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COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY 1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND
GENDER EQUITY

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February 22, 2022
Start: 1:05 p.m.
Recess: 5:39 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING - (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)

B E F O R E: Tiffany Cabàn,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alexa Avilès
- Gale A. Brewer
- James F. Gennaro
- Jennifer Gutiérrez
- Shahana K. Hanif
- Kristin Richardson Jordan
- Mercedes Narcisse
- Kevin C. Riley
- Althea V. Stevens

A P P E A R A N C E S

Cecile Noel

Commissioner Mayor's Office to End Domestic and
Gender-Based Violence, ENDGBV

Elizabeth Dank

Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel to ENDGBV

Yurika Min

Human Trafficking Survivors

Polina Osterenkova

Victim of Labor and Sex Trafficking

Jayne Bigelsen

Vice President of Advocacy at Covenant House New
York

Stephanie McGraw

Founder and CEO of W.A.R.M.

Alexander Stein

Victim of Domestic Violence

Shamara Kelly

Survivor of Domestic Violence and Community
Organizer at the Voices of Women, VOW

Dana Hanuszcak

Survivor of Domestic Violence and I am Community
Organizer at the Voices of Women

Angelina Rosado

Founder and Executive Director of Returning Hope

Joyce McMillan

Founder and Executive Director of JMacForFamilies
and Parent Legislative Action Network

Margarita Guzman

Executive Director at the Violence Intervention
Program

Bianey Garcia

Transgender Woman from Mexico and Leader of the
Trans Immigrant Project of Make the Road New York

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Victoria Galeana
Make the Road New York

LoriKim Alexander
Community Organizer at the New York City Anti-
Violence Project

Sarah Telson
Deputy Director of Legal Services at the New York
City Anti-Violence Project

Alethia Ramos
Community Member and a Member of the TGNC
Leadership Academy of the New York City Anti-
Violence Project, AVP

Bravo Corazon
Community Member of the New York City Anti-
Violence Project, AVP

Dania Darwish
Founder and the Executive Director of the Asiyah
Women's Center

Beth (Speaking on behalf of Narbada Chhetri)
Adhikaar

Salma Mohamad
Partnership and Capacity Building Specialist at
the Arab American Family Support Center

Katherine Yoem (Speaking for Jeehae Fisher)
Director of Community Engagement and Operations
at the Korean American Family Service Center,
speaking on behalf of Jeehae Fisher

Gabriela Sandoval Requena
Senior Policy Analyst of New Destiny Housing

Rebecca Fisher
Executive Director of New Yorkers Against Gun
Violence

Jess Persaud
Director of Policy at Common Justice

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Jasmine Bowden
Community Member of the New York City Anti-
Violence Project

Andy Bowen
Associate Director of Government Affairs at Sex
Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center

Jared Trujillo
Policy Counsel at the New York Civil Liberties
Union

Laura Russell
Director of the Family Domestic Violence Unit at
the Legal Aid Society

Diane Orengo
Social Worker for Bronx Community Solutions

Patrick Boyle
Assistant Vice President for Public Policy with
Volunteers of American Greater New York

Meghan Downes
Associate Director of Social Work in the Family
Defense Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services

Kelly Grace Price
Close Rosie's

Jane Manning
Director of the Women's Equal Justice Project

Naomi Young
Staff Attorney at Her Justice and Co-Chair of the
New York City Domestic Violence and Consumer Law
Working Group

Jennifer Feinberg
Litigation Supervisor at the Center for Family
Representation

Maria Lizardo
Executive Director of NMIC

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Linda Lopez
Deputy Director of the Legal Center Sanctuary for
Families

Maureen Curtis
Vice President of Criminal Justice Programs for
Safe Horizon

Leah Faria
Community Organizer with the Women's Community
Justice Association

Teal Inzunza
Program Director of the Economic Empowerment
Program at the Urban Resource Institute

Taykina Chowdhury
Associate Director of Helpline and Residential
Programs at Womankind

Antonia Clemente
Executive Director of the Healing Center and
Founder

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2 SERGEANT LUGO: PC recording done.

