoring these funds is  
necessary to protect public health, secure  
environmental justice, enhance neighborhood  
empowerment, and save over 100 jobs, 50 of them at  
least are union jobs.

City taxpayers spend almost a half a billion  
dollars a year, \$470 million to export our trash to  
landfills and incinerators, with significant  
environmental problems. The largest portion of this  
waste, one-third is organic waste. Food scraps, yard  
waste and food soil paper. The most sustainable and  
sensible path for this waste is to compost it.  
That's why the Council passed the zero-waste package  
of bills earlier this year. The budget director says

that curbside organics collection is all that's  
needed to make that program a success but he is  
wrong. Curbside organics collection won't be  
successful without a diverse vibrant neighborhood-  
based community composting operation at green  
markets, at community gardens, and at neighborhoods  
and sites all across the five boroughs of this city.  
There are eight nonprofit groups that are our  
ambassadors for composting. They are the educators,  
they are the trainers, they are the outreach force  
needed to teach New Yorkers what to compost, how to  
compost, why it's important and what composting  
really is. These programs educate kids about nature.  
They provide training for green jobs and they give  
kids a sense that they can make a difference for this  
city and this planet. It doesn't make sense to stop  
this program, cut it now only to restore it later.  
For a program that requires public cooperation and  
public buy in, that confuses the public. That's  
exactly what we did after 911 in terms of the  
recycling program and recycling rates never rebounded  
after those cuts to plastic and glass recycling in  
2001. If the Administration wants to fulfill its  
pledge to cut global warming emissions to address

environmental justice in Black and Brown communities,  
to strengthen overall neighborhoods and to take a  
bite out of the city's population of rats, it should  
and it must act in not sort in a way and it should  
refrain from cutting commercial uh community  
composting.

Finally, from strictly a financial point, we're  
spending close to a half a billion dollars a year to  
export our waste to landfills and incinerators.  
Aside from all of the environmental costs to that,  
experts have long recognized that composting saves  
money. In other words, a ton of material that you  
send to a composting facility will cost taxpayers  
less over time than sending it to a landfill or an  
incinerator and that because when you put it in a  
composting facility, it provides a useful material  
finished compost. There's a market for that. If you  
send it to a landfill or an incinerator aside from  
the environmental costs, it's a waste material. It  
costs us money. And so, if we want to have  
composting succeed in the city, if we want to have  
our organics collection succeed, we've got to have as  
a foundation for that program these community  
composters. And to get \$5 million for that program

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3 is an investment worth doing. Thank you for your  
4 attention.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 NORA MORAN: Hello, my name is Nora Moran. I'm  
7 the Director of Policy and Advocacy at United  
8 Neighborhood Houses. We work with New York City  
9 Settlement Houses. Uhm, we raised concerns when the  
10 first announcement was made about 15 percent across  
11 the board budget cuts and our experienced percentage  
12 targets for city agencies never go well. It doesn't  
13 account for the nuance that's needed in human  
14 services. You're dealing with real people, real  
15 lives, real services. We also were very concerned  
16 about the false choice that was laid out between  
17 services for asylum seekers or services for everybody  
18 else. The Settlement House movement started over 100  
19 years ago in times like these. High waves of  
20 migration coming to New York City. We're in a very  
21 similar time now. We've done it before. We can do  
22 it again. We don't need to be scapegoating a  
23 population.

24 When we look at the November plan we see a lot of  
25 cuts without a lot of detail or information. Lots of  
cuts to human services for underutilization. Very

unclear why those services are being under-utilized.

There's a \$120 million cut to Early Childhood Education and no transparency around where those seats are, why they're being reduced. 3,500 slots cut in after school. It's hard to believe that 3,500 families don't need after school services in New York City.

Uhm, so overall looking at those long list of cuts for various reasons, we're just very concerned about that, particularly given the report that was released last week saying that the people who are leaving New York City at the fastest pace are people making between \$32,000 and \$65,000 a year. If you know regular New Yorkers can't afford to live here. Human service workers can't afford to live here. We need the administration and agencies to be working with Human Service providers around spending to be transparent about financial challenges going forward and really to try and collaborate as much as possible to preserve core services instead of just cutting here and there because of you know under utilization or whatever other reason.

Uhm, I also just want to clarify one point that was made earlier around contracting with human

service organizations, non-profits, to serve asylum seekers because they're cheaper. Often times they are and they often, you know we feel do better work but also just want to clarify that often times they are cheaper because their labor is often under valued and sometimes they're intentionally underpaid. So, we don't want to repeat that same mistake going forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COCO KILLINGSWORTH: Good evening. Uh, thank you Chair Brannan and Council Member Brewer for this hearing and this lesson in endurance, stamina and patience. My name is Coco Killingsworth, I'm an Executive at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and I'm also the Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group.

The CIGS represent New York's unique investment in the arts and culture and we are a reliable revenue source and a part of the city's economic engine.

Unfortunately, we have not seen that investment. We have seen an investment stagnate with no increases to our baseline funding in over ten years and now we are on the brink of a historical underinvestment in this sector. The fallout of which will be seen for years to come. The CIGs all saw a city funding decrease n

the November Plan and that is coming off of a \$5 million cut in the FY24 budget. This funding is vital to our ability to sustain the economic impact and workforce stabilization the city relies on us for. Additionally, it's directly tied to programming and services we provide including for the million plus school children a year who visit one of our institutions or access cultural programming through their school. We have all seen the convincing and strong advocacy of the city's libraries having to reduce hours of operations, public safety having to cut jobs and sanitation having to cut necessary programs with the CIGs diverse make up of theaters, museums, zoos and gardens, we are having to do all of the above.

In conversations I have had with my colleagues, the November Plan means a reduction in both our workforce and our programming among other limited options. It means in the anticipation of the future PEGs means we will have to defer maintenance of billings and grounds which is city property. Minimization of marketing work that drives tourists to our institutions and our neighborhoods, reduces services for certain populations including seniors,

youth and public-school children and the diminishment  
or elimination of community and education program.  
Not only will we struggle to absorb these approved  
and pending cuts, we will struggle to recover. In  
fact, it is possible that some of us will not.

This additional five percent plan cuts in January  
would be detrimental to the continuing running of  
these programs. We call on the city to partner with  
the nonprofit sector, not punish us and work toward  
creative solutions that will not hinder us any  
further. Again, thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

ERIC LEE: Hi, good evening. My name is Eric  
Lee, I'm Director of Policy and Planning for Homeless  
Services United. Thank you Chair Brannan, Council  
Member Brewer as well as the Speakers Office for  
allowing me to testify today or tonight.

Uhm, the city must change its overly broad  
approach which wrongly seeks to cut funding for  
agencies like DHS and HRA when the city is confronted  
by record high numbers of households entering shelter  
and applying for public benefits. The city cannot  
balance it's budget on the backs of those most in  
need. DHS and HRA contracted homeless and eviction



prevention providers must be held harmless from  
further cuts in FY24 and FY25. DHS contracted  
nonprofits have already slashed their personnel lines  
by 2.5 percent for FY24 and onwards. And providers  
cannot absorb further cuts without negatively  
impacting services when our city can least afford it.

Further cuts to DHS and HRA risk on doing  
investments and specialized services and treatment  
models in favor of maintaining bare bones shelter  
capacity without the wrap around care, which make  
these programs successful. The city's Homeless  
Services and Eviction Prevention Safety net is at a  
crossroads whether to divest its services and have  
shelters return to the grim days of simply  
warehousing people or invest in the services and  
staff within DHS and HRA programs by increasing  
stagnate low wages to be able to fill vacancies and  
enable providers to help New Yorkers access and  
preserve permanent housing.

We urge the city to exempt DHS and HRA from the  
proposed five percent PEG in the November plan as  
well as forthcoming PEGs in the FY25 budget. DHS and  
HRA staff must also be exempted from hiring freezes  
in the one out, one in policy to backfill positions

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given they're critically understaffed with backlogs within their fiscal departments, rental assistance and public benefits units. Contracting and payment delays are effectively strangling cash flow for nonprofit providers to the point that some providers are resorting to private loans to cover payroll and program costs. One program alone is paying \$17,000 a month in interest in private loans to cover the city's reimbursement delays. Without further ability to reliably predict when the city will register contracts and pay invoices, experienced nonprofits will be unable to answer DHS's call to open new programs and take on additional financial risk from doing business with the city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

REVEREND TERRY TROIA: Hi, thank you Chair Brannan and esteemed Council Member Brewer and Ms. Meagan Lynch of Speaker Adams Office. My name is Reverend Terry Troia, I'm the President of Project Hospitality. We're a 41-year-old interfaith not-for-profit serving Staten Island's homeless and hungry communities. Impoverished people, marginalized people, people living with addiction with mental

health challenges, trauma, HIV, uninsured persons and immigrants without status who don't qualify for cash assistance or any health insurance. All of these people in profound need numbering over 60,000 Staten Islanders. We are 41 years old and I have been doing this for 39 years. We cannot sustain another budget cut without doing irreparable damage to our organization survival. We have already taken out more than \$2 million in loans and have put in \$3 million of our own money to sustain our contracts because we can't get money reimbursed to us.

Our ability to save the lives of homeless people on the streets is severely impaired now and we can't imagine what it would look like with a budget cut again. We need to look at another way to address the budget. We need to look at a way to help connect the new immigrants coming into our cities directly into housing through special voucher programs that would be cheaper than shelters and hotels. We need to help people get connected into services based in the community, so that they can put down roots, get training, find jobs and integrate into the world of work and into our communities and neighborhoods. We need an imagination that doesn't balance the budget

on the backs of the poorest, the most infirmed, the  
most in need, the most vulnerable and those living on  
the edge of their lives.

As boots on the ground on the forgotten borough  
of Staten Island, we're seeing an extraordinary high  
number of unsheltered Staten Islanders this year  
because of a huge housing crisis, skyrocketing rents  
that are turning out new homeless people every day.  
We are great at making homeless people in the City of  
New York. Families sleeping in cars, people sleeping  
the back yards of churches, tenting in parks, and  
abandoned areas along our boroughs waterfront. That  
was one neighborhood last week with a family with a  
sixth grader living in a car, a man with a tent on  
the water front and a kid sleeping wrapped up in  
blankets in the back of a church yard.

We are the only organization serving homeless  
street people in Staten Island and we're the only  
borough in the City of New York that today, still  
does not have an open 24-hour shelter for homeless  
street people. I beg you to hold harmless from the  
second budget cut, homeless service not-for-profits  
providing street outreach, drop in and shelter  
services for homeless people and families. Fragile

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3 lives on the street need the connection to care that  
4 will save them from death on the street. This budget  
5 cut may be the death of them. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Terry. Questions  
7 from my colleagues? Council Member.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Just  
9 regarding from United Neighborhood Houses, I have no  
10 interest in having you as settlement houses not get  
11 fully funded. But I just think you would do a better  
12 job and you could hear earlier that WIN is already  
13 negotiating for a couple of hotels. I assume  
14 Christine Quinn is not going to get screwed. She  
15 will make damn sure she gets her money. So, I know  
16 you and Susan would do the same. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from the  
19 Urban Youth Collaborative at Make the Road New York.

20 [00:15:47]-[00:16:29]

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, if you want to go  
22 left to right. Just state your name and then begin  
23 your testimony, sorry, my left.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi, I'm going to be testifying on  
25 behalf of a young person who couldn't be here today.  
Uhm, hello my name is Andres Munoz(SP?), my pronouns

are he, him. I'm in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I'm from Staten  
Island. I'm a Youth Leader at Make the Road New  
York. I'm here today to demand that the city stop  
the harmful cuts to our education. Instead of making  
these cuts, the city should cut from the NYPD budget  
and invest in services that support young people like  
me in our schools. I've seen social media videos of  
students getting into fights in my school. In one of  
the videos, two girls started fighting and three  
school cops came in and broke up the fight by pushing  
both of the students up against the wall at the same  
time.

I'm frustrating at seeing the response of the  
school police using such violence. Issues between  
those students could have been prevented or addressed  
by a guidance counselor having a conversation with  
them. School police consistently escalate conflict  
and make my school environment feel unsafe. When I  
see students fighting in my school, it makes me feel  
like it's a reflection of the lack of emotional  
guidance that young people receive in their lives.  
School cops don't interact with students in a  
positive way. I have constantly heard the ones in my  
school talking bad about students, judging their

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looks and gossiping about drama that goes on in the  
students lives. It feels weird to me because these  
are grown adults that are supposedly in charge of our  
safety. With the cuts that Mayor Adams is doing, we  
see what his priorities are. He does not have our  
best interest in mind. We already have the biggest  
school police force in the country. There are more  
school cops than guidance counselors, social workers  
or restorative justice coordinators in our schools.  
New York City must remove police from schools and  
instead invest in the staff and practices that will  
create long term safety. We continue to see people  
in the city not being able to pay their bills, feed  
their families, get kicked out of their homes and  
attend already underfunded schools. These cuts only  
worsen these situations. Stop cutting essential  
services we need and cut the bloated NYPD budget.

When the city announced it was canceling the new  
class of 250 school cops, it was a step in the right  
direction. Then just last week, they turned around  
and said they were hiring 135 new school cops. This  
is unacceptable, while our schools are facing a  
hiring freeze and can't hire a support staff we truly  
need.

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There should be an immediate hiring freeze on  
school police and the rest of the vacant school cop  
positions should not be filled ever. All that money  
should then go right back to our schools where it  
belongs. Mayor Eric Adams should stop putting the  
NYPD and its budget before the mental and physical  
wellbeing of young people. If I might add as well,  
like for future reference for the next time that  
we're holding such a crucial like budget cuts  
hearing, like let's try not to double book a space  
because I think it's wild to have young people coming  
straight after school to be testifying, then having  
to be standing out and not having a seat. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Say your name please. Say  
your name before you start.

CAMILLA VAQUERO: Hello, my name is Camilla  
Vaquero. My pronouns are she, her. I'm a Youth  
Leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth  
Collaborative. I'm currently a junior at a community  
school in Brooklyn. I'm here today to demand that  
Mayor Adams [00:19:40]-[00:19:44].

Young people like me fought for years for what I  
now have in my school. A community school that  
centers care and support. A students center that



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runs by youth leadership helping students prepare for  
the future and restorative justice to build a  
community and have a positive school culture. I've  
been lucky to have a place in my school to go to  
where I feel safe. The space from our community  
school team is a space where I can be myself without  
any judgement. I can use the computers when I need  
to. I can find feminine products when emergencies  
occur and most importantly I can find support from  
the team that works there.

It's infuriating to hear that Mayor Adams wants  
to cut all that too. Why do we have to continue to  
fight to find our schools in problems like these year  
after year after year? A school like mine must exist  
because community schools level the field for all  
students and their families, helping those that need  
support and resources. Any attack on that funding is  
an attack on their whole community. Research says  
that real safety comes from these investments and  
things like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare  
and youth programs.

The safest communities are communities where  
basic needs are met and where communities our  
resources thrive not where there are more police.

New Yorkers are struggling and what's the Mayor's response? More money for police in our streets and in our schools. The Mayor needs to fix things without messing up programs, agencies and institutions crucial to growing an extra generation of scholars and their families. Our schools and education shouldn't be at the forefront of these cuts, especially when not all city agencies are being held to the same standard. And by all city agencies, I mean NYPD. While funding for my community school is on the chopping block, the city just hired more new school police. So, now the place that gives me real safety, which provides mental health support, social workers and restorative justice and so much more is not protected from these budget cuts, while the NYPD is. This is yet another example of the Mayor funding criminalization over social and emotional support. This is beyond unacceptable.

Today, we are here calling on the Mayor and the City to prioritize our education care. You can start by putting in place an immediate hiring freeze on school cops. You can also cut the funding for the 100 remaining vacant school cop positions. Then use this funding to both protect and expand community

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school like mine, restorative justice, mental health  
and our futures. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

JULIA CRUZ: Hello. My name is Julia Cruz. My  
pronouns are she, her and I am in 8<sup>th</sup> grade from  
Staten Island. I'm the Youth Leader from the Make  
the Road New York and Urban Youth Collaborative. I  
am here today to call on the city to reverse these  
harmful budget cuts to our schools and fund our  
futures. As a young person in New York City, I'm  
always so frustrated to see that my school cannot  
afford the simple resources like clean water in our  
drinking fountains and fixing broken items in our  
classrooms and bathrooms.

In my school, we only had two guidance counselors  
and one social worker for a close estimate of 1,000  
students. If I need to talk to someone or go to  
someone for support, I can only go during my free  
periods, which means missing electives like art,  
music and even my lunch. Even then, both of my  
guidance counselors are usually booked. I wish  
instead of treating me and all youth in schools and  
all New York City schools like the problem, that our  
school would work to find out more about what we the

students are going through and provide support to address it completely before it becomes a serious issue. Two years ago, a boy that joined by school in the middle of the year wrote a note threatening me and other students by name. Many of us were terrified. I told my social worker at my school hoping that they would help but instead they called the NYPD to arrest the student but eventually let him go when they determined that he was not going to harm anyone. He had serious things going on going at home and the school worked with his family to get the mental health support that he needs and he is doing much better now. I believe that more mental health support in schools can help prevent situations like these from happening. Young people from any age would be able to go to someone that they could talk to with issues that they have inside a school, making them into a community school after getting the help with issues they thought they wouldn't resolve or deescalate. It would be so great to see more guidance counselors and social workers in my school and be able to get the advise and stability I need to feel safe. I believe that if the money was put back into the DOE budget it would help to improve schools

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environments both physically and mentally. I want to  
see the millions of dollars in the police budget  
invested in more social workers and guidance  
counselors because all New York City students deserve  
to feel safe and comfortable in a more positive  
school environment. We do not need more police in  
our schools. We are calling on the city to stop  
hiring any new school cops and cut the funding from  
hundreds of remaining vacant school cop positions in  
the budget. Then take the money and invest those  
millions into more restorative justice and mental  
health supports.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

JULIA CRUZ: The schools — I'm sorry. The safest  
schools have the most resources not the most cops.  
Show the schools in New York that you care and fund  
our futures now.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

ESTER: Hello, my name is Ester. My pronouns are  
she, her. I go to school in Staten Island and I am  
in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I am a Youth Leader with Make the  
Road New York.

All students should have access to safe,  
supportive and well-funded schools. The Mayor is

1 slashing the budget to our education by \$1 billion in  
2 the next two years. At the same time, the NYPD and  
3 the DOE are spending more than \$400 million policing  
4 our schools. We have the biggest police force in the  
5 country and more school police than social workers,  
6 guidance counselors and restorative justice  
7 coordinators combined. The city is investing in the  
8 things that do not help us students or make us feel  
9 safe. I've seen school police treating students  
10 unfairly, hurting and arresting them and not actually  
11 solving any problems. We know that the safest  
12 schools have the most resources and not the most  
13 cops. After all we've been through over the past few  
14 years, we need more care than ever. A guidance  
15 counselor and social worker can and should be who we  
16 have in our schools to help resolve conflict between  
17 youth.

18  
19 Schools already are having to make cuts to art,  
20 music, drama and more. These are classes students  
21 enjoy and help them prepare for a better future. I  
22 chose art as an elective in my school. I feel at  
23 peace when I draw and art. Creating helps with  
24 expressing myself and can help me in the future to  
25 continue with my passion. What if all these cuts

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3 impact my school being able to offer this class? But  
4 cuts are also going to make it harder for families  
5 like mine to get Food Stamps. One of [00:26:03]  
6 which is a food. Having this resource makes my  
7 mothers life easier by not having to worry about what  
8 we will eat. It is unacceptable to put families like  
9 mine in a position where we would struggle to put  
10 food on the table. A lot of parents have to struggle  
11 with balancing how to pay rent, buy food and get  
12 school supplies. If the city invested in students  
13 and their families need, it would decrease a parents  
14 stress and struggles.

15 The city must stop taking money from our schools  
16 and stop funding and filling in the positions for  
17 empty school police and instead use that money to  
18 invest in restorative practices and improvements to  
19 support young people. We need to act now before more  
20 students lose academic opportunities and provide us  
21 with the services that will benefit our growth.  
22 Students do not deserve to be treated unfairly. We  
23 deserve justice and respect. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.  
25

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next we'll hear from Lucy  
3 Sexton, Kate Mattie, Sarah Mercanti, Sheila  
4 Lewandowski and Keith Nelson. [00:27:03]- [00:27:34]

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin when you're  
6 ready.

7 LUCY SEXTON: Thank you Chair Brannan and members  
8 of the City Council for hearing my testimony. I'm  
9 Lucy Sexton, I'm with the Cultural Advocacy  
10 Coalition, New Yorkers for Culture and Arts. In  
11 addressing the city's budgets, we too often talk  
12 about what we can cut. Let's talk about invigorating  
13 small businesses and local economies, increasing the  
14 tax base, generating tourism dollars. What keeps  
15 families in New York? What draws workers back to  
16 offices? What drives traffic to local businesses?  
17 What brings visitors to our city? Culture and arts  
18 do.

19 Last months cut of \$12 million from the  
20 Department of Cultural Affairs will do next to  
21 nothing to solve the city's budget needs, yet it is  
22 already causing enormous damage to our cultural  
23 organizations who depend on those grants. Grants of  
24 \$10,000, \$20,000 and \$50,000, not million. We are  
25 already seeing theaters closing and reduced



programming at dance studios, museums, music and art centers. In the words of the Hospitality Alliance's Andrew Richie, our city's economy is an interdependent ecosystem. There are few connections as strong as those between culture and hospitality. Randy Peers of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce adds a budget that slashes cultural funds will be devastating for shops and restaurants still struggling to recover.

While the city rightly celebrates 50 years of hip hop, remember that the city did not respond to the emerging art form by investing in music and dance studios in the Bronx.

Artists left, the Bronx economies and the communities suffered. Instead of images of a vibrant music scene, the world saw images of a city in decay. The same could be said of the neighborhood health and vibrancy that the myriad of services provided by the entire nonprofit sector bring to our city. Nonprofit support vital aspects of daily life from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment and language access. I stand with my colleagues and call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work towards creative solutions,

not hinder us further. Any additional cuts to nonprofits will undermine the public safety, mental health and economic wellbeing of New York City. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: If you want to you can go like this or you can snap. No clapping. Thank you. Next.

SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you Chair Brannan, Council Member Brewer and members of the Council for the opportunity to testify. My name is Sheila Lewandowski, I'm a resident, homeowner, artist, activist, community board member, Founder and Executive Director of the Chocolate Factory Theater in Long Island City. I am worried about paying my staff, paying artists, paying the electric and getting paid myself so I can keep a roof over my head, food and regularly needed medical care. Because of these proposed cuts, the Chocolate Factory Theater and many, many of my peers throughout the city are facing serious operating deficits as private funding sources are stagnant at best.

The Chocolate Factory as an example, is functioning with a 20 percent operating deficit. We

1 don't have an endowment but have enough savings to  
2 get through another year. Hey, the city has savings  
3 too. We're using our rainy-day fund; I'd like the  
4 city to use theirs. Our shows are still selling out  
5 and thousands of visitors are dining and shopping  
6 locally. We are actively partnering with local  
7 restaurants, bars and shops and cross marketing. If  
8 we shut down, so do they. The arts are a revenue  
9 multiplier, so this city cannot afford to cut the  
10 arts. You give us 10 and we give you 30 or 50. The  
11 \$12 million cut to DCLA is a small fraction of the  
12 city's budget. But when we invest in culture, their  
13 turn helps fund all other needed services, attracts  
14 tourists for its education programs, mental and  
15 physical health. Our work makes streets safer and  
16 with people gathering for programming.

17 Like my colleague Lucy said, what keeps families  
18 here? What draws workers back to New York? What  
19 drives traffic to local businesses? Culture does.  
20 Further cuts to culture mean arts bases shut. I  
21 believe in the need for a truly representative  
22 government that does the work of protecting its  
23 people. I also believe that protection is about  
24  
25

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supporting a vibrant and equitable economy inclusive  
and accessible services to all.

Arts, culture, education, childcare, legal  
services, housing assistance and all of the services  
nonprofit partners provide need to be protected. I  
stand with my colleagues and call on the city to  
partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward  
creative solutions, not hinder us further. Thank  
you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

SARAH MERCANTI: Thank you Chair Brannan, Council  
Member Brewer, oh thank you and members of the  
Finance Committee for holding this hearing today.  
I'm here to support the cultural sector and the It  
Starts With The Arts Coalition calling on our city to  
prioritize funding for arts in New York City schools  
and communities.

My name is Sarah Mercanti, I am the Director of  
Government Relations at Roundabout Theatre Company.  
A not-for-profit that operates five Broadway and off-  
Broadway theaters in Midtown Manhattan. With a  
mission to celebrate the power of theater by spot  
lighting classics from the past, cultivating new  
works of the present and educating minds for the

future, we reach 500,000 audience members and employ  
1,500 artists, theater and administrative staff  
annually. Our productions and community work helps  
the nonprofit theater sector generate \$1.3 billion  
each year in economic activity for the city.

Thanks to the vital support and partnership of  
the City Council, four city agencies including DCLA,  
SBS, HRA and MOME, and most recently collaborations  
with New York Public Library and Queens Library,  
Roundabout is able to deliver neighborhood-based  
education, arts engagement and a nationally  
recognized technical theater workforce program. All  
of which reach 24,000 public school students,  
teachers, young adults and local residents across the  
five boroughs each season.

Budget cuts of over 12 million to DCLA and more  
than \$1 billion to New York City public schools  
threatens our city's creative spirit, economic  
prosperity and our students. Programming provided by  
nonprofits has already reduced, has already been  
reduced as a result of the November cuts and the  
additional five percent plan cuts in January would be  
detrimental to the symbiotic ecosystem of nonprofits,  
libraries and city entities working together to

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3 directly serve New Yorkers with the least access to  
4 the arts. Organizations like Roundabout touch every  
5 vital aspect of daily life as Lucy and Sheila said,  
6 from public education to mental health, language  
7 access, as well workforce development and tourism.  
8 We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit  
9 sector and work towards creative solutions and not  
10 hinder us further. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 KATE MATTIE: Good evening Committee Chair  
13 Brannan, President, Council Members and staff. My  
14 name is Kate Mattie and I'm from the Public Theater  
15 here to testify on the impact of the Mayor's  
16 Financial Plan on the City of New York and to request  
17 your continued advocacy and support specifically for  
18 the arts and culture sector. The Council's support  
19 is paramount in ensuring the survival of free and  
20 accessible programs throughout New York City. The  
21 implementation of all three looming budgetary PEGs in  
22 the next fiscal year pose a significant threat to the  
23 entire nonprofit sector, pushing it towards an  
24 unsustainable financial future. Programing and  
25 services provided by nonprofit organizations have

been reduced because of the cuts announced in  
November.

The proposed additional five percent cut to take  
place in January would be detrimental to the Public  
Theater and other nonprofits in their efforts to  
continue providing free and low-cost services and  
programming to New Yorkers. In addition to our free  
Shakespeare in the Park and our main stage  
programming at 425 Lafayette Street, the Public  
Theater has also served as an incubator for New York  
that moves to Broadway and further strengthens the  
local economy generating revenue throughout ticket  
sales, tourism, hotel and restaurant visits and more.

Three shows originally produced by the public are  
being featured in this Broadway season. Health  
Kitchen, Suff's and Here Lays Love. However, without  
necessary funding from the city budget, we will be  
unable to maintain the level of new work development  
in free and accessible programming that nurtures New  
Yorkers and generates economic activity that benefits  
the entire economy. Over the summer, the public took  
proactive and extremely painful steps to achieve a  
sustainable financial model laying off almost 20  
percent of full-time employees and proposed cuts

threaten to upset the careful balance that we have found and force additional layoffs or reduction in programming. The current plans to move forward with the three rounds of PEGs would result in approximately \$250,000 operating funding cut to the New York Shakespeare Festival known as the Public Theater. Please let us know how we can contribute to advocating this mission and feel free to reach out to any of us directly with questions you may have about our testimonies. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

KEITH NELSON: Hi, my name is Keith Nelson and I'm Executive Director and Cofounder of Bindlestiff Family Variety Arts. A 30-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping circus and variety arts vibrant and relevant inspiring people that anything is possible and bringing communities together. I'm here today to share with you my deep concern about the proposed citywide budget cuts. While we recognize the economic challenges facing New York City, I'm shocked and confused by these dramatic cuts. Social, environmental and cultural programs cuts would negatively impact New Yorkers. This city relies on



the arts and culture to drive tourism. Only a year ago, the city's conversation emphasized how art and cultures lured visitors. The effect of these cuts will make tourism, community, culture innovation, quality of life and local economy suffers.

Bindlestiff's programs employ. In 2022 we provided work for more than 300 people with 200 free productions across the city. This past year after the loss of federal pandemic relief funds, we employed 130 people, performing 90 shows in 40 different locations and entertained over 23,000 people.

City funded enables Bindlestiff to provide access to the arts for thousands, ensuring the performing arts stay affordable, accessible and inclusive for all. Arts and culture are essential to what make New York New York. Like many others, we were dealt a major blow in 2020 with COVID. Our industry came to a halt. The following two years, federal funds kept the creative sector alive. As the funds ended a year ago, we like many others continue to face great challenges. Just as the arts are starting to find post pandemic footing, the city is ready to pull the rug out from under us. These cuts will be felt by

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creative workers currently struggling to survive.

These are the people who bring magic to this city.

We bring performances into communities, which in turn

generates revenue for businesses. Our programming

fosters community, draws crowds, bring sales and foot

traffic to adjacent business. This transfers into

real dollars. As research indicates, public arts

provide positive economic impact where events take

place. The proposed budget cuts are counter

intuitive. Creative solutions are our specialty,

talk to us please. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

We'll now here from Andrea Ortiz, Tania Mattos,

Magaly Melendez, Hailey Nolasco, Meropi Peponides

and Yonah Zietz.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just wanted the public

there to know that Hell's Kitchen is wonderful.

[00:39:07]- [00:40:08]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we'll start from you

and go around.

MEROPI PEPONIDES: Good evening, my name is

Meropi Peponides. I am a New Yorker, a nonprofit

worker and an artist based in Flatbush Brooklyn and a

member of the Justice Committee. A grassroots

organization working to end police violence in NYC.

I'm deeply disappointed and worried about Mayor  
Adams' financial plan. As a remote worker, I rely on  
libraries as one of the few places in the city I can  
access a quiet space and internet and I was  
especially disappointed to learn that all local  
branches in my predominantly Black and Latina  
neighborhood are being forced to cut hours and other  
services that provide supportive and safe places.

When I see Mayor Adams increasing the NYPD's  
budget by close to \$135 million while libraries,  
schools and accessible housing have faced five rounds  
of cuts. It tells me that the Adams Administrations  
priority is to criminalize and suppress the needs and  
voices of Black, Latina and other low-income  
communities of color in New York City overproviding  
the support and services that keep New Yorkers  
healthy, safe and thriving.

While not a parent, I have several young people  
in my life who I care about deeply and who attend our  
public schools. I am worried about them getting the  
education and opportunities they deserve. Nearly 500  
school cops leave their jobs each year and a hiring  
freeze could amount to \$40 million divested from

1 school policing. This can help prevent more school  
2 cuts and help fund school support staff, such as  
3 restorative justice coordinators, social workers,  
4 counselors and other evidence-based positions and  
5 practices that keep students safe and learning.  
6

7 I have also watched members of my community  
8 struggle with losing their housing as rent in NYC  
9 continues to skyrocket and unaffordable fancy  
10 developments continue to be built. Meanwhile, the  
11 NYPD buys robot dogs, regularly flies its helicopters  
12 and drones over our heads and has unnecessary  
13 officers on my block who mostly chat with each other  
14 and scroll on their phones. I urge the Mayor and  
15 City Council to stop giving the NYPD preferential  
16 treatment and invest in services that serve all New  
17 Yorkers. Thank you.

18 ANDREA ORTIZ: Good afternoon, good evening now  
19 and thank you. My name is Andrea Ortiz from Dignity  
20 in Schools New York. DSC works to create systems of  
21 school discipline and safety that are based on mutual  
22 respect, problem solving and ending the school to  
23 prison pipeline. Punitive school discipline and  
24 policing create barriers to learning and violate the  
25 safety and wellbeing of students, particularly Black

and Brown students, students with disabilities and other marginalized groups were targeted most harshly by police. We call on New York City elected officials to reject the Mayors austerity plans, hiring freezes in November Budget cuts. The city must stop the \$600 million in cuts proposed to education explicitly listed in the November financial plan and protect critical programs currently funded with \$1 billion of federal COVID relieve dollars.

Students thrive when they can access restorative justice, counselors, social workers, mental health workers, and the resources and programs that they need. However, Mayor Adams has been forcefully attacking public schools calling for devastating cuts to school budgets and undermining the plan expansion of restorative justice. City officials must invest \$1 billion to protect the range of programs currently funded by COVID federal relief funding. This includes \$21 million to protect and baseline funding for school based restorative justice, \$5 million in baseline funding for mental health continuum, \$77 million for counselors, social workers, mental health professionals and we also demand that the New York City fully fund meaningful restorative justice and

divest from school police and policing  
infrastructure.

A commitment to restorative justice requires a  
meaningful culture shift that makes it possible to  
build community safety and respond to harm when it  
occurs. We are calling on the city to not only  
protect previous investments in restorative justice,  
but also expand them to ensure that all students have  
access to school-based restorative justice  
coordinators and for all schools to be able to hire  
caring, community members into supportive positions.

Finally, we must seize all hiring of school  
policing, redirect the \$400 plus million in funding  
from school policing into opportunities for young  
people and remove surveillance technologies in our  
schools to make space and funding available for what  
youth and families need, safe and restorative  
schools.

Just last week, Mayor Adams made the  
unconscionable decision to protect and move forward  
with a class of over 135 school safety agents while  
continue to slow the hiring evidence-based programs  
budgeted for Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024, such as  
Restorative Justice Coordinators, Social Workers,

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Shelter based Group Coordinators. This and all other  
academy classes for school police must be permanently  
canceled. Schools should be a place where young  
people should be supported to grow, try new things,  
feel safe and learn, yet for too long the city has  
directed schools funds into hiring and training  
school police who harm students, rather than  
supportive staff and services that students need. We  
cannot fall for this trap for any longer. We need  
your leadership now. Thank you.

TANIA MATTOS: Good evening Members of the  
Committee on Finance. My name is Tania Mattos. I am  
currently serving as Interim Executive Director of  
UnLocal. A steadfast immigration legal organization  
dedicated to assisting people with immigration relief  
applications and fighting against deportations  
amongst other essential services.

Today, I address you regarding the profound  
impact of the Mayor's announced budget cuts on the  
Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, the RRLC. A  
collaborative in which UnLocal collaborates with Make  
the Road and New York Legal Assistance Group. We  
initiated during the Administration of President  
Trump. The RLC was designed to assemble a team of

highly skilled attorneys capable of swiftly  
addressing and stopping deportation orders. Free of  
cost for long standing residents with their families  
and serving as a vital referral service for other  
providers including the city's asylum navigation  
centers.

Regret will be the Mayor's proposed budget plan  
entails a severe reduction of 306— uh \$100,000 in  
city funding for the RLC in upcoming fiscal year  
beginning in July. This already follows in an  
already deeper cut earlier this year and I'm here to  
highlight the alarming consequences these cuts will  
impose on immigrant New Yorkers, their families and  
the broader community we serve. These reduction in  
services not only jeopardizes the fabric of our  
society but also robs individuals of precious years  
of their lives.

To underscore the urgency of RLC, has experienced  
an alarming surge of referrals receiving twice as  
many in October compared to the same month last year.  
While we're getting an average of 10 to 15 referrals  
each day of people with deportation orders. Our  
clients have shared the stressing stories of  
receiving deportation orders due to issues such as



not receiving critical mail containing immigration  
court hearing notices or receiving it too late to  
attend their scheduled hearings in the shelter  
system.

In this critical moment, we ask the City Council  
to collaborate with the nonprofit sector fostering  
creative solutions rather than injuring our  
collective efforts. We urge you to reconsider these  
debilitating cuts and recognize the vital role that  
the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative plays and  
preserving the rights and livelihood of our fellow  
New Yorkers. Please join us in safeguarding the  
Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. The future of  
countless lives depend on it. Thank you for your  
time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

HAILEY NOLASCO: Good evening Chair Brannan and  
esteemed members of the Finance Committee. There we  
go, thank you, much better. Alright, good evening  
Chair Brannan and esteemed members of the Finance  
Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
today on behalf of the Center for Justice Innovation.

My name is Hailey Nolasco and I am the Director  
of Government Relations at the Center for Justice

Innovation and I'm joined by my colleague Magaly  
Melendez, Program Manager of Bronx Hope.

It does not go without notice that our city is  
experiencing unprecedented fiscal challenges and we  
fully understand the city's responsibility to respond  
to competing needs. However, today I'm hoping to  
share that although we understand that there are  
challenges, it is important to make a conscious  
effort to not divest from vital services that work to  
address a multitude of growing community needs, as  
this will directly impact public safety. We must  
work our way through this fiscal crisis together  
without further cuts to programs. More cuts will  
have detrimental effects to the vulnerable  
communities we serve for generations to come.

The centers program span the entire justice  
continuum, working to enhance public safety beyond  
enforcement by increasing civic engagement in place,  
keeping NYCHA developments through our Neighborhood  
Safety Initiatives, by responding to and bringing  
awareness to the intersection of gun and domestic  
violence to our Rise Project. By supporting at risk  
and systems involved youth with supportive services  
needed to help them live healthier, safer and more

economically sustain lives through our crisis management system wrap around services, such as our Anti-Gun Violence Youth Employment program. School counseling mediation services and therapeutic supports. And also, of course, through our lifesaving pre-arraignment diversion work such as Bronx Hope, that uses a harm reduction model to give clients the opportunity to rehabilitate and connect to community rather than jail or options that do not really address the underlying issues.

And also to consider, as we look forward to the closer of Rikers Island, our programs will be relied on more than ever and the efficacy of these programs are reliant on meaningful investments to do so responsibly.

In closing, well-funded community programming produces better outcomes for individuals as well as communities and they generate cost savings for our city and our taxpayers. Our programs provide much needed services that address barriers, criminogenic factors and help people stay out of the criminal legal system, overall improving our public safety which is so imperative at this time. Thank you for your time and for your ongoing support.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

YONAH ZEITZ: Thank you Chair Brannan for holding this hearing and inviting our testimony. My name is Jonah Zeitz and I am the Director of Advocacy at the Katal Center for Equity Health and Justice and we're based in Brooklyn but our members are based all across the city and all across the state and our members include people that are formally incarcerated in city jails, family members, people that are currently and formally incarcerated and then every day regular working-class New Yorkers.

At Katal, like many of the other speakers today, oppose the Mayor's proposed budget cuts and we clearly understand that our city is not facing a budget crisis. We're facing a leadership crisis and I think there's no more alarming example of this when we look at the Mayor's handling of the dumpster fire that is the Riker's Island Jail complex and at this time, we know that the conditions there are horrific and life threatening and under this mayor, they've only gotten worse and at least 28 people have died since he took office.

An incarceration at Rikers is incredibly, incredibly costly. In Fiscal Year 2023, the DOC

1 budget was \$1.3 billion and according to the  
2  
3 Comptroller, the cost in incarceration at Rikers is  
4 over \$500,000 per person per year. And so, why are  
5 libraries and education programs being cut when we  
6 know alternatives to incarceration work and they're  
7 much cheaper and we have the options available to us  
8 right now to reduce the safe jail population.

9 And so, under this Mayor, the jail population is  
10 going up when it should be decreasing and it's  
11 costing New York City hundreds of millions of  
12 dollars. And unfortunately this jail first approach  
13 preferred by the Mayor is not only costing a lot of  
14 taxpayers dollars but it's also threatening the  
15 closure of Rikers Island, which we know its safe to  
16 state not just hundreds of millions but actually  
17 billions per year and reports by the Independent  
18 Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and  
19 incarceration reform and the Institute for State and  
20 Local Governments found that the closure of Rikers  
21 would save the city \$1.3 billion annually, yet we  
22 have a mayor that's missed every legal across this  
23 benchmark to complete this plan.

24 And so, uhm, you know the Mayor's first jail  
25 first approach is not only going to cost New Yorkers

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in this immediate term, but it's also going to  
threaten substantial long-term savings. And so we  
urge members of the New York City Council to reject  
the Mayor's first Jail first approach is not only  
going to cost New Yorkers in this immediate term but  
it's also going to threaten substantial long-term  
savings. And so, we urge members of the New York  
City Council to reject the Mayor's budget  
modifications that will drastically cut essential  
services and we call them to first cut the budget  
used for taking people. The NYPD and the DOC's  
budgets are bloated, wasteful, and must be cut.

And then second, the closure of Rikers Island is  
not just a moral and legal imperative, but it's also  
an extraordinarily savings that can be realized and  
it's truly a fiscal imperative and we urge any budget  
modifications made by this Council to focus on the  
choices that will advance efforts to shut Rikers once  
and for all. And thank you for my time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Next,  
we'll hear from Adam Ganser, Heather Lubov, Merritt  
Birnbaum, Christina Taylor and Skip Bamburgh.

[00:53:35]- [00:54:12]. Thank you may begin in  
whatever direction.

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3 ADAM GANSER: Hello, is this on? Yeah. Thank  
4 you Chair, thank you Council Member Brewer for the  
5 opportunity to talk today. My name is Adam Ganser,  
6 I'm the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks.

7 We have the Play Fair Coalition which is over 450  
8 organizations across the city including the Union DC  
9 37 and many of the folks you see here. Uhm, our  
10 parks are under siege. Like every agency, Parks took  
11 a five percent hit. The result is the loss of key  
12 programs, a hiring freeze that will result in  
13 hundreds of lost workers. As if that weren't enough,  
14 the Parks Department received a cut that is actually  
15 happening in a different agency, in Human Resources  
16 Administration. HRA cut the POPs program, which will  
17 result in 1,450 additional workers lost.

18 As an aggregate, these cuts amounted with 12  
19 percent cut to Parks Department. Put bluntly, Parks  
20 has taken more cuts than any other agency from an  
21 Administration that strongly committed to invest in  
22 our Parks system. The Mayor and nearly every City  
23 Council member including you all, has supported an  
24 increase in the Parks budget, pledging to get to the  
25 goal of one percent for Parks. Instead, Parks and  
New Yorkers are getting railroaded. Some context,

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this is happening when the Parks Department has been  
underfunded for 40 years. When the Parks Department  
has fewer workers now than it did last year and  
what's more infuriating, fewer workers [00:55:43]  
before COVID.

What will these cuts mean for New Yorkers? All  
we have to do is go back three years to the pandemic,  
when we saw similar cuts. Trash in our parks, lawns  
un-mowed, bathrooms closed or frankly disgusting.  
Not enough staff to keep the beaches and pools fully  
open and maintained. Unsafe conditions for Parks  
workers and unsafe parks for New Yorkers and their  
families.

What's more is that despite Parks taking more  
than it's share of the cuts in this round, the Mayor  
is proposing an additional five to ten percent cuts  
to the agency. This is a systematic defunding of an  
agency that is operating on a shoestring budget. I  
know these cuts are coming from the top but I also  
want to make one other point. For the past many  
years, the Council itself has funded roughly 300  
positions called Play Fair positions. Those were  
crucial because every year this happens coming from  
the top and those positions would sort of create a



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buffer. You haven't done that the last couple years.

I know we're a little ahead of next year's budget but

I want to put that in here because it's super

important that we have that kind of a cushion. Thank

you.

MERRITT BIRNBAUM: Hi, my name is Merritt

Birnbaum. I'm the President and CEO of Riverside

Park Conservancy. We are over one of the 450

organizations that's part of the Play Fair Coalition.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with all of

you. On behalf of how the cuts will impact just one

of the 1,942 public parks in New York City.

Riverside Park Conservancy works through a

maintenance and operations agreement with NYC Parks

to care for five parks along six miles, 400 acres,

along the westside of Manhattan from 59<sup>th</sup> Street to

181<sup>st</sup> Street.

We're fortunate to have built a 35-year history

that leverages thousands of hours of volunteer time

and financial resources to supplement the dwindling

workforce. We recognize that the vast majority of

public parks in our city do not have the benefit of

conservancy groups. So, our situation at Riverside

only underscores how dire the current round of cuts

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and any future cuts will be for the parks in our most  
vulnerable communities.

In addition to his own cuts as Adam said, the  
Parks Department is the victim as other agencies  
strive to meet their PEG mandates. HRA is saving \$59  
million from its own budget by cutting the Parks  
Opportunity program. A jobs program that has existed  
for three decades and currently employs 1,400  
essential parks workers.

So, to put details on the magnitude of the crisis  
today in Riverside Park, over half of our frontline  
staff in the park are part of the POPs program.  
Cutting this workforce will essentially decimate the  
services that the Parks Department provides in our  
park. So, it will effectively eliminate 50 percent  
of the trash pickups, 50 percent of the lawn mowing,  
50 percent of the graffiti removal and 50 percent of  
the bathroom cleanings.

In smaller parks across the city, a cut of this  
size is equivalent to just eliminating these types of  
services. To eliminate the seasonal positions from  
an agency that has relied on this workforce for  
decades is to cripple an already broken system. City  
Hall says there are no more layoffs but not filling

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thousands of necessary jobs, you are not only keeping  
more New Yorkers unemployed, you are actively harming  
the remaining parks workers who have no way to  
compensate for their absent colleagues.

And as Adam said, we know what this looks like.  
Overflowing toilets, graffiti covered playgrounds,  
discarding needles. Our parks are direct reflection  
of our city's commitment to the health and happiness  
of our residents. A park advocate once said they're  
the lungs of the city, well the city is on life  
support, don't cut off the oxygen. We adamantly  
oppose further cuts to parks.

HEATHER LUBOV: Hi, I'm Heather Lubov. I'm the  
Executive Director of City Parks Foundation. Thank  
you all for sticking with us. We are a citywide  
nonprofit that encourages New Yorkers to use and care  
for their neighborhood parks and open spaces and we  
also are the Administrator of the New York City Green  
Fund. A private campaign to support grassroots  
stewardship efforts in under resourced communities.  
We are a proud member of the Play Fair for Parks  
Coalition and the Hashtag Life 15 Campaign.

I'm here on behalf of the thousands of New  
Yorkers who volunteer through Partnerships for Parks.

1 The program we jointly manage with the Parks  
2 Department and I'm here on behalf of the millions of  
3 New Yorkers who might not volunteer but who rely on  
4 their local parks for their gyms, their classrooms,  
5 their concert venues, their gathering spaces, and  
6 their respites. We run a very lean operation to  
7 coordinate with the agency so that 26,000 people can  
8 volunteer in parks. I could talk about the five full  
9 time and the four seasonal positions that will go  
10 unfilled making it virtually impossible for us to  
11 sustain this current level of volunteer engagement.  
12 Or I could talk about the accumulation of vacancies  
13 within the agency that will make it even harder for  
14 us to contract, secure permits or purchase tools and  
15 supplies like gloves and trash bags that we need for  
16 volunteer projects. Even though the success of the  
17 Administration's Let's Screen NYC Initiative largely  
18 depends on our ability to organize and staff there  
19 volunteer projects.  
20

21 But I'm really here to talk about the 300 plus  
22 full-time already vacant and frozen positions, plus  
23 the loss of 1,450 frontline maintenance workers in  
24 the POP program combined. These lost positions will  
25 result in devastating consequences in our parks and

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will put an enormous burden on the remaining staff  
who are already severely burned out from years of  
underfunding for the agency. You may recall the  
trash piling up in parks during the early pandemic  
and the corresponding constituent complaints. We  
cannot go back to that.

Volunteers are not a replacement for staff, nor  
is private fundraising a replacement for the public  
dollars that by right should be used adequately to  
fund our parks system, which with libraries is our  
city's most democratic and critical community  
resource. We make neighborhoods livable. We are  
undermining climate change mitigation right now as we  
experience more flooding. We are compromising our  
safety. We are subjecting visitors to trash and  
needles. And we are reducing access to fountain,  
sprinklers and pools. Our parks and city deserve  
better.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

CHRISTINA TAYLOR: I'm Christina Taylor, Deputy  
Director for the Van Courtlandt Park Alliance. Thank  
you so much for holding this important hearing. Van  
Courtlandt Park Alliance is also a proud member of  
the Play Fair for Parks Coalition. This

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Administration's proposed cuts will devastate our  
parks system. Year after year, New York City Park  
staff does more with less. This past summer they  
once again stepped up and took care of 30,000 acres  
of parks with limited resources. The staff is  
already stretched too thin. They are tired and  
frustrated and so are we.

New York City Park staff need more resources to  
do the work that the public expects and deserves, not  
less. And yet, we're looking at losing 350 jobs  
through a hiring freeze and losing another 1,450 jobs  
through the discontinuation of the Parks Opportunity  
Program. Eliminating nearly 60 percent of the mobile  
parks cleaning crews. How are Parks staff supposed  
to keep our parks clean? How is Van Cortlandt Park  
staff supposed to keep our 1,146-acre park tidy with  
20 fewer employees during the busy summer season?  
How can parks continue to provide clean, safe, and  
beautiful open spaces for you? Plain and simple,  
they cannot.

To be sure with these budget cuts, it is New  
Yorkers who will suffer. Without enough staff,  
playgrounds will not open on time if at all.

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Bathrooms will not be clean and will not stay open  
during late summer nights.

Fields will not be groomed for sports. Graffiti  
will not be removed. Garbage will not be picked up.  
Trash will fester and vermin will take over. Trucks  
and other vehicles will fall into further disrepair.  
Parks enforcement patrol already under staff will be  
practically nonexistent. Pools will not be fully  
staffed so you can forget about special programs like  
Learn to Swim. It's just not a pretty picture.

Parks are an essential part of city life. 14  
percent of all city land is park land. There are  
nearly 2,000 park sites in New York City and yet the  
Parks Department is chronically underfunded.

With this round of cuts, there will be nothing  
left and yet, this administration keeps chipping  
away. Enough is enough. Please say no to the cuts.  
Join us and let this Administration know that New  
York City Parks Budget cannot be cut any further.  
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.  
Next we'll hear from Sarah Williams, Arif Somonu(SP?)  
and Benjamin Lucas. [01:04:33]- [01:04:56]. Sarah,  
Arif and Benjamin? [01:04:56]- [01:05:06]. Okay,

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next panel is Anthony Feliciano, Lauren Schuster,  
Gabriela Sandoval Requena, Nicole McVinua and  
Shakeema North Albert. [01:05:16]- [01:05:39]. You  
can begin when you are ready.