3 SERGEANT LEONARDO: Cloud recording is rolling.

4 SERGEANT LUGO: Thank you. Mr. Polite.

5 SERGEANT POLITE: Thank you. Good afternoon and
6 welcome to the Remote Hearing on Women and Gender
7 Equity. Will Council Members and Staff please turn
8 on their video at this time. Thank you. To minimize
9 disruptions, please place all cell phones,
10 electronics to vibrate. To send testimony, please
11 send it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again,
12 that's testimony@council.nyc.gov. We are ready to
13 begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Great thank you. Good
15 afternoon folks. I am virtual and at home so I have
16 a make shift gavel. [GAVEL] I'd like to commence
17 the meeting. Good afternoon and thank you for
18 joining the Committee on Women and Gender Equity for
19 this very important oversight hearing on Barriers to
20 Accessing Survivor Services in New York City as well
21 as a Preconsidered Resolution calling upon the New
22 York State legislature to pass and the governor to
23 sign A.8619A in the Assembly Senate Bill 7573, which
24 would expand eligibility for victims and survivors of
25 crime to access victim compensation funds and that's

1
2 sponsored by Council Member Mercedes Narcisse and
3 myself.

4 I am Tiffany Cabàn, my pronouns are she, her and
5 I want to start by thanking you all for being here
6 today at our first hearing of this session. Today,
7 we are going to be focusing on the needs of survivors
8 of abuse and gender-based violence.

9 We know that the imposing majority of people who
10 survive this violence do not report as much to law
11 enforcement. How many avoid interactions with police
12 because of prior negative experiences or because they
13 don't want their assailant imprisoned or because
14 their immigrant status is undocumented and they fear
15 deportation for example. We're going to attempt to
16 find that out today. We know that for many, language
17 access serves as a barrier, our culturally competent
18 language proficient resources available. We're going
19 to attempt to find that out today.

20 We know that for many, technology access serves
21 as a barrier. What if the person doesn't have a
22 smart phone or Wi-Fi, laptop or tabloid you know
23 necessary to register paperwork and personal
24 information. We're going to attempt to find that out
25 today.

1
2 Are there still other barriers that we're unaware
3 of? How pervasive are they? How many people
4 encounter them? What are the consequences? What are
5 the solutions? We're going to attempt to find the
6 answers to all of these questions today and what's
7 clear is that the number of people who experience
8 gender-based intimate partner and domestic violence
9 dwarfs those who access victim and survivor services.
10 And the ubiquity of these incidents is the point.
11 Right, in the past few years, a course millions of
12 voices have swelled up to proclaim that we will no
13 longer tolerate endemic gender-based violence,
14 harassment and abuse. And the lesson of this surge
15 of action is clear. Such stories far from
16 exceptional are everywhere. We will have failed to
17 learn that lesson of all that we have accomplish is
18 punishing a handful of high profile men's of uses of
19 power and violations of women.

20 And so, it's our duty to offer survivors the
21 services that they need on a proactive basis, not
22 just by removing barriers, but by making it common
23 knowledge that they are affective, accessible and
24 confidential ways of obtaining legal advice,
25

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2 counseling, housing vouchers, money to change locks,
3 or any of one hundred other needs.

4 We know that many survivors go without those
5 services and that this is especially true of those on
6 the losing side of various high arches and double
7 standards. Lower income survivors, survivors of
8 color, undocumented survivors, unhoused survivors,
9 disabled survivors and more and it's our duty to find
10 why and to take action on the basis of those
11 findings.

12 And so today, we will be speaking with witnesses
13 about the barriers to accessing survivor services.
14 First, we will hear from the Mayor's Office to end
15 gender-based and domestic violence and then the
16 public and we would of course love for the
17 administration to stay for the duration of the
18 hearing and hear first hand from the community.

19 What factors within our control are getting in
20 the way of connecting survivors with the services
21 they need? What changes can we make to the city's
22 law and practices to remove these impediments?
23 Whatever our findings today, we already know that we
24 will not be satisfied. We know that the answers we
25 obtain to our questions will give rise to other

1 related questions with other related answers. And
2 these will generate subject material for future
3 hearings and so forth.

4
5 And so, I'm excited to work with my colleagues to
6 pursue all these lines of questioning in the pursuit
7 of safe, healthy, equitable city we all want and
8 deserve. And I want to extend particular thanks to
9 Council Member Narcisse for bringing this important
10 Resolution to Council and for partnering with me on
11 it.