ANTHONY FELICIANO: Good evening. Thank you for  
the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is  
Anthony Feliciano, I am the Vice President of  
Advocacy for Housing Works. We're also a founding  
member of the NA's New York Community Coalition. A  
group of over 90 health centers, hospitals, and  
community-based organizations that are fully  
committed to ending AIDs as an epidemic in all New  
York communities and populations. But we have much  
left to do at the start and unacceptable disparities  
persist in HIV's impact on Black, indigenous and  
people of colored communities.

Housing Works in the ET Community Coalition on  
behalf of the marginalized New Yorkers we serve and  
represent implore the City Council to reject the  
Mayor's devastating and regressive cuts to essential  
services that sustain and support our most vulnerable  
New Yorkers and not-for-profit agencies that work on  
the frontlines of poverty and homelessness to meet  
critical needs. Our leaders must remove the 15



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percent budget cut directive. Just a budget based on  
actual need and provide a transparent analysis for  
the public to fully understand the impact of any  
budget cuts. Specifically, we implore the City  
Council and the Administration to accept the  
Department of Social Services, the Department of  
Homeless Services, DOH and community-based providers  
they find from any program to eliminate the gap or  
other cost cutting plans.

Let me add that staffing shortages across New  
York City agencies already disrupt the city services  
and essential service agencies simply cannot sustain  
further erosion. It's critical to exam city  
contracted not-for-profit agencies providing housing,  
homeless prevention, homeless services and other  
essential assistance from a further budget gut so as  
not worsen the existing staffing shortages and  
increase the already untenable caseloads.

Mayor Adams threat and 50 percent PEG is a  
blatant attack on Black, Brown and low-income  
families. The Mayor continues scapegoating asylum  
seekers to justify his administration mismanagement  
and a drastic budget cut. It's shameful and untrue  
with independent government, groups asserting that

the Administration has overstated migrant costs and given the Administration reliance on expensive emergency contracts with for-profit companies that cost city billions of dollars. Even more shameful that we know the city spends over \$5,000 per year to detain one person at Rikers, which is only getting worse under this Mayor and thousands more.

We also know that the NYPD and DOC are escaping the brunt of the Mayor's cuts again. We must require the NYPD to cut its bloated budget by at least seven percent. So, those funds can be used to protect and invest in housing, mental health, education, and other critical nonpolicy safety solutions. This is what we are in solidarity with communities for police reform and justice committee.

Finally, we are dismayed that the Administration continues to ignore calls to address budget shortfalls by increasing revenues. The city Comptroller has proposed a modest change to the taxation for the wealthiest New Yorkers could provide more than \$1 billion a year in additional revenue and we know these are short-sided budget cuts and so we need responsible measures and I have provided a more detailed testimony. Thank you.

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3 NICOLE MCVINUA: Good evening, my name is Nicole  
4 McVinua and I am the Director of Policy at Urban  
5 Pathways. A nonprofit homeless services and  
6 supportive housing provider serving over 2,000 single  
7 adults annually. We are deeply concerned like  
8 everyone else here today by the Mayor's 15 percent  
9 PEG and the disastrous impact that the remaining ten  
10 percent cut will have on essential nonprofit programs  
11 at a time when community services are needed more  
12 than ever.

13 After decades of underfunding, nonprofit human  
14 services are already at the brink of collapse. We  
15 provide essential services on behalf of the city and  
16 we cannot shoulder anymore of the burden on top of  
17 the 2.5 percent cuts that were already absorbed by  
18 DHS providers in the FY 2024 budget. Nonprofit  
19 organizations cannot do the same amount of work with  
20 less funding. If ten percent cuts are passed down to  
21 city contracted providers, Urban Pathways will be  
22 forced to reduce services and serve fewer people,  
23 which will mean turning away people sleeping on the  
24 streets from safe havens, stabilization beds and  
25 drop-in services. We will also be at risk of having  
to close the doors to a program all together, which

would displace upwards of 60 current clients. If providers across the city are forced to shut our programs, hundreds if not thousands of New Yorkers will be left without shelter, creating further chaos in an already overstretched system. The city must consider the long-term cost of slashing services. Additionally, the understaffing of city agencies has caused a dangerous backlog of processing benefits, reviewing City FHEPs applications, and building and filling placements in desperately needed housing.

This cannot continue. City agencies fulfilling benefits, housing placements, and other essential services must be fully waived from the hiring freeze and allowed to fill all vacant positions not just on a one-to-one basis. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life. That's why Urban Pathways joins over 225 organizations in the Y15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the city's budget. We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions. The city cannot withstand a 15 percent cut to its budget and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public

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3 safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Good evening Chair

7 Brannan, Council Member Farias and Council Central

8 Staff. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on

9 behalf of New Destiny Housing. My name is Gabriela

10 Sandoval Requena and I am the Director of Policy and

11 Communications at New Destiny.

12 Our mission is to end the double trauma of abuse

13 and homelessness for domestic violence survivors and

14 their families. We do this by developing supportive

15 housing for survivors in shelter, like Raven Hall in

16 your district Chair Brannan, assisting those who are

17 fleeing abuse to obtain subsidies and find apartments

18 and advocating for more housing resources. New

19 Destiny is also a co-convenor of the Family

20 Homelessness Coalition.

21 Domestic violence is the main driver of family

22 homelessness in New York City. We are deeply

23 concerned that Mayor Adams call for 15 percent budget

24 cuts and hiring freeze at city agencies who will not

25 only further hinder survivors ability to secure safe

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housing, but also put their lives and the lives of  
their children in jeopardy.

The first five percent cut in November, in the  
November financial plan has already reduced  
programming and services provided by nonprofit  
organizations. The additional five percent plan cuts  
in January would be detrimental to vital services for  
survivors and it would decrease affordable housing  
production in housing placements. We're also  
concerned about staffing shortages at HRA, which are  
ongoing – which has an ongoing backlog of public  
benefits applications. Limited capacity has delayed  
check processing, times slow move from shelter to  
permanent housing and impacted the success of rental  
assistance programs.

We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit  
sector and work toward creative solutions not hinder  
us further. For instance, there are at least three  
budget neutral administrative solutions that will  
improve timely access to affordable housing. Number  
one, allow all families in shelter, in all five  
shelter systems including survivors in HRA shelters  
access to HPD homeless set asides, which was promised  
by the Mayor and the Housing our Neighbors Blueprint.

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3 Also reduce steps and streamline the process to fill  
4 vacant affordable housing units made available  
5 through Housing Connect to meaningfully reduce these  
6 timetables and third, open up city funded supportive  
7 housing to domestic violence survivors and their  
8 children who are not currently eligible for NYC 1515.  
9 The city cannot withstand a 50 percent cut to its  
10 budget and any additional cuts to the nonprofit  
11 sector will only undermine the much-needed  
12 development of affordable housing, public safety and  
13 cleanliness of New York City while risking the lives  
14 of survivors of domestic violence. On behalf of New  
15 Destiny, thank you for the opportunity to testify and  
16 stick with us. We'll submit extended testimony.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thanks for all  
18 you do.

19 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Good evening, I am Lauren  
20 Schuster, the Vice President of Government Affairs at  
21 Urban Resource Institute with 23 shelters across New  
22 York City. URI is the largest provider of  
23 transitional housing for survivors of domestic  
24 violence in the country and a leading provider of  
25 transitional housing to families experiencing  
26 violence. URI provides trauma informed care to our

families and we endeavor to end cycles of violence  
and homelessness. We work with youth and in  
communities to prevent violence and we engage people  
who cause harm in that work as well.

Thank you Chair Brannan. You have been here all  
day. You are a trooper and Council Member Farias; I  
don't where Council Member Brewer went but I'm sure  
she will be back. We appreciate your work and the  
work of your staff, the Speaker for the opportunity  
to testify today. Like our colleagues in the  
nonprofit sector, URI has grave concerns about the  
proposed across the board cuts. Our sector meets the  
most fundamental needs of society by providing food,  
shelter and clothing to those who need it most.

Following the last budget, URI was forced to  
implement a 2.5 percent PEG like man of our partners  
that resulted in the loss of 20 full-time positions.  
At the same time, our workforce hasn't had a  
meaningful COLA that reflects inflation in years and  
many of our contracts have remained flat despite  
increasing inflation. The agencies that support us,  
they are woefully understaffed and overburdened and  
as a result, our families are waiting longer to move  
into permanent housing to access vouchers, public



assistance, and other critical benefits. At a time  
of unprecedented when the rates of homelessness and  
domestic are increasing, instead of throwing our  
sector a lifeline, we see yet another round of cuts.

There is simply no more left to cut without  
significantly impacting service delivery. We  
understand that the city is facing a budget deficit  
caused in small part by the arrival to New York of  
people in search of safety and we agree that it is a  
federal problem that demands federal solutions.  
However, people seeking asylum are not the only cause  
of our budget problems and cuts cannot be the only  
solution. We believe that working together we can  
identify creative solutions to this issue. We must  
first exam opportunities to raise revenue and end  
underperforming corporate tax breaks. These  
solutions are supported by the data and the public.

And if the cuts are still necessary at that  
point, then they must be implemented with precision  
with an eye first toward nonessential spending and  
born evenly by all including the private sector. We  
look forward to continuing our work together with the  
Council, with your staff, and with the Administration  
to avoid these cuts. Thank you so much.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Dante  
4 Bravo, Nakisha Francis, Lora Tannenbaum(SP?), Ambreen  
5 Qureshi, and Jeremy Soto. [01:16:43]- [01:17:10].  
6 Thank you, you may begin.

7 JEREMY SOTO: Good evening Council. My name is  
8 Jeremy Soto, I'm here representing El Puente and a  
9 community school in Williamsburg Brooklyn. Thank you  
10 to the Council for the opportunity to speak to you  
11 today in regards to the budget cuts. The proposed  
12 cut of nearly \$550 million from the Department of  
13 Education will administer a blow to the education of  
14 young people that will further increase the  
15 achievement gap our educators are tasked with  
16 closing.

17 The ill intent of divesting from our young people  
18 education does not promote an equitable learning  
19 environment for our students, nor does it equip  
20 teachers, administrators and staff with the resources  
21 to meet our students and family's needs. As civil  
22 servants, it would be irresponsible of us to support  
23 these budget cuts that will severely undermine the  
24 solutions that would address both the educational and  
25 mental health concerns we've encountered since the

emergence of the pandemic. In our community school partnership, we've raised student achievement by working with our students and families physical, emotional and social health. Specifically, our funding has allowed us to hire a social worker to work with our Spanish speaking students on the weekends, primarily students who have refugee status.

The cuts to community schools will not allow us to hire these bilingual social worker and continue the progress that we have made with these students.

The community school model was a priority of the Council and mechanism in the Mayor's violence prevention blueprint, yet a \$10 million cut to a model that is considered a priority to our Council does not align with sustainable growth and equitable development of our students and public-school systems. Since when did it become acceptable to negotiate our young peoples education? When did it become acceptable for our civil servants to create the problems we aim to solve?

With this narrative that the education is expendable in our city and we'll always fight for the future leaders of our city, our young people. It is our responsibility just as much as this Mayor's

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Administration to provide an accessible and equitable  
education to all our young people by preventing these  
cuts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Jeremy.

AMBREEN QURESHI: Thank you Chair Brannan and the  
City Council for your steadfast support of vital  
arts, culture and arts education across New York  
City. My name is Ambreen Qureshi, I am the Executive  
Director of EVC, the Educational Video Center. EVC's  
media arts educational programming and broader  
initiatives help young people heal, grow and thrive  
as learners, leaders and artists build capacity of  
teachers and public schools to create transformative  
learning environments and use original media to  
disrupt systems and narratives harming BIPOC youth  
and their communities.

For the last 40 years, EVC has supported positive  
life and career pathways for over 28,000 BIPOC and  
working-class young people. Alumni from our programs  
have gone on to work at the Urban World Film  
Festival, CNN and become members of the International  
Cinematographers Guild. EVC teachers credit bearing  
film and media arts programs to BIPOC and working-  
class young people from historically excluded and

underinvested communities. We work to ensure that New York City's youth remain in and emerge from high school prepared to succeed in college and career pathways during a time when education has been profoundly disrupted. Over the last three years alone, EVC has served almost 1,700 students who have secured over 2500 credits towards high school graduation and earned over a half a million dollars in paid internships.

Youth at EVC thrive. We partner with over 40 schools across New York City each year to help create transformative learning environments across the five boroughs. And 15,000 global viewers see EVC videos and hear the voices of youth speak out on critical issues. Critical issues like income inequality and the youth produced documentary film Gate Keeping the Bills. Divestment in under resourced communities in the 2021 film, Unjust and unequal education in Black and White and relentless gentrification in the recent film, the One's Who Bought Bushwick.

As the economy tightens, budget constraints are already impacting the EVC community and our young people. Some of our partner schools simply do not have any funds for art teachers, yet their students

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already facing barriers to graduation require arts  
credits to graduate. These schools increasingly rely  
on EVC as a provider of credit bearing arts  
programming. Creating ballooning demand for our  
services. The detrimental cuts laid out in the  
November financial plan will throw out these efforts  
to meet the critical needs, which disproportionally  
impact Black and Brown young people for working class  
communities.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of  
Cultural Affairs and more than \$1 billion to New York  
City's public schools jeopardizes not only vital arts  
education of organizations like EVC and all of those  
in this room here with me today but threaten our  
city's creative spirit economic prosperity and most  
importantly our beloved young people. Please  
prioritize investment in the arts education in New  
York City's future. Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Rabbi Margo Robinson, Caitlyn Passaretti,  
Chai Jindasurat-Yasui, Farias Avokeeti(SP?), Janelle  
Farris, and Tatiana Arguelo(SP?). [01:22:53]-  
[01:23:13].

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UNIDENTIFIED: You can begin.

3 CHAI JINDASURAT-YASUI: Hi, good evening. My  
4 name is Chai Jindasurat-Yasui and I am Vice President  
5 of Policy at Nonprofit New York. Nonprofit New York  
6 is a membership organization representing 1,100  
7 nonprofit organizations across New York City. We  
8 champion nonprofits through capacity building and  
9 advocacy to cultivate a unified, just and powerful  
10 sector. I would first like to ask the city why 15?  
11 And why are we not being consulted and informed about  
12 where programming and services will be cut?

13 Based on our initial analysis of the November  
14 Plan, crucial programming and services provided by  
15 nonprofit organizations will bear a disproportionate  
16 brunt of immediate budget cuts this fiscal year.  
17 From language access to after school programs, to our  
18 arts and cultural institutions. The additional five  
19 percent plan cuts in January would be detrimental to  
20 the continued running of these community programs.

21 Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect  
22 of daily life, from public education, health and  
23 human services, cultural enrichment to language  
24 access. That's why nonprofit New York has joined  
25

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3 over 250 organizations in the Y15 Campaign. To ask  
4 for transparency and inclusion in the city's budget.

5 We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit  
6 sector and work towards creative solutions, not  
7 hinder us further. The city cannot withstand a 15  
8 percent cut to its budget and any additional cuts to  
9 the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public  
10 safety, health and cleanliness of New York City.

11 Thank you.

12 CAITLYN PASSARETTI: Good evening. Thank you for  
13 the opportunity to testify. My name is Caitlyn  
14 Passaretti and I'm a Policy Associate at the Citizens  
15 Committee for Children of New York. I want to thank  
16 the members of City Council for joining advocates  
17 across the city and calling on the Administration to  
18 reverse the devastating cuts proposed in the November  
19 Budget modification.

20 Critical programs for children, families and  
21 communities are facing budget reductions of historic  
22 magnitude in this budget adjustment. The early care  
23 and education system is facing a \$25 million cut to  
24 staffing this year and a \$120 million cut in seat  
25 reductions in outyears. This could lead to 10,000  
seats being lost from the system. The proposed cuts



threaten to strip families of affordable and  
dependable care, worsening socioeconomic disparities,  
while impeding children's educational and  
developmental prospects. Compass Afterschool is also  
facing a \$1.5 million cut this year and \$6.9 million  
in outyears resulting in 3,500 seats lost.

Programs like Compass are vital lifelines for  
countless young people offering crucial support,  
mentorship, educational opportunities and safe spaces  
for personal growth and development. Summer school,  
libraries, parks, community schools and services for  
justice involved youth are also facing devastating  
losses. These cuts are in addition to deep cuts in  
last years budget as well as an approximately \$1  
billion in federal COVID-19 relief funds that have  
been used to support critical programs such as 3K,  
Preschool Special Education, Summer Rising, Community  
Schools and more.

Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of  
seeing cuts to each of these programs, cuts that on  
top of the cuts laid out in the November Plan. On  
top of all this, the sweeping destructive reductions,  
the Administration has indicated its intent to make  
even deeper cuts in the prelim and executive budget.

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3 These cuts are indefensible. The scope and depth of  
4 the harm they will do to children, families, and  
5 communities is impossible to overstate and even  
6 articulate.

7 By making these cuts now, our city is depriving  
8 tens of thousands of children's and families of the  
9 essential supports they need to survive and thrive  
10 and proposing a darker future for our city. We call  
11 on the city administration to reverse cuts to child  
12 and family services proposed in the November budget  
13 modification and instead, invest in the supports that  
14 help children and families thrive. Thank you.

15 MONAE PRIOLENAU: Good evening everyone. My name  
16 is Monae Priolenau, Chief of Staff at Brooklyn  
17 Community Services presenting testimony on behalf of  
18 Janelle Farris, Executive Director who had to leave  
19 due to an urgent matter. Thank you to Chair Brannan  
20 and Member Faris for having us here today.

21 Brooklyn Community Services is a nonprofit  
22 organization that has provided social and human  
23 service for more than 155 years. We serve young  
24 people, families, immigrants, people who are  
25 unhoused, people living with developmental

disabilities and others who are living with severe  
mental illness.

Unfortunately, our ability to provide much-needed  
services is at risk because of the draconian budget  
cut being proposed this year at a time when demand  
for human service is growing. BCS has more than 50  
programs across 30 sites in Brooklyn. We partner  
with our program participants in order to support  
their personal goals and that growth leads to a  
stronger NYC.

The services provided by BCS and over 7,000 other  
New York City human service organizations are  
critical to the success of the city and the people  
that we serve. The wellbeing of New York City  
residents is a reflection of its strengths. We all  
have a shared vision of a greater New York City and  
yet the budget cut as proposed will severely weaken  
the societal foundation of support and promise that  
make this city great.

Programs and services provided by nonprofit  
organizations have already been reduced as a result  
of the cuts announced in November. The proposed  
additional five percent cut in January will disrupt  
services in the lives of the people who rely on them.

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Organizations like BCS touch every aspect of daily  
life with positive impacts. Areas including  
education, physical and mental wellbeing, youth  
development, housing, language access and workforce  
development. That why BCS stands with more than 225  
organizations in the Y15 Campaign to ask for  
transparency and inclusion in the city's budget  
process.

As we consider slashing budgets and services, we  
are doing so in a business environment that already  
challenges nonprofits to operate under contracts that  
do not fully cover costs with a slow, restrictive and  
inefficient bureaucracy that notoriously generates  
late payments, frequently years late.

For example, at BCS, one of the many things we do  
is provide emergency services. For the influx of  
asylum seekers, COVID, monkey pox, Hurricane Ida, we  
are on the frontlines of support and each time the  
city raised the alarm and yet well over a year after  
housing multiple families who suffered from housing  
loss due to the hurricane, we have yet to be paid.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Uhm, you have to wrap. I know  
I see you have two more paragraphs so if you would

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like to end your testimony, if you would like to say  
your final line, that would be appreciated. Thanks.

MONAE PRIOLENAU: Chair Brannan and Finance  
Committee Members, I thank you for your time and I  
implore you to fight for the City of New York by  
maintaining a strong human service sector. Thank you  
for this opportunity to provide testimony.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you so much for all your  
testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Natalia Aristizabal, Nicolas Lombardo, Jane  
Shang, Juan Carlos Salinas, Erin Orr and Tamia  
Santana. [01:30:48]-[01:31:22] Thank you. You may  
begin when you're ready.

ERIN ORR: Thank you for hanging in there and  
giving us time to speak. I'm here to support this It  
Starts For the Arts Coalition calling on our city to  
prioritize funding for arts in New York City schools  
and communities. My name is Erin Orr and I'm the  
Teaching Artist for Arts Connection. I work in many  
schools but I'm here today to give you a detailed  
picture of my experience with PS130K in Kensington  
Brooklyn.

Through arts connection and in collaboration with the PS 130 community, I've designed and taught a sequential puppetry curriculum for over 20 years. Until this year, our puppetry program ran all the way from Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade offering students at this school a unique opportunity to develop deep knowledge, skills and confidence within this art form. This year, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade residencies were cut, causing disappointment and loss of employment for the teaching artists who teach the upper school puppetry curriculum.

Through our sustained partnership, our students discover new ways to express their ideas and experience the job of working together toward a shared vision. Teaching artists learn about their own art form from seeing how these young people take it and make it their own. Class and teachers discover how the children in their classes work and think like artists and are able to make connections in other areas of instruction and the entire community including families come together to celebrate the voices, ideas, and creations of children.

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3 So much can be accomplished through sustained  
4 partnership between schools and arts partners but  
5 stable funding is required. The cuts proposed would  
6 make the sort of deep work that arts connection and  
7 PS 130 have been able to do unsustainable in the  
8 future and completely inaccessible to schools that  
9 would like to develop this sort of program. Programs  
10 like ours that foster student engagement and  
11 community rejuvenation should be available to all New  
12 York City public schools. Please prioritize  
13 investment in arts education and in New York City's  
14 future because success starts with the arts.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

16 NATALIA ARISTIZABAL: Thank you so much. My name  
17 is Natalia Aristizabal and I am the Deputy Director  
18 of Make the Road New York. I'm here to discuss how  
19 the Mayor's steep budget cuts will have a devastating  
20 impact on the thousands of working class and  
21 immigrant New Yorkers who we serve by forcing our  
22 city to lower or reduce city funded legal health and  
23 adult education youth services.

24 Our community depends on these services to keep  
25 our families together, to learn English, to access  
health benefits and more. Short, sided cuts will

1 impact them for years to come. First, our legal  
2 service programs are at risk of substantial cuts for  
3 New Yorkers. We have seen how the Rapid Response  
4 Legal Collaborative and partnership with NYLAG and a  
5 local who testified earlier, fills the critical gap  
6 of immigration services, focusing on individuals who  
7 literally are on the verge of deportation.  
8

9 We are a key referral place for everyone who is  
10 at the asylum navigation center. We are getting  
11 cases all the time while the Mayor is trying to cut  
12 this very vital services. Cutting legal services  
13 will leave people high and dry in the middle of their  
14 cases and it does irreversible harm. Like I said, a  
15 lot of them could be facing deportation.

16 Further cuts to DCWP's budget will weaken  
17 enforcement and key workers. Social workers and  
18 consumer protections like pay sick base. Second,  
19 [INAUDIBLE 01:35:07] and families deserve to have  
20 supportive and well-funded quality schools. Slashing  
21 the Education budget by \$1 billion over the next two  
22 years will be deeply harmful. It will be cutting \$18  
23 million from community schools which provide wrap  
24 around services to ensure all students have the  
25 support they need and their families and we know from



our Bushwick campus in Bushwick, the transformative impact that this model has and the harm that it will create in our communities all these cuts. We're also facing cuts from 3K, social workers, restorative justice, student access centers, and more due to the expiring federal funds.

This on top of the city's cuts that are reverting to the pre-pandemic is going to have a huge impact on mental health for everyone. And additionally right now while the New York Police Department budget cut stays the same and 135 safety agents will be hired. How are our newer New Yorkers are going to be served the right way inside of the schools?

The third is adult education, we need to make sure that we are providing English classes to new New Yorkers and to everyone that's here so that they can help and have better jobs, help their kids in school and continue to have ESL public classes.

And lastly, the cuts to the Department of Health and Mental Services and Health + Hospitals will impact culturally competent health access services including benefit outreach and enrollment and navigation as well as community health worker navigators. We need to make sure that we keep all of

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3 this for all New Yorkers who are currently here and  
4 the new New Yorkers coming.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 JUAN CARLOS SALINAS: Hello Council Members. My  
7 name is Juan Carlos Salinas. I am Director of  
8 Education at Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning and  
9 I'm also here with the Arts Education Roundtable.

10 The first thing I want to do is thank you for  
11 fighting the Mayor's calls to cut from your own City  
12 Council money. We appreciate that you have been  
13 holding the line and have not succumb to that  
14 pressure. It is very much appreciated.

15 I had my speech prepared and I submitted it  
16 online but I don't think I could say anything better  
17 than my peers have already said. What I wanted to  
18 say as the son of a Mexican immigrant woman and a  
19 Mexican American father right on the border to Texas,  
20 Star County Texas, I am able to speak English today  
21 because I couldn't until the age of seven years old  
22 because of arts education. I was able to escape the  
23 third porous county in the nation and attend Yale  
24 University because of arts education. I am able to  
25 stand in front of the New York City Council and give

testimony because of the gifts that arts education  
has given me.

At Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, we have  
these kids. We have the young little Juan Carlos's  
who are the future Council Members, Mayor's,  
Senators, Representatives. These budgets are  
devastating to all of us. But that said, we can work  
our way out of this. The city has faced endless  
challenges before but I know that working together,  
we will accomplish this. But every time I see these  
poor migrant children and mothers selling things on  
the subway, I can't help but cry because that could  
have been me if my great grandparents had not  
migrated just a tad bit sooner, right? But what I'm  
saying is, arts education for us, its free. Every  
student deserves a quality education, arts education  
and I want to thank you guys for again, making it  
possible and to continue to make it possible and  
fight that good fight. And again, please tell the  
Mayor to stop demonizing my people. You know, we are  
here for a chance at a better life and again,  
everything that I've been able to do has been purely  
through the power of arts education. Please don't  
take it from my constituents.

TAMIA SANTANA: Hi, I'm Tamia Santana, the Chief  
Officer of Engagements and Inclusion of Ballet  
Hispanico. That was a hard one to follow but I will  
try.

Uhm, I also submitted testimony so just want to  
talk from the heart. A Native New Yorker, born and  
raised in Brooklyn New York like Ed Koch New York a  
long time ago. The arts raised me. The arts gave me  
everything. It starts with the arts. Uh, we're  
probably all here because someone in a school saw  
something bigger for ourselves than we saw and I just  
ask all of the city to think about that as they go to  
the budget. I appreciate everything that the City  
Council has been doing. I believe in our checks and  
balances and I just want to continue to advocate for  
not only everything that you're doing but everything  
that nonprofits are doing. I heard a lot of people  
talk about partnering with nonprofits. I think now  
is the time. We're facing something that our city  
has never faced before.

Ballet Hispanico's curriculum is now in 45 public  
schools in all five boroughs and we'd like to  
continue to bring access to the arts to as many  
children as possible.

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3 I'll just leave with what I've been researching,  
4 which is the universal declaration of human rights by  
5 the United Nations. Article 27, everyone including  
6 children has the right freely to participate in the  
7 cultural life of its community to enjoy the arts and  
8 to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all so much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Jane Jang we see is on  
12 Zoom. You can unmute and begin when you're ready.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 JANE SHANG: Thank you Council Members for  
15 allowing me to testify today. My name is Jane Shang,  
16 I'm an Advocacy Coordinator from the Korean Community  
17 Services in Metropolitan New York.

18 Founded in 1973, KCS is the oldest and largest  
19 Korean nonprofit organization that serves underserved  
20 communities across the New York City area. to help  
21 maintain the health and wellbeing of underserved AAPI  
22 older adults subject to high rates of limited English  
23 proficiency and poverty, KCS older adult centers have  
24 been provided aging services such as case assistance,  
25 information and referral, educational and

recreational activities, health insurance and family visits, health promotion and meal services.

We currently provide five 50 service units in addition to our meal services with our assistance staff, taking on 15 to 20 cases daily. Despite this overutilization of our services, we have continued to successfully meet each of our clients needs through our dedicated staff. Challenges exist in this process however, due to limited funding which reduces our ability to hire and retain bilingual culturally competent and certified staff and our ability to sustain lives in operational and programmatic costs and response to increased cost of living.

The upcoming 15 percent budget cuts across citywide agencies will exacerbate these challenges and maintaining our programs and critical staffing. And therefore, diminish our capacity to address the different and changing needs of our clients.

Tending to the need for migrants and asylum seekers is undoubtedly important, however, this priority should not be addressed at the expense of the wellbeing of other immigrant community members across the city.

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2 With these concerns in mind, we ask the city to  
3 please take a firm stance against any potential  
4 funding cuts to programs serving underserved  
5 community members. Your support in maintaining  
6 funding for our older adult centers will be critical  
7 to securing healthier lives for older adults in NYC's  
8 most vulnerable community.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 JANE SHANG: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
13 from Rachel Watts, Jacelyn Ramond Wagman, Nancy  
14 Cleaver, Elton Dawtson, Kimberly Olsen, and Paula  
15 Hightman. [01:43:13]- [01:43:38]

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You can begin when you're  
17 ready.

18 RACHEL WATTS: Thank you Chair Brannan for the  
19 opportunity to speak. It's nice to have being  
20 serenaded by music in the background.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: A little musical  
22 accompaniment.

23 RACHEL WATTS: Yes and it's great because I'm  
24 here to speak on behalf of the arts. I'm here with  
25 the It Starts With the Arts Coalition, calling on our

city to prioritize funding for arts in the New York  
City schools. My name is Rachel Watts and I am the  
Executive Director of Arts Connection. Since 1979,  
we have provided programming in all art forms to over  
100 public schools a year and impacted the lives of  
over three million young people, representing all  
five boroughs of this beautiful city.

Young people represent our future and what we do  
now impacts the city's future. Arts Connection  
supports schools and helping young people think  
critically, creatively and as part of a team, much  
needed skills for the leaders of tomorrow.

I've been affiliated with Arts Connection since  
1998 and took on the Executive Director role in  
September 2020. For the last three years, I've seen  
cuts to our funding from the Department of Cultural  
Affairs. The largest of it, which was this year with  
a 66 percent cut that has significantly impacted our  
organizations capacity to sustain programming. Cuts  
to city funding, creating exponentially negative  
impact because it means that nonprofits like Arts  
Connection are limited in their capacity to raise the  
additional private dollars to support programming.  
With orgs and organizations like Arts Connection



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raising additional funds, children and schools would  
not be able to experience arts programming. The last  
New York City Department of Education Arts in the  
Schools report noted that 417 organizations provided  
some sort of arts programing with 71 percent of the  
reporting schools say they worked with at least one  
outside organization. We are a necessary resource to  
schools.

The calendar year, we've had to reduce the size  
of our staff and because of the ongoing budget  
uncertainties, work in schools has been minimal  
impacting the livelihood of artists on our roster.  
Budget cuts of \$17.3 million, the \$1.1 billion to  
schools threaten our students. Please prioritize  
investment in arts education and the New York City's  
future because it starts with the arts. Thank you.

KIMBERLY OLSEN: Hi, my name is Kimberly Olsen  
and I am proud to the Executive Director of the New  
York City Arts and Education Roundtable. Thank you  
Chair Brannan, Council Member Farias and Council  
Member Brewer for your commitment to New Yorkers as  
well as your supportive arts culture and arts  
education.

The Roundtable works with thousands of artists, cultural workers, educators, organizations each year to improve in advance arts education in New York City. I'm testifying as part of the It Starts with the Arts Coalition calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in New York City schools and communities. The creative sector accounts for 13 percent of the city's total economic output. One out of every eight dollars in New York City's economic activity can be traced directly or indirectly to the arts and culture sector. Cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs and New York City Public Schools jeopardize not only the creative economy but the very fabric of our city's prosperity and wellbeing.

To stifle this economic engine is to stifle critical services, exacerbates the volatile employment situation for arts workers still recovering from the pandemic and harms the very heartbeat of our city's economic growth.

Furthermore, the cuts will have immediate and long impact, long-lasting impact on our city's young people. Arts and culture as we've heard today, provides an essential lifeline of support for New Yorkers of all ages. Engaging students in learning,

increasing parent engagement, supporting student  
mental health, improving academic outcomes and  
boosting student attendance, it all starts with the  
arts. Yet, the November Financial Plan has already  
resulted in arts education program delays and  
cancellation. This translates to lost work for  
artists, eliminated arts instruction, a loss of safe,  
constructive out of school spaces for young people  
and lost opportunity for students to build critical  
life skills. These damaging cuts are further  
compounded by delayed city payments and the  
expiration of temporary federal COVID relief funds,  
which has funded considerable arts education over the  
past three years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their  
future. Let us not make New York a place that  
disregards culture as an integral part of our lived  
experiences and our city's economy. Our city's young  
people represent the future, cultural and economic  
vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment  
in arts education and our New York City's future  
because It Starts with the Arts. Thank you so much  
for your time.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you guys very, very  
4 much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
6 from Taina Wagnac, MJ Okma, Megan Ahearn, Gabrielle  
7 Vazquez, Austin Smith, Victoria Davis. [01:48:27]-  
8 [01:48:43]. Thanks you can begin when you're ready.

9 TAINA WAGNAC: Good evening everybody. Thank you  
10 for bearing with us. You may hear some stomach  
11 rumbling, all of our stomachs are at the bottom at  
12 this moment but my name is Taina Wagnac, I am the  
13 Senior Manager of State of Local Policy at the New  
14 York Immigration Coalition. We are an umbrella  
15 policy and advocacy organization that works statewide  
16 with over 200 immigrants serving member organization.  
17 Thank you Chair Brannan and the members of City  
18 Council for convening this hearing and allowing us  
19 the opportunity to testify. We are deeply  
20 disappointed to see that once again, this  
21 Administration has presented New Yorkers with a  
22 budget decision that target and will most negatively  
23 affect Black, Brown, immigrant and LGBTQI  
24 communities.

25 These proposed cuts completely disregard the  
challenges every day New Yorkers face and pit

communities against one another while using scarcity  
as an excuse to instill hatred towards immigrants and  
asylum seekers.

The NYC strongly opposes these proposed cuts and  
we urge the City Council to stand in solidarity with  
their communities to fight back against them. We  
must fully restore funding for 3K and Pre-K programs,  
which are the only free early childhood education and  
care available to many immigrant families. We must  
invest \$10 million in outreach and enrollment through  
the link in immigrant families to early childhood  
education, also known as Life Project, which provides  
hands on one-on-one outreach and enrollment support  
to limited English proficient and digitally  
disconnected families.

We must fully invest in New York Public Schools  
and CUNY, including protecting and expanding  
investment in the six new English Language Learners  
transfer schools outside of Manhattan. We must  
continue to fight back against the Mayor's outrageous  
60-day shelter rule that has been displacing folks  
all throughout the city and doing so by allocating  
adequate funding in the budget to expand the City  
FHEPs voucher program. This Administration has been

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stubbornly in resistance to the comprehensive housing  
solution recently passed by the City Council, which  
is ultimately more cost effective and humane.

We must invest \$5 million in funding to maintain  
the city's Language Access Worker Cooperative which  
connect train professional interpreters to city  
agencies and citywide providers and we must restore  
funding for professional development and technical  
assistance for DYCD funded adult literacy program.

New York City has long prided itself on being a city  
of vibrancy, diversity, and endless opportunities,  
cutting costs without considering the long term  
affect they will have on current New Yorkers as well  
as future of our city's is responsible. At best, we  
look forward to continue to working with the City  
Council and once again, thank you for your time.

MJ OKMA: Hi, good evening. My name is MJ Okma  
with Sage. An organization that has been serving  
LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV  
for over four decades through our network of LGBTQ+  
affirming older adult centers. We also provide  
specialized services for homebound elders, LGBTQ+  
veterans, transgender elders and older New Yorkers  
living with HIV.

Agism and stigma combined with a lifetime of  
compounding discrimination already prevents many  
LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV  
to accessing services. In the face of these  
compounding cuts, we must ask ourselves what  
communities are most likely to fall through the  
cracks and how can fight for an equitable budget?

Just last month, the New York City Council held  
an important oversight hearing on the currently unmet  
needs of New Yorkers aging with HIV who were  
projected to be 70 percent of all New Yorkers living  
with HIV by 2030. A similar hearing about the  
housing and social services needs currently being  
unmet for LGBTQ+ elders was held in June 2022.

The message was very clear out of these hearings.  
LGBTQ+ elders of color, older New Yorkers living with  
HIV and transgender elders have unique and  
compounding needs that are currently being ignored  
due to systemic discrimination and exclusion. The  
needs of these communities cannot withstand a 15  
percent cut to the budget. How can we support these  
populations by slashing NYC Aging's already barebones  
budget? NYC's Aging's budget is less than one half  
of one percent of the city budget as a whole. These

cuts to aging services will cost the city pennies.  
Will save the city pennies while having  
disproportionate impacts in elders who have already  
faced systemic racism and discrimination will fare  
the brunt of these cuts.

Sage is standing with our fellow nonprofits and  
aging service providers demanding transparency and  
inclusion in the city budget. We call on the city to  
partner with the nonprofit sector. Thank you so much  
for holding this really important hearing and  
bringing this conversation to light. We look forward  
to continuing our close partnership with the Council  
to fight for better policy and funding for these  
communities. Thank you.

GABRIELLE VAZQUEZ: Hello everyone. My name is  
Gabby Vazquez. Thank you to the Committee of Finance  
for holding this hearing. I really appreciate your  
time and your support and for the listening. I'm  
here today speaking on behalf of Mural Arts  
Groundswell Mural Arts. A nonprofit organization  
that brings together artists, youth and community  
members to use art as a tool for social change.

Why I feel so empowered by my colleagues and the  
open opportunity to uplift my voice before public



officials, I'm also overcome with anxiety knowing that the mere existence of accessible youth programming needs to be continuously advocated for when it should be so obvious why they're so essential. Over the course of 26 years, Groundwell has fabricated over 600 murals across the New York City landscape and changes are many of you all have seen these beautiful murals fabricated by students, my students, my wonderful students.

We have served thousands of teams throughout programs since the organizations inception in 1996. We have helped teams in numerous ways by providing them a safe space to learn new creative skills, to make friends and to prepare their applications for college and other college and career readiness opportunities that are offered down the line.

Beyond what we do at Groundswell within the context of programming, we also help adorn public spaces across the New York City landscape. So, we in the process insight a lot of conversations on the importance of social and political economic issues that face our communities at large. And we really strive to create these opportunities for young people and with these budget cuts, these opportunities

really don't come easy. The budget cuts completely stifle us. We are scrambling right now to adjust our working plans for programming that we've designed and the November announcement of budget cuts really just left us in a moment where we felt, we began feeling hopeless because we know that the nonprofit sector has been facing these budget cuts for a long time now. This isn't anything new but we recognize that the additional five percent plans, cuts in January will be detrimental to Groundswell as well as just the general running of programs that we offer.

I think that we deserve better for the arts sector, the culture and art sector and our youth deserve much more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

MEGAN AHEARN: Good evening. My name is Meggie Ahearn, I'm the Program Director for NYPIRG. I'm also a former 3K and current 4K parent whose kids made their best friends in city parks who love to go to libraries. And whose daughter is in the Bindlestiffs Circus after school program on every Monday, so that I could do my job. I loved to hear their testimony earlier today.

The Mayor's cuts as we've heard for nearly nine hours today, are the budgetary equivalent of eating the seed corn. These cuts will do long-term harm to the city and are simply not worth an acting cuts to programs that encourage college reenrollment and graduation improvement rates like Can you Reconnect, ASAP and ACE. To cut these programs is not only bad for students but bad for the city's economy. The outsized cuts to community composting programs will increase pollution and it's not like the food waste goes away, it's just being dealt with worse. It will delay positive habit creation and result in job losses.

So, there's more in our testimony that we'll submit but just some solutions. We urge the Council to pull together meetings with our state representatives between the Council, the Mayor, the Comptroller, meeting with the Senate and Assembly to call on the state to step in. The state has \$20 billion in reserves and just as the Governor has recently said, she'll step in to make the Peg cuts to the NYPD whole. The state should step in to make sure critical programs are also made whole. A nudge from the City Council will definitely help.

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3 The Council should also urge the state to enact  
4 the Climate Change Superfund Act which would raise \$3  
5 billion a year to repair climate related damages.  
6 So, you all know that climate change, storms are  
7 getting worse and the cost to repair is on taxpayers  
8 and it should be corporate climate polluters. Thanks  
9 so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all  
11 very much.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Pamela  
13 Pedijohn, Kathleen Kerrigan, Roxanne Delgado, and  
14 Destiny Cologne. [01:58:43]- [01:59:06]. Begin when  
15 you're ready.

16 KATHLEEN KERRIGAN: I guess I'm on, okay. Hi,  
17 good evening. Thank you so much. I'm Kathleen  
18 Kerrigan and I am here on behalf of friends of  
19 Thompkins Square Park. Thank you for your time and  
20 your fortitude.

21 I am testifying that New York City Parks deserve  
22 one percent of New York City's budget. I am  
23 testifying against the proposed budget cuts for New  
24 York City Parks, especially the proposed 1,400 plus  
25 maintenance jobs.

Tompkins Square is our town square in the east village. It's ten and a half acres and it's equivalent in size to about ten football fields. Currently the park lacks a full-time gardener and the park is maintained by a small staff supervised by the Parks Department. Our park is our urban forest and it is an essential outdoor space that demands year around care and maintenance, especially during – especially because of our increased severe weather events.

In October of 2022, a small group of neighbors joined with the support of New York City Parks and the Partnership for Parks to restore and preserve the health, the beauty and the safety of the park. Over the past year, our volunteers have dedicated Saturday mornings to sweeping under benches, collecting trash, weeding, adding soil, adding compost and planting. We have hosted about 20 events that have been attended by about 200 volunteers. We've spent the past year restoring the southwest quadrant of the park that was devastated by Hurricane Isaiah in 2020. And we learned first-hand the tremendous dedication and physical labor that our Parks staff does to maintain Tompkins Square.

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2 Our neighbors are volunteers, visitors to the  
3 park embrace our work and I ask you to refuse these  
4 budget cuts. Do not turn Thompkins Square into the  
5 town dump and an all you can buffet for the rats.  
6 So, thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
9 from Malary Mua, Julie Forenia(SP?), Gabriella Perez,  
10 Beth Slepian(SP?), and Debra Freeman. [02:01:46]-  
11 [02:02:15]. You can begin when you are ready.

12 DEBRA FREEMAN: Okay. Thank you for your time.  
13 My name is Deborah Freeman, I Co-Chair the Education  
14 Working Group for Four Freedoms Democratic Club. An  
15 active democratic club representing the 76<sup>th</sup> Assembly  
16 District. I'm here to testify on behalf of FFDC to  
17 oppose the draconian budget cuts to the New York City  
18 public schools in the November Plan.

19 We are deeply concerned that the impact of the  
20 drastic \$547 million cut to New York City Public  
21 Schools and \$600 million next year will be  
22 devastating for students, schools and families.  
23 Public schools provide essential stabilizing services  
24 to the children of New York that are vital to the  
25 future of New York City.

Our schools need more funding, not less as they continue to struggle with learning loss and mental health emergency challenges, chronic absenteeism due to the pandemic. At this time of overwhelming need for the public schools, our schools need funding to help the students recover from the pandemic, prepare for success in college and careers. It's not the time for budget cuts to education.

Our concerns are increased since an addition to the cuts in the November Plan, there's a slue of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the past few years, as you've heard, our public schools have been using around \$1 billion annually to provide temporary relief for education services that will continue to be important long after the pandemic, including arts education programs to support mental health and social emotional development. Social workers, nurses, shelter coordinators, literacy initiatives and more. With this federal funding expiring in June, we really need elected officials to act now because if not, if that doesn't happen, there's a risk that these programs will be cut on top of the other programs. So, we need City Council leadership to do everything

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possible now to prevent these cuts to education  
services, including arts education programs.

As the Speaker said, nothing is more important to  
protect than students in our schools. So, prioritize  
investment of education to help New York City  
students, the future of our city. Thank you for the  
opportunity to testify on behalf of FFDC on this  
important issue and thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we have Marianne  
Pizzitola, Sue Ellen Dodell and Susie, I can't make  
out the last name. With NYC Retirees.org.  
[02:04:52]- [02:05:20].

MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: Can we go? Okay. Good  
evening Councilman Brannan and staff. This is  
Marianne Pizzitola, I am from the New York City  
Organization of Public Service Retirees.

Ladies and gentleman of the New York City  
Council, thank you for this opportunity to address  
this matter of upmost importance of the wellbeing of  
our municipal retirees. I stand before you today as  
a concerned citizen and advocate of the rights of  
those who have dedicated their lives to public  
service to this city. Let me begin by drawing your



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attention to the recent events of Cortland County New  
York with an attempt to strip away Medicare benefits  
of county retirees just as is being done here was met  
with swift and resolute opposition. Recognizing the  
injustice of such a move, the Cortland County  
legislature promptly held an emergency session two  
weeks ago and reversed its decision. This should  
serve as a stark reminder that threatening the lives  
of retirees is not only morally wrong but is  
politically unsustainable.

In Delaware, the legislature rolled back their  
move to Medicare Advantage to stave off further  
litigation as they realized the plan was inferior to  
traditional Medicare. In Ithica New York, the county  
school board rolled back forcing their retirees into  
Medicare Advantage and gave their retirees the  
ability to go back to traditional Medicare.

Additionally, two unions in Connecticut were  
assisted by my organization and one of the first  
unions we successfully helped push back their OMB and  
their OLR doing the same thing to them. We are  
helping retirees around the country reverse decisions  
forcing them into Medicare Disadvantage plans. This  
should serve as a clear indication that there's a

legitimate concern that needs your urgent attention  
as we have been saying this for almost three years  
now. We have been made aware that our former unions  
have been accused of lying about this issue by  
asserting that our current benefits are part of  
collective bargaining. Please ask them for a copy of  
their signed contracts and you will notice that there  
is nothing in them about negotiating our benefits.  
This evidence disproving the unions claims has been  
well established.

It's disheartening for us to witness the Council  
predominantly comprised of democrats not  
acknowledging the importance of traditional Medicare.  
A political party that claims to champion Medicare  
should be at the forefront of protecting Medicare  
benefits and the retired public servants, elders,  
disabled including 911 responders. The New York City  
Organization of Public Service Retirees has  
demonstrated its commitment to this cause by  
prevailing seven to zero in court against the city's  
attempts to strip retirees of their Medicare  
benefits. And this should serve as another clear  
indication that this is a legitimate concern that  
needs your urgent attention. It's disconcerting to

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see this legislative body sit idly by while the Mayor  
and the Unions propagate the unfounded claim that the  
city will save \$600 million annually by slashing  
Medicare benefits. And let me make this clear, this  
is not true.

The cost of providing Medicare benefits for  
municipal retirees amounts to about \$450 million a  
year and further any "savings" from putting retirees  
into an inferior Medicare plan won't go into the city  
budget anyway but instead will go into a health  
stabilization fund. A fund with no oversight by the  
Council or the Comptroller and has been misused for  
years. I'm almost finished.

How the Mayor can claim that \$600 million when at  
most the savings would be less than \$450 million,  
which is less than six tenths of one percent of the  
budget and the purported dollar savings risk the very  
lives of those people who serve this city. At what  
point is the Speaker mouthing off Hashtag People Over  
Everything goes out the window?

Our Medicare funding is codified in New York City  
Statute. The math doesn't add up and the citizens of  
New York deserve a more transparent and honest  
explanation. The urgency of this matter cannot be

overstated. The failure to protect the Medicare benefits of retirees not only jeopardizes their life but undermines the integrity of this Council as a legislative body. Furthermore it exacerbates the existing challenge of recruiting and retaining talented workers so needed by our city agencies. The city that does not privatize the welfare of its workforce is destined to be served inadequately by mediocre workers and that's if the city can even attract them.

In conclusion, I implore you to ask swiftly and decisively and learn the mistakes of Cortland, Ithaca, Delaware and Stanford and acknowledge the victories of the New York City Organization of Public Service Retirees and fulfill the promises made by this city and a political party that claims to care about Medicare. The time for your action is now.

I also note that our senior care is also a nonprofit and it is also union and the Etna plan that the Mayor wishes to force us in is neither one of those. Thank you.

LAURA GENOVESE: Good evening. My name is Laura Genovese. I am a New York City retiree. I was a school Secretary and have done 21 years of city

1 service. I join so many in outrage of the brutal  
2 budget cuts this Administration thinks it could foist  
3 on workers and the vulnerable. Just hearing the  
4 number of billionaires that reside in New York should  
5 make it clear that something is fundamentally wrong  
6 with the choices that this Administration believe it  
7 can make off our backs to save money.  
8

9 With the budget the Administration has now left  
10 incredibly at your doorstep. I urge City Council  
11 Members to fight to help us New York City retirees  
12 preserve our vetted city healthcare plans. Benefits  
13 we already paid for and depend on. Some of us are in  
14 our 90's, even older. Many are first responders and  
15 have gotten disabled. As many City Council members  
16 have come to know, there's a great deal wrong with  
17 how this administration and the MOC heads have felt  
18 that they could violate, handle and choose healthcare  
19 for us.

20 There's too much to say about this but I will  
21 conclude the pro-profit Etna Medicare Advantage Plan  
22 which excuse me, the Mayor and MOC heads have wanted  
23 retirees to roll into would cost many of our lives.  
24 In addition, privatizing Medicare is draining our  
25 essential Medicare safety net. Insurance companies

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have been getting increasingly powerful, obscenely  
overcharging and causing increasing numbers of  
doctors to leave the profession. This is not only a  
gold rush for the Medicare Advantage industry, but  
alarmingly changing the face of medicine.

As we fight these hard cuts, please also fight to  
preserve the retirees current city Medigap. As we  
enter the new year, please co-sponsor our bill and  
conduct an oversight investigation hearing into the  
Healthcare Insurance Stabilization Fund that is being  
used to justify the diminishment of our benefits.  
Thank you.

SUE ELLEN DODELL: Good evening Chair Brannan.  
My name is Sue Ellen Dodell and I worked for the city  
for 44 years as an Attorney and Administrative Law  
Judge. As a city retiree, I volunteer now to ensure  
that the city keeps its promises on healthcare. I'm  
here today to make sure that the Council continues to  
comply with its obligations under Administrative Code  
Section 12-126, which for more than 50 years has  
required the city to provide retirees with a choice  
of traditional Medicare with a Medigap plan.