12 I would now like to acknowledge my colleagues who
13 have joined us. Like I mentioned, Council Members
14 Narcisse, also joined by Council Member Riley,
15 Richard Jordan, Brewer, Stevens, Gennaro and
16 Gutièrrez. Now, I'm going to turn it over to Council
17 Member Narcisse, who will share remarks on the
18 Preconsidered Resolution.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Great. Hi, good
20 morning everyone. It is my pleasure to be here to
21 introducing that Resolution with my colleagues,
22 Council Member Cabàn.

23 Now we know, less than three percent of all
24 crimes victims in New York receive any victim
25 compensation. It is our duty as elected officials

1
2 serving these vulnerable citizens, remove any
3 barriers impeding their access to relief. We must
4 support all crime victims by guiding them and not
5 impeding them on the road to healing. Which is why
6 myself and my partner, my colleague Council Member
7 Cabàn that introducing the Resolution, calling upon
8 the New York State Legislature to pass and the
9 Governor to sign A.8619A/S.7573. Which will expand
10 eligibility for victims and survivors of crime to
11 access victim compensation funds.

12 It is unfortunate that we have to go through
13 this. Unfortunately, this is yet another segment of
14 our criminal justice system where social inequities
15 wear its ugly head. Reports show that members of the
16 LGBTQIA plus community fear of making reports to the
17 police. With many stating they in turn are abused
18 during the crime reporting process. This is
19 ridiculous. Compounding their victimization.

20 Immigrants like myself, often decline to report
21 crimes because of fear of deportation or losing their
22 pathways to citizenship. While I understand this
23 hearing today is primarily focused on the important
24 issue of gender-based crimes, please allow me to also
25 highlight the intolerable fact that Blacks and

1
2 Latino's, mostly men comprise over 95 percent of our
3 city's shooting victims. Black men are more likely
4 to be criminally victimized than any group. And
5 overwhelmingly, the leading victims of gun violence
6 accounting for 75 percent of our city's shooting
7 victims. However, the least likely to receive victim
8 compensation.

9 Now, if gun violence is a public health crisis,
10 it seems everyone like to say it these days. As a
11 nurse, I can assure you that to fix a health crisis,
12 yes, sometimes you do not need diagnostic care. But
13 without preventive care, which I focus tremendously,
14 the health crisis will surely fester and grow and
15 many of our communities will continue to be torn
16 apart by this ever growing public health crisis. We
17 should thrive for justice for all and to achieve
18 that. But often unkept promise of our legal system,
19 we must endeavor to foster healing for all survivors
20 and crime victims families by providing them with an
21 incumbered pathway to the resources that will allow
22 them to heal and repair after they experienced the
23 violence. This is ridiculous still.

24 We also owe it to them to help ensure that a
25 similar crime does not occur again. As an elected

1
2 body, I will ensure you that a similar crime does not
3 occur again. That's what we're here for. As an
4 elected body, it is my hope that we work to create a
5 corrections system that is rehabilitative for the
6 offender and does not perpetrate a cycle of
7 recidivism. This is the preventive care our city
8 needs the most. And as a nurse, I'm going to
9 continue pushing and work collaboratively with my
10 colleagues to make sure we have the inequities that
11 we need in our city. So, thank you. Thank you so
12 much.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Thank you so much
14 for your leadership on this issue. Now, I am going
15 to turn it over to the Moderator who will review some
16 procedural items relating to today's hearing and call
17 the first panel.

18 MODERATOR: Thank you Chair Cabàn. My name is
19 Chloè Rivera and I serve as Senior Policy Analyst to
20 the Committee on Women and Gender Equity at the New
21 York City Council. I will be moderating today's
22 hearing and calling on panelists to testify.

23 Before we begin, please remember that everyone
24 will be on mute until I call on you to testify.
25 After you are called on, you will be unmuted by a

1
2 member of our staff. Note that there will be a few
3 second delay before you are unmuted and we can hear
4 you.

5 For public testimony, I will call up individuals
6 in panels. Please listen for your name, I will
7 periodically announce the next few panelists. Once I
8 call your name, a member of our staff will unmute
9 you. The Sergeant at Arms will set a clock and give
10 you the go ahead to begin your testimony.

11 All public testimony will be limited to three
12 minutes. After I call your name, please wait for the
13 Sergeant at Arms to announce that you may begin
14 before starting your testimony. For today's hearing,
15 the first panel will include representatives from the
16 Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based
17 Violence or ENDGBV followed by Council Member
18 questions, than public testimony.