Please support Intro. 1099, which provides that  
the city must offer at least one Medigap plan to its

retirees and that nothing in the legislation will interfere with the city unions ability to collectively bargain for their employee members. As you know, the Mayor and the MLC want to put retirees into this inferior so-called Medicare Advantage Plan because of the Ponse Scheme.

In 2014, the MLC took money from the city's Health Stabilization Fund and used it to pay for teacher raises and hasn't paid it back. If we're forced into the so-called Medicare Advantage Plan, we will lose access to our doctors, hospitals and treatments. This literally is a matter of life and death. New York City retirees have been fighting for two years in the courts to keep our earned Medicare benefits from being stripped away and we've had seven court decisions in our favor but litigation is expensive and retirees live on fixed incomes. We've been financing our lawsuits ourselves with small contributions. And the city keeps appealing our wins.

Some Council Members are telling us to wait until the lawsuits conclude but lawsuits can drag on for years. That's why we need Intro. 1099 to protect us now. Please don't stand idly by and refuse to help

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3 retirees who dedicated our lives to the city. Other  
4 states and cities are watching you and a refusal to  
5 help us will mean the end of traditional Medicare.  
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are you at liberty to tell  
8 us where the lawsuit stands in the legal process?

9 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: We have three different  
10 court cases. The Mayor has lost at every single  
11 level of appeal. So, right now our first case,  
12 they've appealed all the way up to the New York State  
13 Court of Appeals. We are still in the briefing  
14 schedule with that. We're not yet ready — they have  
15 not given us a court date. So, I won't expect to see  
16 any court dates until probably February, March.

17 The second case, we won the injunction, the city  
18 appeal — went to appeal that, the judge went to — we  
19 classified that a class action. The Judge approved  
20 it as a class action, the city just, that case, just  
21 appealed that now to the first department. The third  
22 case is our nuclear option case, where the Mayor  
23 eliminated all of our healthcare choices and he right  
24 now, we're going to appeal that. We are in the first  
25 department there too.



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2 So, I have one case in the New York State Court  
3 of Appeals and two cases in uh the first department  
4 and that second case is also in the Supreme Court.  
5 So, literally, I am in four courts.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh, okay thank you.

7 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: Just so you understand. I  
8 mean financing litigation for a quarter of a million  
9 people sometimes at our peak point runs about almost  
10 \$200,000, \$250,000 a month. And that is literally by  
11 grassroots donations and me funding this, like doing  
12 fundraisers like Jerry Lewis on a monthly basis in  
13 order to finance this and the Mayor appeals every  
14 single loss.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thanks for your  
16 patience waiting around today. I appreciate you.

17 MARIANNE PIZZITOLA: You're welcome. I wanted to  
18 hear and I did that without a microphone.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Lena Fry,  
20 Ruth Grebner(SP?), Jazelle Adeno, Austin Arasena(SP?)  
21 and Josh Kellermann. [02:16:11]- [02:16:29]

22 LENA FRY: I have no idea how to use this  
23 microphone. Uhm, hello, oh yes, okay. Hi, good  
24 evening Chair Brannan uhm and thank you for this  
25 opportunity to speak. My name is Lena Fry and I am

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proud to be speaking to you today as a member of the  
Grow NYC Workers Collective represented by the Retail  
Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU.

I worked as a compost coordinator at Grow NYC for  
over four years but I've been dropping off my food  
scraps for years before that. I feel so much pride  
because while the work that we do is literally dirty,  
the services that we provide to New Yorkers make the  
city a cleaner, healthier and more resilient place to  
live and work.

The Mayor's Plan to defund the community compost  
program is unacceptable and it violates the city's  
contract with Grow NYC and the other NYC compost  
project organizations. What's more, this program  
employs 115 people including 53 of us who are union  
workers.

By this time next week we will all be unemployed.  
Just in time for the holidays. This is finals week  
at City College and I should be at home writing my  
final papers and preparing for presentations, but  
instead I am here testifying for the city to let me  
and my co-workers keep our jobs. To let us keep  
providing vital services to communities across the  
five boroughs. I will not sit back and let my co-

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3 workers and I lose our jobs without a fight and I'm  
4 asking the City Council to do the same. These cuts  
5 are a ploy to pit us against each other and to claim  
6 that we must chose between aiding asylum seekers and  
7 providing basic services to our city but they are not  
8 mutually exclusive.

9 Community Compost is not expansive. It is a drop  
10 in the bucket of the city's budget and yet it has  
11 proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.  
12 The Council must oppose the Mayor's cuts to this  
13 essential program in order to save Union jobs and  
14 livelihoods.

15 Funding for community compost must be fully  
16 restored and mandated through legislation, to ensure  
17 it can thrive beyond the opaque pendulum swing that  
18 is the city budget contract process that we fight for  
19 year after year. Thank you for sticking around.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Ruth, right?

21 LENA FRY: I'm Lena.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Oh Lena.

23 LENA FRY: No worries.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I just want to make sure  
25 just for the record. So, it's 115 total workers.

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2 LENA FRY: Across nine different organizations,  
3 so that's a number of different nonprofits.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 53 workers who are RWDSU?

5 LENA FRY: Union workers, yes. There's a couple  
6 of Grow NYC managers who are not in our union but  
7 they will also be, I believe, losing their jobs.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, so when they say no  
9 layoffs, they?

10 LENA FRY: They're lying or they mean no layoffs  
11 through I guess the Department of Sanitations Union  
12 but our union is affected.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Got it. Ruth, go ahead.  
14 Thank you Lena.

15 RUTH GREBNER: Hi, good evening Chair Brannan and  
16 all the staff here. Thank you for all your support  
17 today keeping this hearing going. My name is Ruth  
18 Grebner(SP?). I'm a proud member of the Grow NYC  
19 Workers Collective represented by RWDSU.

20 I became a master composter in 2012 through the  
21 New York City Compost Project at Queens Botanical  
22 Garden. Grow NYC hired me back in October 2021 as a  
23 compost coordinator. It's truly my dream job.  
24 Talking to New Yorkers about all things compost.  
25 People want to do something to fight climate change

and bringing food scraps to a drop off where they can connect with a human face, ask questions, share ideas, it give them a sense of belonging and purpose.

Unfortunately, as a result of the PEGs budget cuts, we've all received layoff notices and had to inform our participants that the last day of drop-offs is this next weekend. Uhm, if these community compost - sorry. If the community drop offs seize operations, thousands of pounds of food scraps will end up back in the garbage. I say that because not everyone can use a smart bin or they don't have one near them and not every building is using curbside composting, even in the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn that have their program. They don't have it available. Their buildings aren't doing it and so, the habits that people have developed of saving their scraps until that weekly trip to the market is going to fade away leading to increased food scraps in trash bags which will lead to an increase in rats.

All of the work that community compost programs have achieved will be lost to the disruption.

My co-workers at Grow NYC and all the workers whose jobs are on the line are passionate about this work and the future of New York City. We've taken

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jobs with a purpose to help the environment. Ending  
the livelihood of people who eagerly and efficiently  
work in all kinds of weather to make sure food scraps  
are collected, delivered and processed in order to  
help our city and our planet is such a heavy blow and  
it has ripple effects for the community gardens and  
education programs and more.

We're here to fight for our jobs and for a  
sustainable New York City and we ask that you do the  
same. Thank you for listening.

AUSTIN ARASENA: Good evening Chair Brannan,  
Council. My name is Austin Arasena(SP?). I work for  
Grow NYC as a compost driver and coordinator. Also  
part of RWDSU.

I've been a compost coordinator and driver here  
for about two years now and I've seen first hand how  
our work has benefited communities all across the  
city. My co-workers and I are the ones you see every  
week at food scrap drop off sites no matter what the  
weather is rain, shine and snow. We're there to  
answer questions from the public about all manners of  
compost, recycling and waste diversion issues. We're  
the ones alongside our wonderful partners at the New  
York City Compost Project that process these food

scraps since the finished compost for parks, gardens  
and community spaces. We also outreach to community  
groups and local businesses for waste diversion  
education. Community composting was fully funded by  
the city and the mayor in the last budget and  
defunding this program is a violation of the contract  
that the city has with Grow NYC and other New York  
City compost project programs. It's a blatant  
violation of the public's trust and the open budgeting  
process which is supposed to set the fiscal  
priorities for the city.

Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment  
and demolishing years of progress made in building  
the infrastructure and necessary public awareness  
needed to divert food waste from mainstream waste and  
rebuild New York City soil in the process. It's not  
an expensive program, it's about 0.3 percent of the  
city's Sanitation budget but it does a lot of good  
for the city.

Again, these budget means the loss of 115 green  
jobs and 53 union jobs and the loss of essential  
education, outreach, and waste diversion services to  
neighborhoods our workers provide to. This includes  
underserved communities by the city and other

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3 government agencies such as the Bronx. The defunding  
4 comes just in time for the holiday season putting an  
5 unjust burden on New Yorkers that have done nothing  
6 but provide for the city. It's an injustice to the  
7 communities we serve and to the union workers who  
8 serve them.

9 Eliminating new city compost project and Grow  
10 NYC's compost funding is anti-sustainability, anti-  
11 environment, anti-union, and anti-New York. Thank  
12 you for your time.

13 JAZELLE ADENO: Good evening Chair Brannan and  
14 members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this  
15 opportunity to speak. My name is Jazelle Adeno(SP?)  
16 and I am a proud member of the Grow NYC Workers  
17 Collective represented by RWDSC. I have worked as a  
18 compost coordinator for Grow NYC for more than a year  
19 now and together with our partners at the New York  
20 City Compost Project. We serve millions of New  
21 Yorkers throughout the five boroughs providing food  
22 scrap collections, organics processing, compost  
23 outreach, education and access and finished composts.  
24 The Mayor's budget cuts will eliminate 115 jobs  
25 across nine organizations including 53 union jobs.



We were informed we would lose our jobs on December  
17<sup>th</sup>; two weeks earlier than we were led to believe.

As you know, we are being fired right before the  
holidays. This is not right. This is not fair. Our  
program is not expensive. The elimination of our  
program has brought feelings of devastation,  
desperation and anxiety. I feel stressed, anxious,  
and ultimately devastated at the thought of knowing  
that I am now about to be unemployed in just a couple  
of days. Days before the holidays, which are meant  
to bring joy to us.

Not only do my co-workers and I feel this way but  
our participants who we get to serve every week feel  
this way too. Just the other day I was having a  
conversation with one of our participants at our  
Ridgewood site in Queens who was expressing how  
extremely upset she is because our program will no  
longer serve her and her community.

As a frequent participant, she has seen first  
hand the impact that our food scrap drop off sites  
does to her community by beautifying it. As we know,  
rats are a huge issue in all of New York City, not  
just certain neighborhoods. Our participant stated  
that after she started separating her food scraps

1 from her regular trash and dropping it off at our  
2 site, she saw the impact that it had on her block.  
3 There were less rats that would chew through her  
4 garbage bags, meaning there was less of a mess in our  
5 city streets. I am positive that with the cut of our  
6 program, the rat population will only get worse. We  
7 need more of these sites, not less.

9 She realized it takes more than one person to  
10 make a neighborhood clean. While at our site, she  
11 would witness the constant flow of weekly  
12 participants doing the same act that she was doing  
13 each week. She would also be educated and with  
14 experiencing the fruit of her labor, that is our  
15 finished nutrient filled compost soil that we would  
16 give away. Her heavy grief at the news of our  
17 closure brought her to be grateful for all the hard  
18 work that we do but she also expressed that she will  
19 miss having weekly interactions with the coordinators  
20 at the Ridgewood site.

21 Social interactions that she won't have if she  
22 drops off at a city smart bin or the brown curbside  
23 composting bins. Dropping off at our sites is easy  
24 and accessible to all New Yorkers. It does not  
25 require an app on a smart phone unlike the city smart

bins. Our service does not exclude our elderly participants who do not have a smart phone to open and see the smart bin. And yes, this is a concern that has been brought to us by many of our participants who do not know how to operate a smart phone or who just don't simply own one.

Mass budget cuts hurt not only those directly impacted but it impacts all of New York City. We need an actual solution that guarantees the best for our city. The Mayor needs to find the money to fund community compost, so we can keep our jobs, keep serving our communities, and keep moving forward to beautify our city. Thank you for your time and consideration.

JOSH KELLERMANN: Thank you Chair Brannan. My name is Josh Kellermann, I'm the Director of Public Policy at the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. We represent the workers at Grow NYC who are an incredible group of individuals that run New York City's Farmers Markets and also operate the city's community composting program.

These workers are the face of our farmers markets and our composting programs. Over 115 of these workers will lose their jobs on the 17<sup>th</sup> if the

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Mayor's cuts are allowed to go through as planned.

This is a personal tragedy for these workers coming right before the holidays and this is a tragedy for the City of New York that will lose the entirety of it's community composting program at the end of this year. I implore the members of City Council, please do not let these cuts happen. Find the money to keep this essential service operating and to keep these workers employed during the holiday season.

In addition, regardless of what happens in the short run, I implore City Council to fund the community composting program in full for the next fiscal year and to pass a bill officially establishing this program in law, ensuring its existence long into the future. But for now, there is still time to save this program and these workers jobs. Let me be clear, the city's curbside program is not a substitute for community composting. We fully support curbside composting and want to see it expand but it is not a universal program. It doesn't exist in the Bronx or Staten Island. When will it start? Sometime in the future.

What fills this gap now? The community composting program. And there are several other

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service gaps that our members have referenced that  
the curbside program does not serve. The outreach  
and education role of community composting is  
something that cannot replicated by traditional  
Department of Sanitation programming and as I  
mentioned before, the community composting program is  
the face of composting in this city. Their present  
throughout the city to educate community members  
about proper composting and its benefits.

Please don't cut the community composting  
programs. It is an essential service and it is cruel  
to cut these workers jobs right before the holidays.  
Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Divid  
Durant(SP?), David Moss, Jessie Spelman, Edward  
Fransis Miller, Omarie McCleary, and Mindy Aloff.  
[02:29:47]- [02:29:52] Uh, Divid or Divid, D-i-v-i-  
d. [02:29:55]- [02:30:15] Thank you. You may begin.

EDWARD MILLER: Thank you Chair Brannan and the  
City Council for your support of arts, culture and  
arts education across New York City. I'm here to  
support that It Starts with the Arts Coalition,

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calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in  
New York City schools and communities.

My name is Ed Miller and I'm a Program Manager at  
Arts Connection and reside in Astoria Queens. Arts  
Connections program support literacy, communication,  
creativity, collaboration and critical thinking and  
create socially just learning environments. Budget  
cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural  
Affairs and more than \$1 billion to New York City  
public schools threaten our city's creative spirit,  
economic prosperity and our students. These budget  
cuts have greatly affected Arts Connection school  
partnerships. Many of the grants that we applied for  
were not funded. Principals with whom I work, can  
thus not afford arts programming. There are long-  
term consequences to these cuts. Schools will end up  
with shifting priorities and arts partnerships with  
schools, which we have cultivated over years and  
sometimes decades will disappear.

Arts Connection was born from a desperate need  
for arts education in public schools in the 1970's.  
Cuts to the agencies that we work with spell disaster  
for arts education and the cultural community that is  
part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts

laid out in the November Financial plan are compounded by the expiration of federal COVID-19 relief funds, which had funded arts programs supporting students academic social and emotional recovery. Considering the trauma of the pandemic lockdown as well as the influx of newly arrived immigrants, New York City young people today have a desperate need for arts programming, which has proven to help kill trauma. Through city fund programs which as CASA, Arts for ELLs and SWD, Broadway Junior and Summer Rising, Arts Connection has been able to provide these vital programs, programs that foster student engagement, mental health and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first. Our city's young people represent the future, culture and economic vitality of our city, please prioritize investment in the arts education and our most vulnerable New Yorkers and children because the city's health and success Starts with the Arts. Thank you.

DAVID MOSS: Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is David Moss, I am speaking on behalf of the Legal Defense Fund. We call on the Council to ensure adequate funding for services that

improve the wellbeing of our communities and put an  
end to the pattern of exceptionalism that protects  
the NYPD budget at the expense of other crucial  
public resources.

Aggressive policing does not make our communities  
safer. Since the Mayor took office and reinstated  
police initiatives like Neighborhood Safety teams,  
the NYPD is making more arrests, mostly for  
nonviolent offenses and most of this policing is  
highly concentrated in Black and Brown communities.

Instead of prioritizing the NYPD budget, the city  
should make substantial investments to enable  
impacted communities to direct and determine the  
resources necessary to ensure their safety and  
prosperity. We must prioritize health, housing,  
education, employment and workforce development.

Unfortunately, these are the very services that  
are devalued in the Mayor's proposal. Cuts to food  
programs, sanitation and healthcare make communities  
less safe. Cuts to the DOE will jeopardize programs  
like Universal Pre-K and 3K and disproportionately  
impact Black and Brown communities by stifling  
resources to an already underfunded and segregated  
school system.



Slashing funding for parks and libraries decrease public safety by providing fewer recreational spaces for young people and decreasing access to community resource centers. Cuts to DSNY will result in less garbage collection in the outer boroughs, meaning worse service for Black and Brown residents and potentially unhealthy conditions surrounding NYCHA housing. Our housing agencies have faced chronic under investments as well but meanwhile, NYCHA residents and unhoused New Yorkers are often the one's who experience aggressive policing most acutely. This is a recipe for increased instability, which we fear the Administration will later use to justify more increases in spending for criminalization and policing. We must end the NYPD's budget exceptionalism. At \$11 billion, the city has a larger police budget than the next 14 municipal police budgets combined. While it was initially announced that law enforcement agencies would also face a hiring freeze, reports indicate that the city intends to hire 120 new school safety agents and the NYPD was announced as one of the few agencies exempted from the next round of cuts.

Our exorbitant police spending amounts to a  
plundering of community services, which inevitably  
leads to Black, Brown and queer communities suffering  
most. These communities already deal with  
underinvestment and the Mayor's proposal will only  
harm them further. We call on the Council to invest  
in services that will lead to true safety and  
wellbeing while ending the NYPD's budget  
exceptionals. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

JESSIE SPELLMAN: My name is Jessie. My pronouns  
are she, her and we, ours. I'm a 4<sup>th</sup> generation New  
Yorkers and we know the power we all have to shape  
our city. Don't you think it's a pity to hear  
children say, "why is there no budget for Pre-K?" No  
budget for libraries, no budget for books, no budget  
for parks, they just took and they took. With  
billions in reserves and billions for cops, our  
children are asking you, when does it stop? We have  
all we need to make our city thrive. Let's invest in  
the things that keep us alive. More libraries, more  
parks, more schools, more art, less weapons, less  
bloat. Please use your head and your heart. We can  
build a better and stronger city for all. City

Council members, please head our call. Invest in our libraries, our parks and our schools. Let common sense and love be our strongest tools. Divest and dismantle the SRG. It's our constitutional right to protest peacefully. We deserve care, not cuts, no if's, and's or but's. The future is bright. Think what we can do and remember history has its eyes on you.

DIVID DURANT: Thank you. We needed poetry. Uhm, hello, my name is Divid Durant, I'm a Leader in the Justice Committee. A grassroots organization committed to ending police violence and systemic racism in New York City. As a Black man raised in the South Bronx, one of the poorest congressional districts in the United States, I've experienced the physical and psychological harms of police violence as well as the violence of historical disinvestment.

Growing up, my safety was dependent on essential services like youth programs, community centers, public libraries, institutions and organizations that nurture neighborhoods back to health, not the NYPD.

I was repose to learn that the consequences of Mayor Adams mismanagement of city funds and refusal to generate revenue from the rich leaves low-income,

Black, Latinx and other New Yorkers of color stuck with the bill. The NYPD's budget increased by close to \$135 million in the Mayor's Financial Plan, at least 2.3 of an increase in the budget. NYPD wastes millions on expenses like over \$1,600 for a robocop. That also costs two cops to protect the robot. \$75,000 each for robot dogs, \$500 million to hide radio transmissions from the public despite it being fine for 87 years. This is a waste. We've just listened to tons of other programs that need funding and you know this is literally a waste.

Moreover, New York City will pay out \$121 million in police misconduct settlements this year. This doesn't even include the personnel costs of keeping cops who kill, brutalize and sexually assault on payroll. When the NYPD obstructs discipline and refuses to fire them. Despite this, the NYPD has already reported to not face cuts in January.

Claims that reducing police numbers will increase violence lacks evidence. Clear eyed research supports that real safety is achieved through investments in core infrastructure and services like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare and youth programs, something that your colleague Cabàn was

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3 leading us toward when we were talking about what  
4 this public safety looked like.

5 We need a City Council and Mayor to prioritize  
6 New Yorkers well being over further bloating the  
7 police force. I urge the Mayor and City Council to  
8 stop giving the NYPD preferential treatment and  
9 invest in services that all New Yorkers need to  
10 thrive.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, folks remaining in the  
13 room, if you are signed up to testify you can come on  
14 forward and after that, we'll go to our panelists on  
15 Zoom. [02:39:44]- [02:39:58] Please state your name  
16 when you are ready and you may begin when you're  
17 ready Miss.

18 NADIA SWANSON: Hi, my name is Nadia Swanson. My  
19 pronouns are they, them. I'm the Director of  
20 Technical Assistance and Advocacy at the Ali Forney  
21 Center. We are the largest, the world's largest  
22 program for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.  
23 We serve over 2,200 youth a year and they estimate  
24 about 5,700 homeless youth are in New York every  
25 night.

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3 There's no budget to cut. The RHY budget for  
4 DYCD is just under \$50 million. Our personal budget  
5 is \$22 million and that \$450 million is spread around  
6 six, seven different programs in the continuum. What  
7 happens when we lose money is literally people die.  
8 That's what we see every day and I'm just going to  
9 like get my testimony with you but to be frank,  
10 that's what happened when we had to shut down during  
11 COVID for most of our services. Our housing stayed  
12 open; 13 youth died. For the ten years prior to  
13 COVID, 8.

14 When there's not services for youth to be able to  
15 come and have substance use services to get away from  
16 domestic violence, get housing, get therapy, have  
17 medical care. Young people who have been rejected  
18 from their families and have nowhere else to go, just  
19 get continuously rejected by New York City again and  
20 all they want to do is become members of our society  
21 and be contributing members and thrive and have  
22 families and be part of the community. This is who  
23 we need to be funding.

24 If we're not funding youth who are experiencing  
25 homelessness, what are doing, right? Like those are  
our most vulnerable New Yorkers. So, I just want to

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3 leave that with them and my testimony will be given  
4 to you. Thank you.

5 SIDNEY GRANT: Good evening and thank you to  
6 Chair Brannan and the City Council for your steadfast  
7 support of arts, culture, and arts education across  
8 New York City. Uhm, it's quite wonderful actually  
9 that I can preface my remarks by thanking you  
10 personally Council Member Brannan for your cultural  
11 funding in FY19 and FY20. The Councils initiative  
12 and discretionary awards are the lifeblood of our  
13 nonprofits fiscal health.

14 My name is Sidney Grant, a 33-year resident of  
15 Manhattan, member of the Starts with the Arts  
16 Coalition and proud founder and artistic director of  
17 ballroom basics. We're the only large-scale  
18 noncompetitive partner dancing nonprofit in the DOE  
19 vendor system but you, the City Council and hundreds  
20 of schools know me as Dr. Dance. Uh, we transform  
21 the social and emotional health and wellness of your  
22 constituent communities through the poise and  
23 politeness, the verbal and physical courtesies of  
24 non-competitive ballroom and Latin dancing.

25 Meaningful work that is threatened by the Mayor's  
present and proposed budget cuts because these cuts

mean that this doctor and his dancing practitioners will have far fewer prescriptions and fun fitness and fancy foot work with which to combat bullying, device addition, in order to transform peer relations among the class, in the classrooms, enabling every child regardless of ethnicity, ability, popularity and/or identity to dance rotationally and respectfully with their classmates. And when we bring these schools together at the conclusion for the ballrooms basics bash, no drugs, no alcohol, pornography, profanity. Manners. We're bringing them together with manners, which is why we have our meaningful moto Making Manners Matter Every Move We Make. This is what is at the core of arts education. Safe, welcoming spaces for children to feel accepted, validated and self-expressed. We've unmasked over a decade of both anecdotal and empirical evidence that the impact of our programming is one of the most significant adolescent experiences in the young lives of the children we serve.

Daysha Baker, one of our first students from 2002, 2008, 2001 said herself that this program excuse me. This program opened my eyes to etiquette, something I'd never known. It has forever changed my



young adult life. As Speaker Adams emphatically mentioned in her opening remarks today, cuts to schools and students do a grave debilitating disservice to our community. It's a hard pill to swallow to think that we literally crafted CDF funding programming this year in response to the migrant crisis and that CDF programming is actually on the chopping block. So, we ask you please to do whatever you can in your political will to reverse the \$17.3 million dollars of the DCLA budget reduction and please ensure that the vital creative life-giving connection of the arts and arts education is protected. Because as Kim Olsen and others have said today, It Starts with the Arts. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL MAGAZINE: Good evening. I'm glad to be one of the last speakers of tonight. My name is Michael Magazine. I am a college student, activist, and Brooklynite and I'm here calling the New York City Council to stand against the Mayor's proposed budget cuts. It's absolutely unacceptable that this city puts educating our children, our retirees, our public libraries among other essential public goods on the budget chopping block. All the while NYPD

gets the green light for another year of 200 plus million dollars toward and settlements and judgements and an estimated \$133.7 million in funding their hyper aggressive and controversial strategic response group. You've already heard plenty of expert testimony and impact statements from organizations, departments and many people of this city on just how disastrous these budget cuts will be. What this city needs now more than ever is care, not cuts. Care as in allocating enough of the budget so that Pre-K and 3K classrooms in the Bronx and Staten Island can open on time.

Care as in funding our libraries so they can continue to provide New Yorkers seven days service. Care as in ensuring 43 percent of the school system doesn't have a midyear budget crisis. Care as in community composting. Care as in investing in New York City Parks and in green jobs. Care as in keeping thousands of vacant positions open so that departments that have already been fighting staff shortages don't crumble from a hiring freeze. If you want to cut something, cut the Boston dynamic robo dogs and night scope police Roomba's that patrol Time Square Station. Cut funding of the Strategic

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3 Response Group who cost us not in just keeping them  
4 running but also in their misconduct lawsuits. Cut  
5 NYPD's excessive overtime. Cut the countless items  
6 on FBI investigation Adam's austerity agenda, which  
7 prioritizes pricey private contracts and rooftop  
8 parties over the people of this city. And for the  
9 love of God, can we stop using migrants as a  
10 convenient excuse for every administrative failing.  
11 They are people, not problems. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now move to panelists  
14 on Zoom. First testimony we'll hear from Paulette  
15 Healy followed by Tanisha Grant.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 PAULETTE HEALY: Hi, can you hear me?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you.

19 PAULETTE HEALY: Alright, thank you so much for  
20 this opportunity and uhm, I just wanted to uh thank  
21 Chair Brannan for sticking in there. I am grateful  
22 to have you representing my borough of Bay Ridge as  
23 my Council Member and I wanted to also acknowledge  
24 the fierce advocacy from the progressive caucus,  
25 especially Council Member Alexa Aviles and Council  
Member Rita Joseph for prioritizing our children. As

Council Member Alexa Aviles already spoken about,  
District 75 is under attack. The DOE, in response to  
the five percent PEGs, are looking to cut \$97 million  
from District 75 schools. Schools, not programs,  
schools.

And what that means is that there is schools that  
are losing their entire para budget. There are  
schools that are losing their entire procession  
budget. And what that means to families and students  
is that there will not be a bus para, a medical para,  
a support para to actually allow the child to attend  
school. We're talking about thousands of children  
who will not be able to get their free and  
appropriate education because of decisions made by  
the DOE in response to these five percent cuts. And  
as everyone has been saying before, we need care, not  
cuts. We need to prioritize people over profits and  
I am really hoping that this City Council will refuse  
the austerity cuts that this Mayor is proposing.

As much as I don't like to acknowledge it,  
Michale Mulgrew was right during his testimony. This  
is a case of mismanagement. We have a Mayoral  
crisis, not an immigrant crisis. These are families  
coming to seek refuge because of the horrific things

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that they've experienced. And our schools are hubs  
that they're supposed to be able to feel welcomed and  
supported and given an opportunity to thrive. Just  
like all the other immigrants that have ventured into  
this country over the past centennial years.

We need to make sure that the mismanagement  
stops. We need to prioritize the oversight that the  
Comptroller has already talked about in terms of how  
we are handling the divvying of contracts to the for-  
profit organizations that are addressing our asylum-  
seeking families and wonder why not 30 percent of  
those very expensive contracts —

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

PAULETTE HEALY: Are going to minority and women-  
based enterprises like they're supposed to with any  
RFA that's being presented for city agency  
consideration. If the Department of Buildings have  
to do it, then so should those who are tasked and  
making a profit off of the backs of these  
disenfranchised families. I also want to make sure  
that you know we prioritize —

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

PAULETTE HEALY: What is important. We have —  
okay, I'll wrap up, sorry. I just want to make sure

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that our students with disabilities are not targeted  
for these particular cuts because we will go to  
Washington and sue this Mayor on behalf of our  
students with disabilities because when you take \$97  
million away from District 75, which serves almost  
100 percent of students with disabilities, you are  
discriminating against an entire disability  
population. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Paulette.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
from Tanisha Grant followed by Andrew Sta.Ana.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

TANISHA GRANT: I want to say that - Hi. I want  
to say that I second what Paulette Healy had to say.  
My name is Tanisha Grant and I am the Executive  
Director of Parent Support and Parents New York and  
United for Black Lives in New York City. Thank you  
Chair Brannan for holding this important meeting. I  
have been listening to testimony since 10:00 a.m.  
this morning. It is irresponsible how the Office of  
Management did not answer key questions asked by our  
City Council members. I only heard them constantly  
repeat the same thing, which is, we don't have the  
money.

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3 We have heard countless agencies, union leaders,  
4 nonprofits, community-based organizations like ours,  
5 community activities and parent leaders not only  
6 object to these cuts but also give solutions and  
7 reasons why we should be cutting any of our vital  
8 public service agencies including the Department of  
9 Education. As our community partners, advocates with  
10 children has laid out, there are countless school  
11 services that were funded by COVID funds, services  
12 like that our children should have had before the  
13 pandemic without these funds, these programs would  
14 not exist. These funds for 3K and Pre-K community  
15 schools, restorative justice programs, Department of  
16 Education nurses, should have – should be permanently  
17 funded in the New York City budget every year full  
18 stop.

19 Support for our children and special education  
20 should be fully funded. As Chair Council woman  
21 Joseph of the Education Committee stated, Nicholson  
22 cases are increasing, Nicolson letters are increasing  
23 because our public schools don't have the funds  
24 needed to support our children's IEP services. We  
25 agree with Councilman Charles Barron about using our

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3 reserves to fully fund our schools in all public  
4 service agencies.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

6 TANISHA GRANT: We have had several clients who  
7 didn't get their Food Stamps on time. Some clients  
8 had to wait two extra weeks. I'm not talking about  
9 people applying but we know there are issues there  
10 but I'm speaking about people who already have cases.  
11 When we encourage clients to go to HRA, they were  
12 told that HRA systems are running slow. What are  
13 clients supposed to do while waiting for Food Stamps?  
14 We believe that staffing is still down across  
15 agencies and this is why service has been slower than  
16 usual.

17 We ask the Finance Committee to look into numbers  
18 of people reentering shelter systems. The Office of  
19 Budget Management says 16 percent. We highly doubt  
20 that. Maybe they are only accepting 16 percent back  
21 into the system. We have had clients visit shelters  
22 and be turned away because there is no space. Please  
23 stop —

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You time has expired.

25 TANISHA GRANT: Blaming asylum seekers. I'm  
going to wrap it up. Please stop blaming asylum



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3 seekers for poor leadership. Let's not repeat the  
4 poor leadership of the pandemic. Let's go on and we  
5 ask City Council to not pass a budget that will harm  
6 our city as a whole. Thank you for having this  
7 meeting.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
9 from Andrew Sayona followed by Alex Molesio.

10 ANDREW STA.ANA: Hey everyone. Thank you for the  
11 marathon hearing. I've learned a lot today. I want  
12 to thank Chair Brannan, the Council Members of the  
13 Finance Committee for holding this important hearing.  
14 My name is Andrew Sta.Ana and I am the Deputy  
15 Director of Research and Policy at the Asian American  
16 Federation.

17 At the Federation, we proudly represent a  
18 collective voice of over 70 nonprofits, several of  
19 whom will testify or submit testimony and we  
20 represent over 1.5 million New Yorkers. We're here  
21 today obviously to discuss the disastrous cuts  
22 proposed by the Mayor. Without question, these  
23 impacts will devastate our communities.

24 I wanted just to make a few small points followed  
25 with some data and that data I think is really  
important. Since 2010, the Asian population in New

York City has increased 34 percent growing from \$1.1 million to 2010 to \$1.5 million in 2020, making up 17.3 percent of our city's total population.

Overwhelmingly, Asian American New Yorkers are immigrants and two out of three in the city are foreign born. Of those Asian immigrants, 24 percent arrived after 2011 and many of those immigrants are limited English speaking.

So, the two points I wanted to make in the time that I have is just point out that Asian American and AAPI nonprofits, like many other nonprofits serving communities of color are underfunded. We are also completely led by community members themselves that are impacted by the issue of confluence race, immigration and identity. Through these challenges, despite a regular shortage of resources, we continue to deliver them. Prior to these funding cuts, AAPI nonprofits have struggled to meet the demand. Distinctly and this is why these cuts are so important to us, AAPI nonprofits rely on government funding to support our life saving work more so than other communities.

For example, according to the Asian American Pacific Islanders and philanthropy report, for every

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\$100 spent by foundations, only 0.20 cents are  
designated for AAPI -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

ANDREW STA.ANA: One more point that I just  
wanted to make is that Asian New Yorkers are  
immigrants and Asian New Yorkers are nonprofits. So,  
when we talk about these cuts to the community,  
there's a conflation here. That's a rhetoric that we  
want to address right? Our communities are not going  
to fall for that rhetorical trap and in fact, Asian  
communities are the ones and our Asian American  
nonprofits are ones providing services to nonprofits.  
And so, with the larger goal of addressing the  
nonprofit crisis, it's basically shooting itself in  
the foot by trying to silence or limit resource to  
the Asian American community.

So, thank you for your time and I hope all have a  
good night and have an opportunity to rest and take  
care of yourselves later. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Alex  
Malescio followed by Lacy Tober.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

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3 ALEX MALESCIO: Chair Brannan and members of the  
4 City Council, my name is Alex Malescio and I am the  
5 Senior Director of Government Relations at Urban  
6 Upbound. A nonprofit that breaks cycles of poverty  
7 for lower income New Yorkers through a comprehensive  
8 suite of direct services.

9 Today, I will bring attention to the importance  
10 of programs that are designed specifically to empower  
11 residents of public housing communities and the risk  
12 that these communities face should such programs be  
13 cut. Programs that provide public housing residents  
14 with viable pathways for overcoming systemic barriers  
15 to career, personal and financial growth must always  
16 remain a priority in our city because trust,  
17 continuity, and reliability are key determinants of  
18 the success of such programs. Every day throughout  
19 our city, nonprofits that are accessibly located  
20 within the public housing development serve the  
21 residents in these communities.

22 At Urban Upbound for instance we serve residents  
23 through workforce development, financial counseling  
24 and inclusion, youth development, education access  
25 and small business development, tax preparation and  
mental health services. However it takes more than a

conveniently located service sector to make a real  
impact in public housing communities. Just as  
important as the trust that is built through in-depth  
outreach and the consistent reliability of services.

At Urban Upbound, we rely on historical  
placements at a larger network of residents, resident  
association leaders, community organizers, faith  
leaders and fellow nonprofits to share recent program  
offerings and success stories with the community. We  
rely on our outreach and program staff who often  
reside in the same communities we serve to foster  
motivational and effective relationships with  
clients. And finally, we rely on the continued  
availability of our programming so that community  
members know that our doors will be open to them  
regardless of whether their career, financial, or  
personal growth journey takes five days or five  
years.

It's for these reasons I urge the City Council to  
consider the long-term consequences, potential budget  
cuts for our city's most vulnerable members. As  
responsible stewards of public funds, it is crucial  
to recognize the investment in public housing  
communities yield significant returns -

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

3 ALEX MALESCIO: Alright, thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Lacy  
6 Tober followed by Veronica Wong.

7 DONAVON SWANSON: Hi, good evening. Donavon  
8 Swanson with the Brooklyn Borough Presidents Office.  
9 Apologies on the confusion. Uhm, thank you Chair  
10 Brannan and more power to you for holding this  
11 important hearing today. I'm here representing the  
12 Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to express  
13 his opposition to specific budget cuts outlined in  
14 the November PEGs.

15 While financial projections requires that tough  
16 conversations about cutting back, we need a data  
17 driven approach that prioritizes quality of life for  
18 New Yorkers. It hits critical services and social  
19 services. Last not first, our office has submitted  
20 testimony digitally of some areas of concern like  
21 education, youth and libraries.

22 Pre-K and 3K lead to positive outcomes for  
23 student learning and provide an alternative to  
24 expensive childcare for working parents. According  
25 to the Center for American Progress, the estimated

average cost of high-quality preschool in New York City exceeds \$15,000 a year, while Kings County's median household income is approximately \$67,000 a year. Meanwhile need is outpacing supply. The Office of Children and Family Services classifies over 60 percent of Brooklyn as a childcare desert. The answer is in cuts. It's more aggressive than sensitive outreach to communities with the most need and a continuing shift in seats at Extended Day and full year for working families to participate.

Additionally, given the scale of these cuts, it seems unlikely that early childhood educators who are predominantly women of color won't face layoffs. Communities schools, despite DOE's recent testimony in which they committed to no individual community school closures, it's hard to see how it will be possible for them to maintain quality of programming after these cuts.

Every community school should have the ability to operate a meaningful program especially now that many are supporting our newly arrived families and students. By reducing community school funding, we're only limiting our schools and provide us the ability to adequately serve their students and their

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families. These PEGs are even more impactful coming  
on the heels of mid-year budget cuts. According to  
the UFT, 650 schools saw a total of 109 million cut  
citywide with approximately 35.7 million –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

DONAVON SWANSON: Uhm, I'll just wrap up by  
saying we also included in our testimony the damaging  
cuts to both compass programming as well as our  
libraries and our community composting. The borough  
president stands with their partnerships in City  
Council and we look forward to continuing the great  
work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Veronica  
Wong followed by Nicole Touzien.

VERONICA WONG: Good evening Chair Brannan,  
members of the Council and Council staff. Thank you  
so much for your time and the opportunity to testify.  
My name is Veronica Wong, I'm the Advocacy Director  
at University Settlement. Every year University  
Settlement partners with 40,000 New Yorkers across  
Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn. We provide programming  
for all ages. Like so many of the community-based  
organizations, I want to echo just how devastating



these cuts will be on our programming and the ability of community-based organizations like ours to continue providing high quality programs and services to so many New Yorkers.

I would like to – we’re going to submit longer testimony but I’d like to focus our testimony on addressing two of the Administrations main talking points regarding these cuts. The first one is that Administration argues they can cut senior centers, early childhood after school, preventive services because of lower enrollment.

Using lower than normal enrollment in the last two years is using a faulty benchmark. The Human Services Sector is by no means the only sector in New York that is yet to rebound to pre-pandemic numbers. And our sector faces unique challenges as we seek to be responsive to the communities that we serve.

Second, the Administration has blamed programmatic and service cuts in our sector on the incoming asylum seekers. We reject this framework. As New Yorkers, we refuse to scapegoat or newest New York neighbors. In fact, we know that strengthening our sector strengthens the ability of the city to meet this moment.

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3 Instead, we have seen years of divestment from  
4 our sector and disrespect for our workers including a  
5 lack of any COLA for our staff. Many of whom qualify  
6 for the very services they provide due to their low  
7 city contracted wages. Shame on the city for now  
8 threatening these cuts to these programs and to their  
9 jobs.

10 Nonprofits like ours already operate our high-  
11 quality programs on lean budgets and we can't absorb  
12 this cut without reducing services. For us, that  
13 means at minimum a 15 percent cut means at minimum  
14 almost 500 young people will no longer be able --

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

16 VERONICA WONG: Receive after school services.  
17 Hundreds of working families impacted. I'll be  
18 quick. 400 young people will no longer be able to  
19 receive summer camp services, almost 9,500 homebound  
20 meals per year will no longer be served to older New  
21 Yorkers and there are many, many more impacts that we  
22 will include in our written testimony.

23 This is just not the time to undercut our working  
24 New Yorkers and the community-based organizations  
25 that serve them. Thank you so much for your time. I  
really appreciate it.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Nicole  
4 Touzien followed by Luke Boyd.

5 NICOLE TOUZIEN: Good evening and thank you for  
6 the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of  
7 Dancewave. A nonprofit dance organization located in  
8 Brooklyn where I serve as Executive Director. Like  
9 many arts organizations, Dancewave is counted on to  
10 provide essential services to over 6,300 youth,  
11 adults and seniors each year. We provide dance  
12 education programming at no cost to participants in  
13 the most under resourced neighborhoods across New  
14 York City.

15 Last year we partnered with over 20 schools with  
16 significant volumes of recently arrived migrant  
17 students. Many of whom were living in temporary  
18 housing. We understand the importance of providing  
19 safe, inclusive and engaging programs to reach these  
20 young people at such a critical time. We also know  
21 that art has been proven to help people feel  
22 connected, valued, seen and heard, in addition to  
23 improving academic performance and developing the  
24 social and emotional life skills necessary for  
25 success.

Budget cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs  
and New York City public schools will have  
detrimental impact on all New Yorkers. In the short  
term, these cuts will force organizations like  
Dancewave to eliminate entire programs serving  
thousands of the most vulnerable New Yorkers and  
that's just one organization.

The city leans on arts and cultural organizations  
like Dancewave to help build persistent programming  
gaps in New York City public schools, older adult  
centers, shelters, libraries in community and social  
service centers.

In the long term, these cuts will cause  
significant and lasting damage to the health and  
vibrancy of our neighborhoods as social  
disconnections further exacerbates the mental health  
crisis and as youth have fewer opportunities to  
engage in meaningful and future affirming activities.  
These budget cuts might be presented as a short-term  
savings solution but they will only cost us more in  
the long run.

Our city and it's future is at stake. I ask the  
Committee to advocate for our city's arts  
organizations who represent the future of cultural

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3 and economic vitality of our city. Thank you so much  
4 for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Luke Boyd  
7 followed by Yvonne Roen.

8 LUKE BOYD: Good evening Chairman Brannan and  
9 members of the Committee. My name is Luke Boyd, I'm  
10 the Director of Education Public Programs at Historic  
11 Richmond Town in Staten Island. Thank you for  
12 hearing my testimony and for support of our city's  
13 cultural institutions in the arts.

14 I'm here today to advocate for the continued  
15 financial support for cultural orgs and outreach into  
16 New York City's communities which enrich the lives of  
17 our city and its people.

18 Historic Richmond Town has been proud to partner  
19 with Carnegie Hall citywide. For the last two  
20 summers, we have posted performances by world class  
21 musicians at our open-air campus on Status Island.  
22 These free concerts have visitors, many who come to  
23 the Richmond Town neighborhood adjacent to our site,  
24 they come from the neighborhood. Nestled in the  
25 middle of the island our local residents and  
neighbors are accustomed to distance when it comes to

arts and culture, knowing that a long commute separates them from the entertainment capital of Manhattan. Carnegie Hall's Citywide initiative collapses that distance bringing live music to their doorstep. The incredible talent of Jamie Stones folk life and Empire Wild drew hundreds of visitors at the center of town. These concerns bring a diverse group of people together to our village site from across different age groups and communities on the island.

Each audience members experience is an encounter with this unique museum that will endure, inspiring them to seek out more experience that excite the mind and engage them with their community and their neighbors. HRT is a member of the city's cultural institutions group and is the oldest cultural organization on Staten Island. Historic Richmond town is dedicated to understanding and unfolding the human history on Staten Island and providing experiences that inform, provoke and delight.

Whether that be a tour, a program, a living historical reenactment, a school field trip, a walk on the grounds. We remain committed to preserving the past and serving our public in the present.

Without the support of our Mayor and the City

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3 Council, Carnegie Hall's Citywide Initiative would  
4 not be possible, nor would HRT be adequately able to  
5 staff and host these beloved concerts.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

7 LUKE BOYD: Which are now in the annual park of  
8 our tradition in the community. Programming and  
9 services provided by nonprofit orgs have already been  
10 reduced as a result of the cuts announced in  
11 November. The additional five percent plan cuts in  
12 January would be detrimental to the continuing  
13 running of these programs. Organizations like  
14 Richmond town in Carnegie Hall, touch every vital  
15 aspect of life from public education, health and  
16 human services, cultural enrichment to language  
17 access. We call on the city to partner with our  
18 nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions,  
19 not to hinder us further.

20 The city cannot withstand a 15 percent cut to its  
21 budget and any additional cuts in the nonprofit  
22 sector will only undermine the public safety, health  
23 and cleanliness of our city. Thank you for your  
24 time.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now here from Yvonne  
3 Roan followed by Natasia Sidarta.

4 YVONNE ROEN: Good evening. My name is Yvonne  
5 Roen. Thank you for this marathon day and for your  
6 commitment to hearing from New Yorkers about this  
7 budget and what is going on with it. I am an artist.  
8 I am a teaching artist and I am the Development  
9 Director for New York City Children's Theater, known  
10 legally as Making Books Sing and I'd like to thank  
11 the Council for its current support of New York City  
12 children stayed in our programs. I've seen so many  
13 great advocates today for nonprofits and the arts and  
14 it heartens me to hear your voices.

15 Each year, over 12,000 New York City school  
16 children in all five boroughs of the city experience  
17 a New York City children's theater production or  
18 education program. For many it is their first  
19 experience of theater. For most, it builds an  
20 immediate and perpetual connection to the arts as a  
21 means of storytelling.

22 In short, it builds the artists and audiences of  
23 this city's future. Because of our Council and DCA  
24 funded programs and our DOE funded programs, over  
25 12,000 children experience what it means to see



themselves and their concerns presented at the center  
of the story, song or play. They create their own  
place in songs and experience what it means to have  
their voice amplified to a work of art of their own  
creation. Through this process, they build literacy,  
social emotional wellness skills, community, a sense  
of agency, and a connection to lifelong learning.

Don't take it from me. Take it from the teacher in  
Coney Island who squealed for joy the first time an  
immigrant student in her class added a full English  
sentence in one of our programs.

Take it from the refuge from Hurricane Maria who  
spent the first 30 minutes of an after-school program  
in Hell Kitchen hiding under a desk only to jump out  
for an acting activity and say, "I want to do that."

Take it from a kindergartener from the shelter  
program in Brighten Heights who grabbed my hand when  
I showed up in his DOE classroom and said to his  
teacher, "that's her. That's the reading lady."

Take it from the first through fourth grade students  
in a shelter in Clairmont Village who viewed similar  
images in two picture books and turned them into a  
song about what it means to stand together as a  
community against a monster.

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

4 YVONNE ROEN: Take it from the girl in South  
5 Richmond Hill who through 17 weeks of an after-school  
6 program never spoke a word, even when she helped  
7 script the most amazing adaptation of a story book  
8 but chose on week 18 to give a line in that  
9 adaptation for herself and to deliver to an audience  
10 of over 100 people.

11 Take these stories, share them, remember them.  
12 Don't take away 15 percent of the budget that funds  
13 these programs. It will have a deleterious affect on  
14 these children and on the nonprofits of New York  
15 City. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Natasia  
18 Sidarta followed by Renee Crowley.

19 NATASIA SIDARTA: Good evening and thank you. I  
20 echo everyone's gratitude for this marathon hearing.  
21 I will make it quick. My name is Natasia Sidarta,  
22 I'm the Community Stewardship and Operations Director  
23 at Gowanus Canal Conservancy in Brooklyn. I oversee  
24 stewardship and volunteer programs and stewardship of  
25 local green spaces.

We're a proud member of the Forest for All  
Coalition and the Play Fair Coalition and I would  
like to say that investing in resilient eco systems  
across the city is essential to mitigating and  
adapting to the impacts of climate change. And I am  
here to ask this Council to continue fighting for a  
budget that invests in critical environmental  
services, including investing in parks and also  
community composting in order to support health,  
quality of life, resilience and justice for everyone,  
for all New Yorkers.

We know the benefits of green spaces, including  
tree canopy, vegetation cover, green space. It  
reduces heat related illness and death and especially  
for those that are severely impacted including  
communities of color and lower income communities  
especially. And our city faces increasing numbers in  
intensity of heat waves and extreme precipitation  
events. In Gowanus alone, we saw the effects of  
flooding in countless ways just a couple of months  
ago including damaging local businesses and homes,  
holding public transit, overflowing our combined  
sewer system and we can invest in this green  
infrastructure that provides exponential benefits,

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especially if they mature and we work with lots of  
tree stewards, volunteers, and community composting  
organizations including Big Reuse, Grow NYC, Lower  
Eastside Ecology Center, Brooklyn Botanic Garden to  
provide compost and healthy soil in order to make  
those green infrastructure thrive.

These activities also provide social  
infrastructure including neighbors in order to  
participate in and organize these beautification  
events, all while combating climate change. By  
computing community composting.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

NATASIA SIDARTA: By cutting community composting  
and the budget uhm we will – this will eliminate over  
1,500 green jobs. And I'll end my testimony by  
saying that we must invest in these infrastructure.  
We need to tackle the climate crisis. We need to  
invest in community composting and this underfunding  
of both the Parks Department and community composting  
as well. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Renee Crowley followed by Lynn Kelly.

RENEE CROWLEY: Hi Natasia, good to follow you.  
Hi everyone. My name is Renee Crowley and I'm the

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Deputy Director of the Lower East Ecology Center. We  
have been running community-based composting programs  
since 1990 and we've been working in partnership with  
the Department of Sanitation since 2005 to bring  
compost education through the master composting  
program, food scrap posting, free compost and much  
more to New Yorkers.

Community composting is an in our DNA as an  
organization and we've seen how powerful collective  
community action can be in achieving a more just and  
sustainable city.