19 For ENDGBV, we will have Commissioner Cecile Noel
20 and available for questions and answers we will have
21 Elizabeth Dank Deputy Commissioner and General
22 Counsel to ENDGBV.

23 I will now administer the oath to the
24 Administration. When you hear your name, please
25 respond once a member of our staff unmutes you. Do

1
2 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
3 nothing but the truth before this Committee and
4 respond honestly to Council Member questions.

5 Commissioner Noel?

6 CECILE NOEL: Yes.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you. Deputy Commissioner Dank?

8 ELIZABETH DANK: Yes.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you. Commissioner Noel, you
10 may begin presenting your testimony when you are
11 ready.

12 CECILE NOEL: Good afternoon Chair Cabàn. Can
13 everyone hear me fine?

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, good afternoon.

15 CECILE NOEL: Good afternoon Chair Cabàn and
16 members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.
17 I am Cecile Noel, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office
18 to End Domestic and Gender-Based violence or ENDGBV.
19 I am joined by First Deputy Commissioner and General
20 Counsel Elizabeth Dank. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to speak to you about access to services
22 for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence
23 in New York City.

24 ENDGBV partners with numerous city agencies and
25 over 100 not-for-profit providers and community

1
2 stakeholders to implement innovative initiatives,
3 including the Family Justice Centers. Directly
4 manages a contract portfolio of prevention and
5 intervention programming. We build capacity for
6 agency staff and community members to identify and
7 respond to domestic and gender-based violence through
8 outreach, training. We develop policies and best
9 practices to strengthen the city's approaches to
10 these issues. We collaborate with city agencies and
11 community stakeholders to reduce barriers and to
12 ensure access to inclusive service for survivors of
13 domestic and gender-based violence. Including
14 intimate partner violence, family violence, sexual
15 violence, stalking, human trafficking and other forms
16 of GBV.

17 New York City has a vast network of community
18 based service and agency programming for survivors of
19 domestic and gender-based violence. In addition to
20 the services operated by ENDGBV, which I will discuss
21 some of those in a moment. We work collaboratively
22 with our sister agencies on the implementation of
23 their domestic and gender-based violence programs.
24 Such as the Department of Social Services, Human
25 Resources Administration in relation to the domestic

1 violence shelters and housing programs for survivors.
2
3 And the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, Office of
4 Crime Victim Support in relation to the Domestic
5 Violence hotline, supervised visitation and
6 programming for people who cause harm. This close
7 collaboration is key to supporting ENDGBV and its
8 mission to coordinate the city's response to domestic
9 and gender-based violence across city agencies.

10 The New York City Family Justice Centers or
11 FJC's, use a unique model that places government
12 agencies and not-for-profit partners side by side to
13 support survivors and their children in one location
14 through multidisciplinary services and resources.
15 The FJC's are located in each borough and deliver
16 services through over 40 nonprofit partners. ENDGBV
17 staff oversees the FJC operation and have an
18 administrative team onsite at each FJC.

19 Services include civil legal, criminal legal
20 advocacy, case management, mental health counseling,
21 onsite childcare and therapeutic childrens services,
22 housing and economic assistance, practical supports
23 and additional supportive programming. The FJC's are
24 free and confidential and all are welcome, regardless
25

1
2 of the language spoken, income, gender identity or
3 immigrant status.

4 Interpretation services are available onsite at
5 every FJC and all locations are wheelchair
6 accessible. FJC's are grounded in trauma informed,
7 client centered principles. Clients are presented
8 with accurate information about all possible service
9 options and are empowered to make their own choices
10 regarding the services they would like to receive.

11 Even though the FJC's are collocated with
12 criminal, legal agency partners, engaging with the
13 criminal legal system is completely optional and up
14 to the client. The FJC's have onsite partnerships
15 with community-based organizations that specialize in
16 working with survivors who have been impacted by the
17 criminal legal system. Based on their survivorship,
18 which is often referred to as criminalized survivors.

19 Those providers rising grounds steps to end
20 family violence and the Women Prison Association
21 offer case management, advocacy and supportive
22 services to criminalized survivors seeking services
23 through the FJC. In addition to efforts to ensure
24 survivors know they do not need to engage with the
25 criminal legal system to access services. ENDGBV

1 works with our onsite and offsite partners to hold
2 criminal legal system systems accountable to
3 survivors who are engaged with that system to
4 identify and address ways to improve that engagement.
5 In 2021, the FJC's had over 42,000 client visits,
6 which included over 9,000 new clients.
7

8 In 2018, ENDGBV launched the NYC Hope Website.
9 NYC Hope provides educational materials and
10 comprehensive information on services available to
11 survivors. The NYC Hope resource directory includes
12 information on about nonprofit service providers
13 based in communities that work with survivors in all
14 five boroughs.

15 In 2021, the NYC Hope Website had over 50,100
16 visits, an average of 137 per day and over 18,200 new
17 visitors. That's an average of 50 per day. ENDGBV
18 is dedicated to implementing and enhancing efforts
19 with young people, prevention efforts with young
20 people. Through ENDGBV's Early Relationship Abuse
21 Prevention Program or Early RAPP, the city's
22 contracted providers day one, Rising Grounds, steps
23 to end family violence and the Urban Resource
24 Institute conducted workshops and trainings for young
25 people, providing over 2,583 workshops to youth

1
2 across 102 Department of Education middle schools in
3 36 different City Council districts.

4 We are also committed to expanding our prevention
5 efforts as we were excited to launch a new initiative
6 last year focused on elementary aged youth. Through
7 a partnership with the Mayor's fund and supported by
8 the Jerome H. Hasson(SP?) Fund to address domestic
9 violence.

10 The ABC's of Healthy Relationships Project
11 includes student tool kits and guides for adults
12 working with or caring for children in grades K-5.
13 To help them build the foundational skills necessary
14 to develop healthy relationships, first with their
15 friends and later with their intimate partners. The
16 ABC's materials are available online through ENDGBV's
17 website and the DOE's Parent University Portal.

18 ENDGBV also has a training team that provides
19 tailored trainings on topics across the spectrum of
20 domestic and gender-based violence to city agencies
21 and service providers. The trainings are designed to
22 support organizations in effectively identifying and
23 responding to clients experiencing domestic and
24 gender-based violence. And the team works with
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1
2 organizations to review and enhance current policies
3 and protocols.

4 A foundational goal of the training program is to
5 expand survivors access to services at the FJC and in
6 communities. ENDGBV's programs are data informed and
7 based on best practices and promising models in the
8 field of domestic and gender-based violence. We work
9 closely with nonprofit partners, community
10 stakeholders, local and national experts, government
11 agencies, consultants, academic institutions, and
12 other private partners to research, design, and
13 develop new and innovative programs to respond to
14 domestic and gender-based violence in New York City.
15 We regularly implement robust evaluations to study
16 the implementation and outcomes of our programs and
17 use the information to refine and enhance service
18 delivery. ENDGBV regularly facilitates working
19 groups and convenings with diverse stakeholders on
20 topics related to programming for people who cause
21 harm, criminalized survivors, housing, immigration
22 legal, healthcare responses to domestic and gender-
23 based violence and responses to strangulation in
24 intimate partner violence and human trafficking. We
25 use the discussions and analysis in these groups to

1
2 inform best practices, policy development, program
3 implementation, as well as create a learning
4 community to enhance coordinated and consistent
5 approaches to domestic and gender-based violence.
6 ENDGBV also facilitates the Voices Committee, which
7 is a survivor led group that works to inform policies
8 and programs at ENDGBV and the FJC's. Raise
9 awareness about ENDGBV and domestic and gender-based
10 violence in the community while building a network
11 and developing their own leadership skills. The
12 Voices Committee provides ongoing feedback to ENDGBV.
13 To ensure our work is accountable to survivors and
14 informed by their voices and experiences.

15 In 2021, ENDGBV also launched an advisory council
16 to provide feedback and guidance on the development
17 and implementation of ENDGBV's programs, policies
18 and/or campaigns as well as the ways to strengthen
19 the city's approach to domestic and gender-based
20 violence. The impact COVID-19 has put into sharp
21 focus the vulnerabilities that many people in our
22 city face every day, especially domestic and gender-
23 based violence survivors.

24 And highlighted the barriers and challenges that
25 we know keep people from seeking help and finding

1
2 safety. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our top
3 priority has been to ensure the continuity of
4 services, access to resources, and unwavering support
5 to survivors. The FJC's and nonprofit service
6 providers utilized creative engagement approaches
7 that were developed with survivors and grounded in
8 safety and minimizing risks.