It's unacceptable to eliminate community  
composting from the city's budget. I'm here today to  
ask you to restore the \$3 million to continue running  
community composting programs for the remainder of  
the school year 2024. And also ask that community  
composting continues to be funded in the outer years  
as well.

Community composting demonstrates how climate  
friendly action can take place right in your  
neighborhood. It demonstrates that your food scraps  
don't necessarily need to be taken to far away  
places, burning additional fossil fuels in the  
process, but that food scraps can be efficiently

managed by the community and create a product that  
benefits the community. At the ecology center, we  
donated tons of compost to urban farms, gardens to  
help them grow healthy food for their community.  
We've applied hundreds of cubic yards of compost to  
park land and street trees, which increases the soils  
capacity to retain storm water and prevent flooding.

These are just a few of the direct benefits that  
come from our programs to create healthy and  
resilient communities. Composting to create soil  
amendments is the highest and best use of food scraps  
and organic waste materials. Ecology Center is  
committed to composting as a way to recover and  
recycle resources and restore soil health across the  
city.

And it's through community composting efforts,  
where true circular waste systems can be achieved and  
I should say, we do it really efficiently too.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

RENEE CROWLEY: I can't help but point out that  
in the midst of our own composting process right now  
with the decomposition of our budget. I ask that the  
Council ensure that what comes out at the end is an  
abundance of resources to help our community grow,

just as what happens in a compost pile. Please  
restore our community composting and thank you for  
listening today.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Lynn  
Kelly followed by Victoria Deerhorn(SP?).

LYNN KELLY: Hello, I'm Cory Hasson and I'll be  
testifying on behalf of Lynn Bodner Kelly for NYRP.  
Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Bodnar Kelly and I  
am the Executive Director of the New York Restoration  
Project. Thank you for the opportunity to provide  
testimony this afternoon Chair Brannan. We know it's  
the evening now.

NYRP is a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition  
and a coalition of over 400 organizations across the  
city advocating for the city's park system. NYRP is  
also a member of the Forest for All NYC and a family  
member of parks and open space partners. We are here  
in total opposition of the budget cuts at 5 percent  
and the additional proposed cuts of 5 to 15 percent  
in 2024.

The 5 percent cuts invented by the city resulted  
in the hiring freeze, the loss of allow staff and the  
delay of critical park programs. In total, Parks has

lost an additional 1,450 workers representing 47 percent of a cleaning workforce responsible for maintaining our city's nearly 2,000 parks. These positions are essential and include maintenance workers who keep our parks well maintained and clean. These cuts also mean less PEP Officers who keep our parks safe.

At the start of the pandemic in 2020, the Parks Department saw a similar cut leading to the worse parks conditions in over 20 years. We saw overflowing trash bins and poorly maintained or closed bathrooms. In short, disinvestment in the park system leads to parks that are less clean, safe and secure. These cuts will eliminate community composting programs across the city by January. These programs are critical at keeping New York City clean by diverting 8.3 millions of pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, turning it into rich soil that our parks, gardens and playgrounds use and that NYRP relies on for technical assistance, compost education and food scrap hauling services.

The additional reductions posed in 2024 will devastate the already over worked workforce that is responsible for maintaining the vital spaces. We



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should not be cutting services and programs that make  
our city more resilient or livable.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

LYNN KELLY: All New Yorkers in the devastating  
impact of climate change. Nature is a fundamental  
right of all New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Victoria  
Dearborn followed by Chris Chalfont.

VICTORIA DEARBORN: Good evening, my name is  
Victoria Dearborn and I'm representing Tammi Lynn  
Moggis(SP?), the Interim Director of the Nature  
Conservancy City in New York. Thank you Committee  
Chair Brannan for the opportunity to speak. I'm  
going to talk about the New York City urban forest  
and other green spaces in the city and I'll be brief  
tonight but we will submit a longer written  
testimony.

The Nature Conservancy is the worlds largest  
conservation organization. We have 90,000 members  
across New York. 35,000 of whom are in New York  
City. We also convene Forest for All NYC Coalition  
which is about 130 organizations. We are a proud  
member of the Play Fair Coalition.

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3 I'm here today to express support for fully  
4 restoring and protecting the New York City Department  
5 of Parks and Recreation Urban Forestry budget. Tree  
6 canopy, vegetation cover and green space are crucial  
7 for the health, safety and livability of New York  
8 City and to low-income communities and communities of  
9 color tend to have lower tree canopy and suffer from  
10 greater heat related illness and death.

11 Treatment of parks cool neighborhoods, clean air  
12 and improve quality of life. Our urban forest and  
13 it's care is a matter of environmental and social  
14 justice. I want to commend the Mayor's  
15 Administration as well as City Council for  
16 establishing a goal of achieving 30 percent tree  
17 canopy cover citywide to address extreme heat, go  
18 through a commitment of NYC and now codify the Local  
19 Law 148 of 2023.

20 Unfortunately, the reason budget cuts, the  
21 proposed cuts from the remainder of this fiscal year  
22 critically threaten our urban forest. The November  
23 Plan included devastating cuts to DPRS budget  
24 including cuts to funding to formalize the city's  
25 300-mile nature system, plans for tree management,  
and for the longstanding Parks Opportunity program.

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3 These cuts threaten public safety. They impact  
4 the workforce available to care for and clean our  
5 parks and they also set back our progress in the  
6 commitment this Administration has made to improving  
7 the equity and resilience of the New York City Urban  
8 Forest. Beyond DPI to plan cuts to Department of  
9 Sanitations community composting program will set  
10 back progress towards local wood savage, a key  
11 activity that has sustainability and economic  
12 benefits for the city.

13 Similarly, the elimination of DSNY service of  
14 litter baskets in combination with the loss of 1.3  
15 million hours a year of cleaning, care and  
16 maintenance from DPR's budget will result in dirtier  
17 and less hospitable public space. Thank you again  
18 Committee Chair Brannan and to the members of the  
19 Finance Committee for considering our request that  
20 DPR's urban forest budget be fully restored and  
21 protected. And that Council provide funding for the  
22 New York City Urban Forest in the FY25 budget. Thank  
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Chris  
Chalfant(SP?) followed by James Dill.

3 CHRIS CHALFANT: Hello, I'm a volunteer for the  
4 Van Cortlandt Park Alliance. I do trail maintenance  
5 restoration and trash control. I thank you for  
6 allowing me to testify Chair Brannan and City  
7 Council. My written testimony has been submitted.

8 I am gravely concerned about the budget cuts to  
9 NYC Parks Sanitation and the Parks Opportunity  
10 Program that will effect millions of New Yorkers and  
11 30,000 acres of NYC Parks. The budget for Parks is  
12 now only 0.5 percent. These further cuts will be  
13 devastating. We saw the condition of the parks in the  
14 70's and 80's and are still recovering from the  
15 damage. I have seen water tanks, car parts, and  
16 mattress clothes deep into the woods that go back  
17 decades.

18 I would like to point out a few things. 1,500  
19 jobs within the parks and thousands of educational  
20 opportunities for youth and young adults, many of  
21 whom are Black and Brown have already been lost.  
22 Reducing trash collection to once week will mean an  
23 increase of rats and safety issues with drug  
24 paraphernalia laying around. People will be  
25 discouraged to go to the park or playground, a place  
that is their only respite from heat, noise and

danger. Parks help people find equilibrium and encourage exercise. They are a lifeline for those that cannot afford mental health treatment. Erosion control, structure maintenance and repair will no longer continue. We are still recovering from Hurricane Ida that has destroyed miles of paths and structures. Ongoing deterioration requires extensive efforts. Tree plantings on the sidewalks, in parks and the woods will seize. The 30 percent canopy mandate of New York will not be met. Efforts to achieve green equity will come to a halt. Important work to curtail embraces to only wooded areas and in bodies of water will stop causing extensive damage to the ecosystem. Thousands of hours of work will be undone.

I urge you to reconsider these cuts and look closely at the long-term effects these cuts will have on the health of New Yorkers economy and pollution control, not to mention climate change. New Yorkers need and deserve parks. Please don't let -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

CHRIS CHALFANT: Thank you for your attention.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from James  
3 Dill followed by Tierra Labrada.

4 JAMES DILL: I'm Jim Dill, Executive Director of  
5 Housing and Services Inc. We provide permanent  
6 supportive housing. We are a member of the  
7 Supportive Housing Network of New York and fully  
8 support all the networks advocacy points for this  
9 hearing.

10 We will provide written testimony to supplement  
11 the networks testimony. We strongly advise against  
12 the budget cuts to our funding agencies, HRA, DOMH  
13 and HPD. The proposed cuts will not produce cost  
14 savings. It will increase costs by substituting  
15 predictable permanent housing costs with the vital  
16 service cost such as EMS, hospitalizations, police  
17 and jail time that the filtered absorb.

18 Recent studies show that an unsheltered single  
19 adult absorbs approximately \$40,000 annually in such  
20 city resources. Supportive housing providers and  
21 their funding agencies are already at a breaking  
22 point. For example, our DHS, SRO support Services  
23 contract, they receive no significant increases in  
24 over 20 years. Creating low staff moral and high  
25 staff turnover for these essential workers.

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3 Seven HPD funding programs have year long waits  
4 for project managers to be assigned. Past  
5 austerities have all produced unintended cost  
6 increases. In winter of 2022, the pandemic delayed  
7 HRA housing placement process, it slowed down  
8 creating an unprecedented ten percent vacancy rate in  
9 citywide permitted supportive housing. To truly  
10 produce savings, the under funded budgets for HRA,  
11 DOMH and HPD should be increased to ultimately avoid  
12 unnecessary spending. I thank you for your time this  
evening.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Tierra  
15 Labrada followed by Sareta Daftary.

16 TIERRA LABRADA: Thank you so much. Thank you so  
17 much Jim for hanging in there and thank you to Chair  
18 Brannan and members of the Finance Committee for your  
19 tireless listening to all this testimony. My name is  
20 Tierra Labrada and I am Associate Director of  
21 Advocacy at the Supportive Housing Network of New  
22 York. We're a membership organization representing  
23 nonprofits that provide supportive housing to  
24 homeless individuals and families. New York City  
25 relies heavily on nonprofits to provide essential

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3 housing and supportive services, and nonprofits rely  
4 on a functioning government that can move housing  
5 development along without delays, process contract  
6 payments and increases, like Jim just mentioned, and  
7 most importantly filling housing vacancies with  
8 people living on the street or in the shelter.

9 However, due to excessive budget cuts, hiring freezes  
10 and an already strained workforce, city agencies are  
11 not functioning effectively, causing massive delays  
12 across the board again like my colleague Jim just  
13 mentioned.

14 One of our members alerted us to \$4 million worth  
15 of contract payments that had not been reimbursed  
16 with another reporting a five-month delay in improved  
17 rental assistance increases. These delays  
18 significantly hinder their ability to provide  
19 services and repairs and keep up with the rising cost  
20 of building maintenance and operations. These delays  
21 are a direct result of agency understaffing at  
22 housing and homelessness related agencies like DOHMH,  
23 HPD, DHS, HRA, DOB and DCP. These agencies must be  
24 [INAUDIBLE 03:28:45] from the Mayor's austerity  
25 measures.



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3 And make no mistake, we are under no mistake that  
4 two more rounds of PEGs, any more rounds of PEGs will  
5 inevitably lead to city agencies exhausting their own  
6 budget and passing these cuts onto nonprofits. The  
7 nonprofits that the city relies on to house, feed and  
8 care for New Yorkers in need. Our members are  
9 already struggling with staffing shortages and  
10 operating on razor thin margins and cannot absorb  
11 these cuts, especially considering the delays that  
12 we've already mentioned and the inefficiencies.  
13 Nonprofits must be held harmless.

14 The Network joins over 225 organizations in the  
15 Y15 Campaign to demand transparency and inclusion in  
16 the city's budget process. We urge the city to  
17 collaborate with the nonprofit sector to find  
18 innovative solutions rather than imposing further  
19 hindrances.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

21 TIERRA LABRADA: A 15 percent cut, 10 percent  
22 cut, 5 percent cut is an additional cut to the  
23 nonprofit sector and to New Yorkers in need. Thank  
24 you so much.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Sarita Daftary followed by Andrew Perry.

SARITA DAFTARY: Good evening. Thank you Chair  
Brannan and Council Members for this marathon hearing  
and for all of your advocacy to push back ANC's cuts.  
My name is Sarita Daftary, I'm a Co-Director at  
Freedom Agenda and we're a grassroots member led  
project organizing with people and communities who  
have been impacted by incarceration. We organize the  
campaign to close Rikers and we're a member of the  
peoples plan and the communities police reforms  
budget justice campaign.

The Mayor's budget cuts will have devastating  
impacts for our members as they will for many other  
New Yorkers who are struggling to find quality  
housing, healthcare, childcare, jobs and education  
opportunities. While the resources to arrest and  
jail them seem to be limitless.

I will submit a full written testimony but just  
given that I'm speaking directly after the Supportive  
Housing Network of New York, I have to touch on the  
fact that a couple of years ago, the Corporation for  
Supportive Housing did a report that estimated that  
over 2,500 people on Rikers could be served by  
supportive housing instead. Supportive housing net  
costs may be around \$50,000 per person per year,

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compared to Rikers at a cost of \$500,000 per person  
per year in a setting where people are traumatized,  
denied healthcare and in some cases the city even  
fails to keep them alive.

So, it's just further evidence that what is being  
painted as a budget crisis is really mismanagement  
and misguided priorities from this Administration.

Uhm, the main thing I want to convey to the Council  
tonight is that while the city is slashing funds and  
vacancies like housing and all these social services  
that provide essential services, housing, healthcare  
services and education, the Administration plans to  
let DOC hold on to at least 720 vacancies.

Eliminating these vacancies is not only in alignment  
with the city's moral and legal obligation to reduce  
the jail population and close Rikers, as this Council  
voted on four years ago. But could also save nearly  
\$100 million just in the remainder of this fiscal  
year and could position the city for more commonsense  
savings in the future. DOC's wasteful spending isn't  
limited staff lines. Just in the past year, they  
spent \$240,000 on submachine guns. They spent  
\$171,000 on —

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

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2 SARITA DAFTARY: Fraudulent overtime. I will  
3 wrap up here. I just want to note that the NYPD has  
4 also been treated preferentially and their \$11  
5 billion budget is actually set to see an increase  
6 this year. We ask the Council to bring the budget  
7 modification to a vote and to vote it down unless the  
8 Mayor rolls back cuts to essential services and such  
9 drastic budget changes are halted until the normal  
10 FY25 budget process, where there will more  
11 transparency and accountability. In which we will  
12 certainly be coming back to you to talk about how we  
13 can absolutely save and reallocate the Department of  
14 Corrections wasteful budget. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
16 from Andrew Perry followed by Jason Cianciotto.

17 ANDREW PERRY: Hello, thank you for the  
18 opportunity to testify. My name is Andrew Perry,  
19 Senior Policy Analyst at the Fiscal Policy Institute.  
20 A nonpartisan research organization committed to  
21 approving public policy to better the economic and  
22 social conditions of all New Yorkers.

23 New York City faces real fiscal strain in the  
24 current year and next fiscal year. However,  
25 projected budget cuts is a result of an unexpected

and temporary fiscal shock with cost of services to  
asylum seekers, rather than a permanent structural  
imbalance.

As such, the city should not make additional cuts  
and should mobilize nonrecurring resources to close  
any remaining shortfall next year. Given the fiscal  
resources available to the city, these steps can be  
taken while also restoring \$200 million of cuts that  
were recently made to essential services such as  
libraries, schools and Sanitation.

For the Fiscal Year 2024, FPI notes that the  
current year is balanced. No additional cuts in the  
January or April financial plans are necessary. \$200  
million of recent cuts should be restored by drawing  
down the \$1.2 billion general reserve budgeted for  
the current fiscal year. The remaining \$1 billion in  
the general reserve will prepay next year expenses,  
narrowing that years gap.

Based on current economic conditions as well as  
our recent analysis of the past ten years, we expect  
that revenue will continue to exceed projections,  
surplus revenue will increase next years pre-payment.

For Fiscal Year 2025, FPI notes that over the  
past ten years, the November Plans average outyear

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budget gap was four percent of revenue, a routine gap that consistently closed without policy intervention and was the result of conservative budget practices. These projections should not provide pretext for reactive budget cuts. The current fiscal year 2025 gap is \$7.1 billion or 6.7 percent of revenue. This gap was driven by projected city spending on services for asylum seekers which rose to \$5.5 billion between the two in November Plans. Without these costs, the city would be on strong footing heading into next year with a projected gap of \$1.6 billion or 1.5 percent of revenue.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

ANDREW PERRY: Lower than the four percent level routinely projected. Collective bargaining did not add to the growth in budget gaps between the April and November plans recently ratified bargaining patterns. Keep workers wages in line with recent and projected inflation over the contract period. Because the gap is the result of a temporary fiscal shock, it is appropriate to use nonrecurring resources to close the near-term shortfall. These include state funds, city revenue that will exceed projections this year and next year. If pessimistic

projections become reality, withdrawals from the city's \$2 billion revenue stabilization fund would be appropriate. We also expect the city to continue to find savings from cost re-estimates. The actual savings of which tend to exceed savings projected in proceeding years. Over the past five years -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

ANDREW PERRY: Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear from Jason Cianciotto followed by Chi Loek.

JASON CIANCIOTTO: Good evening Chair Brannan. You are a rockstar and role model for sticking this out with us so that we can testify. Thank you. I am Jason Cianciotto, the Vice President of Communications and Policy at GMHC. Founded in 1982 has gained its health crisis, the world's first HIV and AIDs services organization. We serve about 5,000 New Yorkers every year in all five boroughs.

These budget cuts could lead to an increase in new HIV infections and this concern is rooted in data recently in conjunction with World Aids Day. New York City HIV surveillance data came out and showed a less than two percent decrease in new infections. This is compared to pre-pandemic new infection

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3 reductions by about eight percent from 2018 to 2019  
4 and seven percent from 2017 to 2018.

5 And here's a practical example of how these cuts  
6 are already hurting GMAC and our clients. Several  
7 months ago, we were awarded a contract for the city's  
8 representative payee program, which helped New  
9 Yorkers living with HIV Aids most vulnerable to  
10 homelessness by enabling us to manage their benefits  
11 income.

12 Initially that contract was for \$500 per year but  
13 as a result of the PEGs, it was reduced by nearly  
14 \$80,000 per year. And while small relative to the  
15 total city budget, you add that up across contracts,  
16 multiply that by nonprofit organizations around the  
17 city effected and you can see how it could produce  
18 these negative outcomes. So, I want to thank you for  
19 leading the advocacy in this hearing against these  
20 cuts and I hope you can have a restful evening soon.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
23 from Chi Loek followed by Jimmy Costello.

24 CHI LOEK: Good evening Chair Brannan and  
25 committee members. My name is Chi Loek, I am the  
Executive Director of UA3 and Community First Pantry.



Whenever you know about our special food distribution and PPE events. Our efforts to build solidarity across neighborhoods and the community cultural exchanges we foster as well as our commitment to combat anti-Asian hate across vulnerable New York City Communities. We are the largest lower east side food pantry in the borough and have a network of 100 CBO's in the outer boroughs who come to feed the communities.

The Community First Pantry is in the heart of Manhattan's AAPI community in Chinatown and serve 5,000 economically vulnerable New Yorkers every month. Older adults, low-income families, burdened with high rent, people with limited risk scales, the unemployed, the homeless, the shelter residents rely on healthy fresh produce we distribute to combat hunger, which raises head morning, noon and night.

People experiencing food insecurity look to us to provide nutritious and culturally familiar food to prepare for themselves and their families. We are able to provide this service largely due to City Council funding and community food connection allocations. The Mayor's proposed cuts will harm the health of vulnerable New Yorkers who depend on the

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essential nutritional services and increase the  
mental vagility of those who live on the margins.

UA3 also assists seniors in navigating the city  
social service such as benefits and low-income  
housing. In addition, we provide youth with  
leadership skills and mental wellness programs to  
counter the residual effects of pandemic, which  
disproportionately effect AAPI seniors and youth.

Any cuts to the city's budget in the social service  
sector will have devastating consequences for New  
Yorkers at large.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHI LOEK: UA3 have been long term partners in  
the 18 percent growing campaign and we vigorously  
oppose any cuts to essential services and to funding  
many programs to the accounts. Particularly in light  
of the recent increase of food, transportation and  
housing, I'm asking and counting on your vote. Thank  
you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Jimmy  
Costello followed by Anna Sacks.

JIMMY COSTELLO: Hi everyone. This is Jimmy.  
Thanks for being here. I know, I have been on since

10:00 a.m., so I am very grateful for your time and  
your attention. The first thing I want to say is  
that I understand this a very difficult situation to  
be in. This is not the first time I've studied a  
similar economic situation. This is not the first  
time I have listened in to a very long testimony,  
such as this.

I am a full-time salary employee of the New York  
City Compost Project. Today, I am testifying as an  
individual. Any views that I put forward are unique  
from my employer, the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

I understand that at first glance, community  
composting may seem like an axillary or superfluous  
program. It was previously mentioned multiple times  
or it was claimed multiple times that community  
composting in New York City is inefficient. This is  
a nauseating and incorrect statement. My employer  
operates on such a small budget that we do not have  
running water in our office, yet we have a 90 percent  
attendance rate and we have seen a 70 percent  
increase in our community composting newsletter  
audience in the last year alone.

The elimination of over 115 positions would make  
future composting efforts including the curbside

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brown bin program that we all want to see champion  
even more inefficient.

Previously Council Member Aviles, who I want to  
say thank you for mentioning this, included that many  
nonprofits are not only need their budgets restored  
but they currently are underfunded. I could not  
agree more. I want to reiterate that we do not have  
any running water. We operate in a parks building,  
which is powered by a generator with no clear plan to  
returning electricity to the building.

I ask the Council people, if we lose our budget,  
what should I tell these people? What should I tell  
the over 1,000 unique individuals who have attended  
my programming alone? What should I tell the  
officials from the City of Chicago who reached out to  
me about and I quote, "how to run such a successful  
and cost-efficient community composting program?"

What should I tell the United States Composting  
Council -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JIMMY COSTELLO: Thank you. I'll wrap it up.  
Who welcomed us to California to highlight New York  
City's community composting programs across the  
nation? What should I tell the master composter

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training, who took paid time off from her full-time position to attend one of our community composting workshops? What should I tell my friends, family and neighbors who never received a brown bin, do not know how the program works and don't even know that they had the service? Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Anna Sacks followed by Mark Laster.

ANNA SACKS: Is it time sir? Hi everyone. Thank you for having me. I am a member of the Save Our Compost Coalition and I strongly oppose the cuts to community composting. For those who don't know, New York City has been building for over three decades of thriving local grassroots community composting programs. These are the compost sites under the Kingsborough Bridge, on Governor's Island, in Lower East Side Ecology Center, the East River Park. These are our programs that are successful. That are a cornerstone of New York's environmental and climate resiliency programs. And I was here in 2020 and I am here yet again because it seems like every time there is a fiscal crisis, this is the first thing on the chopping block and that does not go well for New York

City and that does go well for the climate crisis  
more broadly.

This is a small program. I think it's 0.02  
percent of the city budget. It's so tiny and yet it  
is one of the most important things that we're doing  
as a city for climate resiliency, at least in terms  
of waste. It is also educating a future generation  
and group of leaders through the master composting  
program, which is something that I did and loved and  
met some of my best friends doing it and have built  
an incredible environmental local community. These  
are people who then devote themselves to making New  
York City a better and more sustainable space.

So, I want to really strongly oppose these cuts  
and ask that you reconsider dismantling overnight  
what New York City has built for 30 years and what's  
truly an exemplar program in the United States.

These are jobs. These are people who have been  
devoting their life, their career, to composting and  
I want to also add that New York City already has a  
hugely expensive organics program where we spend  
close to half a billion dollars exporting our trash  
to landfills and incinerators.

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3 Over 40 percent of our trash consists of material  
4 that is organics, which could be composted.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 ANNA SACKS: So, we're spending a lot of money on  
7 organics and we're spending it in the wrong way.

8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Mark  
10 Laster followed by Sarah Garrison.

11 MARK LASTER: Hi, good night. Good night, it's  
12 been a long day. My name is Mark Laster, I'm Co-  
13 Chair of the Forest Hills Green Team. We have been  
14 running a food scrap drop off site since May of 2021  
15 in partnership with Queens Botanical Gardens, Row NYC  
16 and the Big Reuse.

17 We initially filled in until Grow NYC restarted  
18 their food scrap drop off site by McDonald Park in  
19 December 2021. When they restarted their site, we  
20 partnered with Queens by their food pantry in Forest  
21 Hills in April 2022 until now, never missing a week.

22 I'm testifying today to address feedback we  
23 receive in our weekly site. We are surrounded by co-  
24 ops and a few of them have implemented the mandated  
25 curbside compost in Queens. When we speak to people,  
they tell us their co-op boards and management

companies do not see the need since penalties do not kick in for a while. With this reluctance coupled with the expectation that co-ops provide their own containers to collect the food scraps, this makes it even more challenging. The brown bins that were distributed when the initial trial program started in Queens back in the end of last year, were no where sufficient for some large buildings to collect their food scraps, even if they did indeed implement the program.

When people ask for support and education for their co-op boards, resources to this education are few and far between. In Forest Hills, there are no smart bins that I am aware of.