9 We were encouraged to see that new clients were
10 able to identify resources and reach out safely for
11 assistance. ENDGBV continued to conduct the FJC
12 satisfaction surveys during the pandemic and those
13 surveys revealed that 94 percent of respondents would
14 recommend the FJC to others.

15 In June of 2020, to address the increase in
16 emergency needs of survivors due to the huge economic
17 impact of COVID, ENDGBV launched the city's first
18 financial relief program for survivors.

19 Incorporating best practices from other successful,
20 flexible spending across the country and building
21 upon existing city investments for domestic and
22 gender-based violence survivors.

23 The program provided 377 clients with plans that
24 average more than \$1,200. The program dispersed over
25 \$468,750. Now, we are beginning to move past the

1
2 immediate impact of COVID-19 and we will begin to
3 explore the longer term impacts of the pandemic on
4 survivors. We know that switching to remote
5 operations has inspired ENDGBV and our providers to
6 think creatively and innovatively about how to reach
7 survivors and deliver services in new ways.

8 We already know that there are some great lessons
9 to be learned from this experience that will enhance
10 some of the ways in which we provide services. We
11 also recognize that it is essential to continue to
12 integrate new methods of service deliveries and as we
13 do so, it will be critical to enhance survivor access
14 to mobile devices and the internet.

15 ENDGBV and partnership with the Mayor's Fund to
16 advance the City of New York has developed a new
17 public, private partnership to support survivors and
18 minimize the digital divide they have experienced
19 through a new initiative with T-Mobile. ENDGBV is
20 distributing 1,000 mobile devices to survivors
21 seeking services through the FJC and through our
22 nonprofit community providers. In addition to
23 receiving a free mobile device, survivors also have
24 the option to access discounted mobile plans through
25 T-Mobile.

1
2 We look forward to continuing to collaborate with
3 the Council, our sister agencies and most importantly
4 our community partners who have gone to extraordinary
5 lengths to support survivors during the pandemic.
6 Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today
7 and I welcome any questions you may have.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Okay, I'm just
9 going to ask for one moment of your patience and I'll
10 be right with you.

11 I just wanted to take a second to acknowledge
12 some more Council Members who have joined us.
13 Council Member Mealy and Avilès. Okay, so inclusive
14 of ENDGBV and the FGC's, what is the full scope of
15 city resources, programming and services available to
16 survivors and victims of domestic and gender-based
17 violence?

18 CECILE NOEL: Good afternoon again to all the
19 Council Members. I think it is real important to
20 recognize that ENDGBV or that domestic and gender-
21 based violence crosses many areas across our city and
22 ENDGBV has a portfolio services but there are other
23 services that exist outside of the ENDGBV portfolio
24 and they are run by other agencies. We do our very
25

1
2 best to try and inform that programming but those
3 programs are run by the agencies.

4 I'll give you an example. Again, the shelter
5 system, which is a huge component and provides a
6 necessary service for survivors of domestic and
7 gender-based violence is run by DSS, HRA, and that
8 system is one that we definitely work with them and
9 collaborate on but they are responsible for operating
10 it.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And is there a website or
12 resource that pulls all of the resources available to
13 survivors? So, from all agencies, not limited to
14 your own.

15 CECILE NOEL: There is not one. Our NYC Hope
16 website provides community-based organizations and
17 providers and many city agencies as well that provide
18 those services.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And when you say that you
20 inform the services that might be housed or provided
21 by other agencies, practically speaking, what does
22 that look like?

23 CECILE NOEL: We collaborate with them. So,
24 again, using DSS as an example, we often talk with
25 them about the challenges that providers are telling

1
2 us about the shelter system, collaborate on how we
3 can improve that. Ways of thinking outside of the
4 box. Again, holding survivors experiences at the
5 center of that. We want to do that. For instance,
6 MOCJ also has the domestic violence hotline contract.
7 How do we – how can we improve that service? How can
8 we collaborate understanding that there's a need that
9 does this and how do we do that? So –

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And across services, what are
11 the eligibility requirements for access?

12 CECILE NOEL: For the FJC's, the only thing that
13 one has to be is a survivor of domestic and gender-
14 based violence.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And inclusive of FJC clients,
16 how many New Yorkers access survivors resources
17 annually over the past three years?