One final point, my own co-op hid the brown bin when we received it. When it became mandatory, I let my board know and was emailed that we are in compliance. When I attempted to report my co-op to 311, I was told enforcement does not start until the program is fully rolled out, which will be delayed if the cuts to the Mayor make it, you can fully implement it.

I am highlighting these issues because I have seen reports that once community composting is



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stopped in January of 2024, these options for fill in  
from the huge gap created by the end of this program.  
I stand here and testify to the fact that this will  
not happen. I thought we are the city of yes. I  
think we are the city of no. No to community  
composting. No to full implementation of Local Law  
97. No to congestion pricing. No to wind farms. No  
to replacing gas stoves.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARK LASTER: No to closing Rikers. Uh, I  
implore the City Council to find the \$3 million  
needed to help community composting going. Let's say  
yes to something that fights climate change. Thank  
you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Sarah Garrison followed by Mary Ellen Sullivan.

SARAH GARRISON: Hi, good evening Chairman.  
Chairperson Brannan and colleagues. My name is Sarah  
Garrison. I am a Physician. I've spent my career  
working to improve healthcare for the people of New  
York City. I'm also a volunteer for New York City  
Parks. I'm a trail maintainer in Van Cortland Park  
and a natural areas volunteer for Mosholu Park, both  
in my home borough of the Bronx.

I see volunteering to maintain and improve our natural environment as an integral component of improving health. My ask of the City Council tonight is to restore cuts to the FY24 budget. We know from science the benefits that parks and nature have on people, both physical and mental in addition to improving biodiversity and mitigating climate change as many of my colleagues have spoken about.

I'm going to tell you how nature has helped me. During that first week of April 2020, I started a new job at a Bronx public hospital. Let's remember those days for a moment. New York City was locked down. Playgrounds were closed. Streets were silent except for the sounds of sirens and during that week in April, there were over 700 deaths a day from COVID.

I was taking care of patients with COVID and I was terrified. My daily walk to work took me through Mosholu Park, where the beauty that I witnessed of early Spring provided me with an oasis that gave me the strength and the courage to continue to work. Being in nature gave me hope when I desperately needed it. It was this experience of nature's respite that has made me committed to do everything I can to support nature in parks.

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3 Everyone deserves the opportunity to experience  
4 the beauty, renewal and hope of the natural world,  
5 which is so profoundly needed in today's world. The  
6 City of Chicago spends over four percent of its  
7 budget on parks. New York City, as we have heard,  
8 spends less than one percent.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 SARAH GARRISON: We need to do better for  
11 ourselves, for each other and for our future  
12 generations. I urge all of us to work towards  
13 restoring funding for New York City's Parks and thank  
14 you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the  
15 health of New York City's residents. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
17 from Mary Ellen Sullivan followed by Christopher Leon  
18 Johnson.

19 MARY ELLEN SULLIVAN: Hello, my name is Lori  
20 Neshan and I am reading the testimony on behalf of  
21 Mary Ellen Sullivan. So good evening Chair Brannan  
22 and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you all  
23 for hearing all of us today. It's been a long day.  
24 I'm representing the Forest SWABs of Queens,  
25 Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. I am Mary Ellen  
Sullivan at the Brooklyn SWAB. The PEG initiative

cuts to the DSNY community composting program will  
produce outcomes that increase municipal solid waste,  
produce few fiscal savings and create negative social  
impacts. The Forest SWAB stand with the peoples plan  
in calling for care, not cuts in meeting this moment.  
My testimony will cover the increase in municipal  
solid waste that defunding the New York City  
Community Compost project will cost.

In 2022, New York City residents produce 1.1  
million tons of organics. The New York City  
Community Compost Project processed 4,000 tons of  
organics collected from voluntary drop off sites  
throughout the city. The city collected an  
additional 23,000 tons of residential organics from  
curbside collection from schools and the new orange  
smart bins and the word compost printed on each side.

The remainder of the \$1.1 million tons is sent to  
landfill or incineration with our regular trash.  
Landfilling incineration, and co-digestion are the  
absolute worst things we can do with our valuable  
organic material. Organics exported with our regular  
trash cost the same, \$190 million a year according to  
the SWABs calculations.

If this is the method of exposing of our organics, it is the world's most expensive organics program, as well as the most harmful. In contrast, composting is the best solid waste solution for our organics. Last year, the 4,000 tons of compost, which is biologically active soil amendment, were distributed to support New York City Parks, botanical gardens, 25 community groups, street tree care and events, and the thousands of individuals and community and school gardens at no additional cost to the city or to the users. This is compost for all, not just the truest of true cleavers. Our written testimony expands about the increase to municipal solid waste, the few fiscal savings and the negative social impacts of the PEG cuts of the New York City Compost Project. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now here from Christopher Leon Johnson followed by Kristine Hensen.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hi, good afternoon and good evening. Good evening Mr. Justin Brannan. So, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson on the record representing myself. Dual press today. So, I want to make a suggestion to call for the defunding of

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transportation alternatives. I'm calling for the  
defund of the Rising Lines and I'm calling for a  
converted decrease of funding probably in the six-  
figure amount, less than \$23,000 for the Brooklyn  
Justic Project which is really under [INAUDIBLE  
03:53:20] England on record but [INAUDIBLE 03:53:22]  
England was doing business for the Brooklyn Justice  
Project was held by Liga Galapia(SP?). I am calling  
for the defunding of the DOT by 50 percent. I have  
saved for 75 percent or 80 percent because there's a  
lot of corruption with the DOT, especially with  
transportation alternatives and open plans and arise  
[03:53:41]. I'm calling for the defunding of the  
DOT. Why is the NYPD being -- I mean why is the  
Sanitation being defunded. Shout to everybody out  
there fighting for the composting. Why is the  
Sanitation being defunded? Why does education need  
to be defunded while the DOT, which is a corrupt  
organization ran by a corrupt Ydanis Rodriguez who is  
a corrupt Eric Adams is allowed to keep their budget?  
They got an increase of their budget, so I'm calling  
for defunding of the DOT. I am calling for the  
eradication of the influence of the community boards  
by Cathy Price, Jexi Jabat(SP?), Dexi Plum(SP?),

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Derrick Holmes(SP?), Danny Harris, Sarah Lynn,  
Elizabeth Adams, and many more Ligi Gallapia and many  
more and we need to stop with the influencing of the  
community board. Because a lot of our tax dollars is  
allowed through the lobby at the community boards.  
So, we need to start defunding these organizations.  
We need those three and Third Section England, they  
need to be cut to \$250,000 maximum other than \$1  
million.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: So, if you give me a  
few seconds. So, that's what I'm going to say is  
defund the DOT. Defund Transo. Defund Rise Lines  
and defund the Third Section England and Justice  
Project and Defund DOT. Thank you Justin Brannan.  
Take care man. Get home safe.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Christine  
Hensen followed by Toge Sutton. Christine Hensen?  
Alright we're now going to Toge Sutton.

CHRISTINE HENSEN: Good evening folks. Can you  
hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED: Bless you. This has been such a  
long day. Thank you for still being here and

1 listening. We've heard so many incredible  
2 testimonies with specifics, so I'm going to do what I  
3 did at the PEP and that is explain these budget cuts  
4 as violence, which they are. We hear a lot about the  
5 budget in the context of safety. And that is the  
6 excuse used to defund education, defund childcare,  
7 defund children's parks and libraries and senior  
8 meals. And we all should be able to agree that this  
9 is unacceptable.  
10

11 When we talk about safety, we are talking about  
12 holistic safety and the new class of school safety  
13 agents cannot replace the importance of a full-time  
14 social worker at every New York City Public School or  
15 a full-time nurse at every New York City Public  
16 School or a full-time well-staffed kitchen staff. As  
17 we continue to navigate a pandemic, no one wants to  
18 talk about it anymore.

19 We have to think about the fact that when kids  
20 leave school, right? They now, there's no Saturday  
21 school. Their afterschool programs are defunded.  
22 They, Pre-K to 3K we just got in my daughters  
23 elementary school in addition to 14 last year. It's  
24 not lasting because of the budget cut. So, myself as  
25 a parent association member, we are scrambling to



fundraise for things that we've never had to  
fundraise before in addition to all the things that  
we knew we would, right? So, the budget cuts impact  
nonprofits and for-profits and city structures too  
but I want to take it even more granular and talk  
about just about the individual level for many of us  
as parent leaders. Which are known as CECs but you  
might better understand as school boards.

I also want to take this time really to just  
drive home the point that the Mayor is completely  
ill-equipped and that under Mayoral control he gets  
to decide the budget and I want the City Council to  
use this power as a body and really the only check  
and balance that exists to tell this man no.  
Unapologetically because the entire City of New York  
stands with you in saying that these budget cuts are  
egregious. They are unacceptable.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

UNIDENTIFIED: They are undemocratic. They are  
fast and they should not have been. We need to fund  
students, families, communities and the supportive  
services and structures that we know will allow New  
York City to not only survive but thrive and we need  
to be very careful about allowing this person just

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because he is a representative right? Because some  
of these leaders look like the communities that they  
serve. To get away with being co-cop, republicans  
and democratic. So, I thank you for your advocacy.  
I ask that you keep it up and know that you have an  
entire city of students, parents, educators and New  
Yorkers behind you. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
from Delila Whirl followed by Fiona O'Grady.

DELILA WHIRL: Hi, good evening. So good to be  
here with you. Okay, I'm ready. So, I am Delila  
Whirl Educational Director at Marshall England Early  
Learning Center. One of seven sites of Hybridge  
Council servicing the Hybridge spectrum of the - I  
oversee 14 teaching staff and a total of 79 students  
ages 2 through 5 and our birth through 4 program and  
special education.

Research shows that too many families are  
struggling at this time to access affordable  
childcare. And many providers are struggling to keep  
their doors open. The Mayor's proposed cuts carry  
the potential to undermine early childhood education  
in the city drastically. How does this help us in  
the long term to advance our city's educational

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system or address racial disparities in education?

3 How does this budget cut add pages to closing the  
4 achievement gap in our education system.

5 [INTERFERENCE [03:59:58]- [04:00:18]

6 DELILA WHIRL: Should I keep going?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes please.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, go ahead.

9 DELILA WHIRL: Okay, alright. If early childhood  
10 education funding suffers, a \$120 million cut as  
11 proposed by our Mayor, what are the alternatives for  
12 our infants? Whose language and learning mild delays  
13 do not meet the eligibility requirements for programs  
14 like the New York City Early Intervention program but  
15 who would benefit from the exposure of their  
16 enrollment in an early childhood education setting,  
17 right? We want to think about that.

18 What about how does this budget cut further the  
19 efforts to align CBOs with New York City's DOE to  
20 ensure continuity of education, curriculum, planning,  
21 instructional strategies approaches and professional  
22 learning for CBO teaching staff.

23 Lastly, what is taken away must be replaced.

24 That's just the law of attraction. So, then how will  
25 the city replace the loss of funding? Child seats

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3 and employment vacancies. Are early childhood  
4 education charter school lingering in the future us?  
5 The future is now and it starts with our children.  
6 Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
8 from Fiona O'Grady followed by Chistine Hensen.

9 FIONA O'GRADY: Hello good evening. Can you hear  
10 me?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

12 FIONA O'GRADY: Good evening Chair Justin Brannan  
13 and thank you to the members of the Committee. I was  
14 there this morning at 10:00 in the Chambers and Chair  
15 Brannan. You are a rockstar in your past life and a  
16 rockstar today. Thank you.

17 I am Fiona O'Grady; I'm representing Samaritan  
18 Suicide Prevention Center, which has operated New  
19 York City's own anonymous and completely confidential  
20 suicide prevention essential hotline for over 40  
21 years. We run education programs all over the  
22 boroughs. Our hotline response to 50,000 calls, 40  
23 percent of which are I mean, 40,000 of which are from  
24 New Yorkers in crisis.

25 I echo the Speakers comments this morning to  
surgically make cuts instead of across the board,

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especially when it comes to behavioral health sector.

When it comes to mental health in the U.S., we know that since COVID, the CDC reported that depression as quadrupled. Anxiety has tripled and suicide ideation has doubled. Given the focus of these budget cuts, which seems to be on our migrant population, then let it be known that one in three asylum seekers experience high rates of depression, anxiety and PTSD.

We've heard a lot about our schools and youth. Let it be known that between 2019 and 2021, both CDC youth risk behavioral surveys showed in both those two-year periods that 9.2 percent of our high school students actually attempted suicide in New York City. That's one in ten of our high school students. 15.6 percent of our high school students reported that they seriously considered attempting suicide. So, we know that our children are talking about it and we know that they need our help. Samaritans provides information to over 3,000 professionals annually -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

FIONA O'GRADY: Including guidance counselors, social workers, SAPIS and students in temporary housing. I just want to say thank you so much. We

applaud the City Council for pushing the Mayor's  
Office to utilize more nonprofits and prevent budget  
cuts to them, especially in the behavioral health  
sector. New York City nonprofits such as ours,  
Samaritans have the capacity. We have the experience  
and are trusted by New York City's local  
constituents.

With every story we've heard from New Yorkers and  
every life we've touched, we strongly urge you to  
ensure that the Mayor's Administration corrects how  
these budget cuts are made and instead makes some  
reasonable solutions with surgical cuts to myriad  
problems we face, including suicide. And I think I'm  
one of the only persons or very, very few who are  
even looking and thinking about suicide and suicide  
prevention. Thank you for your funding of \$312,000  
from the City Council and it is because of these  
budget we are grateful to the City Council for your  
funding. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christine Hensen followed by  
Dior St Hillaire.

CHRISTINE HENSEN: Hello everyone. Good evening.  
My name is Christine Hensen. I am mother of Andew

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Hensen. He was assaulted by NYPD officers.

[INTERFERENCES 04:05:39]- [04:06:06]

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You're breaking up.

[INTERFERENCE 04:06:13]- [04:06:28]

CHRISTINE HENSEN: Since then, I just pray for  
his safety and hope he will return back to the  
striving level that he was on. [INTERFERENCE  
04:06:42]- [04:06:43] And we automatically seen an  
emergent change from the excessive force that altered  
his life. Looking at the mayor's financial plan  
[INTERFERENCE 04:06:57]- [04:06:57] to investing in  
the kind of violence. All the expenses of New  
Yorkers and it needs to be stopped. The budget needs  
to be slashed. [INTERFERENCE 04:07:20]- [04:07:30]  
other programs that are needed and access to safety.  
That was a police violence that heightened.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

CHRISTINE HENSEN: Sleeping on the streets.  
They're not able to meet their needs. Instead of  
slashing crucial services and agencies, please  
Financial Committee, Mayor Adams, our city needs to  
strive again. Please cut the bloated budget and use  
the money for schools and community and behavior  
services, housing, employment, and healthcare. Thank

you. Thank you for your time and have a safe night.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Dior St.  
Hillaire followed by Nakisha Francios.

DIOR ST HILLAIRES: Good evening Chair Brannan and  
members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for  
hearing all of us today. I am representing the Four  
SWABs of New York City. My name is Dior St. Hillaire  
and I Chair the Bronx SWAB. The four SWAB stand with  
the peoples plan in calling for care not cuts and  
meeting this moment.

My testimony will cover the dubious assertion  
that cutting the New York City Community Compost  
Project will produce meaningful fiscal savings. The  
most fiscally efficient solutions are often not the  
best fiscal solutions. No matter what the city does  
with our organics, there will be associated costs.  
New York City will spend \$291 million to collect and  
process our residential organics whether we compost,  
landfill, or co digest it.

The SWABs believe that New York City should spend  
our \$291 million on the best solid waste solution  
associated with the best solid waste policy that



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3 produces the least harm and greatest benefit to New  
4 York City residents. For organics, that solution is  
5 composting and compost. The New York City Community  
6 Compost Project represents a 30-year accumulation of  
7 institutional knowledge of best practices of how to  
8 move towards a meaningful residential organics  
9 processing program. Whether at a small scale in the  
10 community garden or at a large industrial scale found  
11 on Staten Island, we cannot lose this institutional  
12 knowledge and tool for resident engagement. If we're  
13 going to move forward with the right solutions, we  
14 need the New York City Compost Project to continue.

15 Our city's cutting of these programs makes no  
16 fiscal sense. Our written testimony expands about  
17 the increase to municipal solid waste, the few fiscal  
18 savings and the negative social impacts of the PEG  
19 cuts to New York City Compost project. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now hear from Nakeesha  
22 Francios followed by Rhonda Kieser.

23 NAKEESHA FRANCIOS: Thank you. Thank you Chair  
24 Justin Brannan for the opportunity to testify. My  
25 name is Nakeesha Francios and I am the Policy and  
Advocacy Manager at Good Sheperd Services. Good

Shepherd Services operates 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Nonprofits like Good Shepherd Services are managing prices supporting the new comers, absorbing the cuts to programs in the November Plan and those that will follow and preparing for the funding gaps in the fiscal year 2025. As a result of the Sunsetting of the Federal COVID relief funds.

Additionally, we are advocating to the city to help us meet the needs of our workforce that includes support for cost-of-living adjustment and an increase in base salaries to providers.

With that said, we are calling on the city to reverse these cuts and to engage the nonprofit community in discussion around how to cause the least harm as budgetary decisions are made this fiscal year.

Regarding the November plan, we have already seen cuts to crucial programs that Good Shepherd Services operates in communities across Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. Archies, the New York City Department of Probation terminated the next steps mentoring program in August and later informed providers that you

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should enroll in Archies program. However, in the  
November Plan, DOP is significant reducing Archies  
slots. Where are youth supposed to get the support  
they need if this program is being cut. The  
Department of Youth and community development made  
cost of Come Pass and Summer Rising. This will have  
a direct impact on services. We are concerned that  
the highly anticipated compact and request proposal  
will reflect a reduction of slots across the system.

The Department of Education proposed cuts to  
community schools that will impact four out of the  
seven community schools Good Sheperd services  
supports. The Administration for Children Services  
is set to re-estimate close to home monitoring and  
prevention programs. Good Sheperd services  
prevention Brooklyn Passages, FFT, TCM –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

NAKEESHA FRANCOIS: Case management will be  
terminated effective June 30<sup>th</sup>. Good Sheperd  
Services has 31 education support programs supporting  
over 75,000 students, including learning to work,  
Students Success and are why ABC transport schools in  
community.

And lastly, these programs were needed before the pandemic and are even more important today for our city's long-term recovery. Custodies programs are injustice through the most vulnerable and already under resourced children, families, communities and the workforce that support them. We can all agree that children deserve more, not less and yet we see children and families targeted by the cuts in the November Plan. Unless elected officials act now to reverse these cuts stated out in the November Plan, we are bearing witness to an alarming shrinking of the system and decrease in services to the high impact communities still recovering from the devastating impact of COVID.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

NAKEESHA FRANCOIS: Communities cannot continue to bear these mountain cuts. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear from Rhonda Kieser followed by Lorial Crowder. Rhonda, you're on mute.

RHONDA KIESER: Oh my gosh, thank you. Sorry about that. Good evening members of the Finance Committee, thanks for hearing all of us today. I'm

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3 representing the Four SWABs of New York City and I'm  
4 Rhonda Kieser, I'm Chair of the Brooklyn SWAB. The  
5 Four SWABs stand with the peoples plan in calling for  
6 care not cuts and meeting this moment. The negative  
7 impacts of cutting funding to the New York City  
8 Community Compost Project cannot be ignored. The  
9 seven sister organizations of the New York City  
10 Compost Project provide social connection and build a  
11 strong urban immune system. This is the care that is  
12 threatened by the cuts. Composting maintains the  
13 city's social fabric. Every week, the seven sister  
14 organizations touch hundreds of community volunteers  
15 who help to build and maintain compost piles and  
16 turn, sift and bag finished compost for distribution.

17 Without the compost project last year, 400,000  
18 ton of food scraps would have created methane gas Co2  
19 in landfills, incinerators, and co digesters  
20 contributing to global climate change. 4,000 tons  
21 may not sound like a lot of material but each of the  
22 8 million pounds in that 4,000 tons touches thousands  
23 of New York City residents.

24 These organizations also create green jobs,  
25 employing 115 people, most of whom live within the  
city. The offer 68,000 households and

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3 environmentally responsible and community building  
4 method of disposing of their food scraps. Cutting  
5 funding for this program deprives New York City  
6 residents of their voice and choice in an organic  
7 waste disposal methods hindering their ability to  
8 build and support communities through thoughtful  
9 waste management decisions. Let's not continue to  
10 externalize our methane and Co2 environmental costs  
11 on our communities by landfilling, incinerating and  
12 co digesting our food scraps. Let's support the  
13 social fabric of New York City's communities and not  
14 fray it through miscalculated PEG initiatives. Thank  
15 you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear  
17 from Lorial Crowder followed by Mary Arnold.

18 BETH SLEPIAN: Good evening Chair Brannan and  
19 members of the Finance Committee. Thank you again  
20 for hearing all of us today. I am representing the  
21 Four Solid Waste Advisory Boards of New York City. I  
22 am standing in Lorial Crowder but my name is Beth  
23 Slepian and I am Vice Chair of the Brooklyn SWAB.

24 Today, the Four SWABs spoke to this Committee  
25 about the importance of the New York City Community  
Compost Project. We have shared that the PEG

initiative cuts to the DSNY's community composting program will produce outcomes that increase municipal solid waste, produce few fiscal savings and create negative social impact. Our purported saving from the PEG cuts are financially miscalculated and thus overstated. And the environmental and social costs are ignored. Let's make real fiscal savings for how we manage our solid waste by composting our organic material. Let's not continue to externalize our methane and Co2 environmental costs on our communities by landfilling, incinerating and co digesting our food scraps. Let's support the social fabric of New York City's communities and not fray it through miscalculated PEG initiatives.

Once again, we reiterate the call for care not cuts in meeting this moment. Our written testimony expands about the increase to municipal solid waste, the few fiscal savings, and the negative social impacts of the PEG cuts to the New York City Community Compost Project. I yield back the remainder of my time. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear from Mary Arnold and finally Peter Tarson. I see Mary Arnold is off. Peter Tarson.

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3 PETER TARSON: Alright, hi there. One moment.

4 So, I'm speaking today just to condemn both the  
5 ongoing cuts to basic services from every aspect of  
6 like the waste processing to early education, to  
7 mental healthcare and as well as the ongoing funding  
8 of many police units such as the Strategic Response  
9 Group whose funding is not proportional to the  
10 benefit that they ultimately confer on our  
11 communities and I'm not just going to talk about the  
12 economic figures of this but I am going to say, why  
13 do we allow ourselves to do this? Why do we see  
14 funding that is about the use of force in response to  
15 force as something that is just like a, almost a  
16 responsibility and yet, at the same time, funding  
17 that creates joy and meaning and community  
18 connections is something one must justify and that is  
19 always first to meet its end. Why is it that which  
20 is beautiful that which fundamentally creates a  
21 meaningful urban environment is unnecessary because  
22 it is satisfying and something that is inherently  
23 purely a response to these existing cycles of  
24 disenfranchisement of systemic poverty and the  
25 violence that results from it.



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2 This is necessary apparently. Like I really want  
3 to urge everyone to consider the fact that groups  
4 like the NYPD Strategic Response Group have  
5 brutalized peaceful protestors, directly targeted  
6 Black and Brown communities through both the language  
7 in their handbook surrounding what peaceful movements  
8 are to be suppressed and through their ongoing  
9 deployment against redlined and homeless communities  
10 and they fundamentally no longer cover –

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

12 PETER TARSON: My apologies. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And we've been rejoined by  
14 Mary Arnold. So, Mary Arnold.

15 MARY ARNOLD: Yes, thank you very much Chair  
16 Brannan. It's amazing this hearing. I'm proud to be  
17 here with everybody that's spoken. Please fund  
18 community composting. It's 115 green jobs.

19 At the December 7<sup>th</sup> RAT hearing DSNY Deputy  
20 Commissioner Joshua Goodman, affirmed that DSNY  
21 eliminated community composting and initiated a  
22 procurement for backend processing of Queens and  
23 Brooklyn's organics. Without using OMB climate  
24 budgeting guidance and sustainability and city  
25 resiliency evaluation tools. How do we know this?

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Because DSNY affirmed that OMB didn't provide them to  
DSNY, yet they told the City Council it would. It's  
a fact that DSNY is employing three of the worst ways  
for New York City to manage organics. According to  
USTA's October 2023 Wasted Food Scale, these are  
landfilling, incinerating and co digesting sewage  
with organics. Goodman said that DSNY's criteria  
were beneficial use of organics and keeping organics  
out of landfills. Criteria EPA's scale shows are too  
crude.

Goodman smearing denigration of community  
composting at RAT hearing, and the OMB Directors  
characterization of community composting today as  
small and inefficient are unwarranted. Since DSNY  
chosen technocratic model isn't meeting USCPA's 2023  
Standards and lacks foundational climate  
sustainability and resiliency standards. Community  
composting increases DSNY's compliance with USCTA  
standards, making DSNY more efficient and effective  
in reducing greenhouse gases, toxic pollution and  
waste exports and increasing community benefits –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired.

MARY ARNOLD: By resiliency. Please work with  
the Mayor and Commissioner Tisch to support immediate

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3 restoration of funding for community composting and  
4 it's 115 workers. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, thank you so much and  
6 with that, this Finance Hearing on the November Plan  
7 is adjourned. [GAVEL]  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date DECEMBER 31, 2023