18 CECILE NOEL: Over the past – I can tell you that
19 over the last year in 2021, the FJC saw over 42,000
20 client visits. Every system has their own data
21 collection process and one would have to ask that
22 system about it. But for us and for ENDGBV, which is
23 the FJC, is what we oversee and manage. There were
24 42,000 client visits in 2021.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and you mentioned
3 that the only requirement for the FJC is that you are
4 a survivor. Are New Yorkers ever denied access to
5 survivor resources and services due to eligibility
6 requirements, despite that being the case in the FJC?
7 And then, the second part of that question is, is
8 there ever – is there ever a case outside of FJC's?

9 CECILE NOEL: I can speak to FJC services and for
10 FJC's, our goal here you know is to really make sure
11 that we're meeting the client where they are. We
12 provide services to survivors of domestic and gender-
13 based violence but we completely recognize very much
14 that our services might not be appropriate to
15 everyone or might not be for everyone.

16 So, our goal in meeting clients where they are is
17 to one, identify what their needs are. Figure out if
18 the FJC is the most appropriate source for them to
19 have their needs met and if it is not, to connect
20 them in every way possible to community resources
21 that can actually meet their needs.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And so, in terms of cases
23 where there's a determination made that the FJC is
24 not the appropriate, they need to receive services,
25 what are the reasons behind it?

1
2 CECILE NOEL: Uhm, it could be client choice.
3 That they want to get services within a community
4 with a community-based provider closer to home
5 because that makes sense for them and their family
6 and for their needs. It might not be the right
7 compliment of services that they're looking for.
8 Some survivors come to us and take some of our
9 services and choose to receive others in the
10 community. It is really centered around what's best
11 for this client in this way. And so, we are in every
12 way trying to connect and meet the client where they
13 are.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And so, at what rate are
15 potential clients – that that is not the venue or the
16 space where their needs are being met.

17 CECILE NOEL: I don't think we can provide the
18 rate but I do think that we can say collectively that
19 if 42,000 clients visits over the year, now is a
20 substantial number of clients receiving service from
21 us. And connecting those clients who feel that they
22 would like to explore other options is our goal.
23 That's what we're doing on the other side.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you.
25

1
2 CECILE NOEL: And it provides a significant
3 service for those who choose to stay with us.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And can you provide a
5 breakdown of cost by undelivered service type? So,
6 as example, like shelter, counseling, etc.?

7 CECILE NOEL: Those services by type of service?

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes.

9 CECILE NOEL: We don't have that breakout with us
10 but we can certainly look into that and get back to
11 you. Are you saying across city agencies or just for
12 the FJC's?

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: For both but it's okay if you
14 aren't prepared.

15 CECILE NOEL: Okay, but we can look at that and
16 get back to you with that.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Thank you and can
18 you describe how the FDC tracks clients?

19 CECILE NOEL: The FDC has a tracking data base
20 that we use, alright. Clients come into the FJC on
21 their screen first to make sure again that you
22 understand the FJC, understand the compliment of
23 services. And if this is not the place that's most
24 suited to your needs, we will connect you at that
25

1
2 point, at the point of screening to other sources and
3 resources in the community.

4 Once that's established, we have a basic database
5 that collects demographics. Clients are asked and
6 must consent to having their information in our
7 database. And some clients don't necessarily want
8 that. So, our database at any given point may not
9 continue the demographic information of all of the
10 clients who come into the FJC because they must give
11 consent. That database is controlled by DoITT and
12 it's an online database that we use.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And how often do folks opt
14 out of providing information to contribute to the
15 data you're collecting?

16 CECILE NOEL: We can look at that but the numbers
17 are not that high generally but we can certainly get
18 back to you with that information.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. And does the
20 involvement with the criminal legal system impact a
21 survivors eligibility or ability to access any of
22 those services? So, like for example, if they have
23 an open criminal case.

24 CECILE NOEL: No, it does not affect their
25 eligibility. As I said before, we try to meet

1
2 survivors where they are and connect them wherever
3 possible to the services that they need. We also
4 recognize that abusers can use the criminal legal
5 system as a tool against survivors. And so, we have
6 seen in our experience that we've seen survivors come
7 in, provide them services and then there's an order
8 of protection against them.

9 We continue to provide that survivor services
10 because we know that abusers are those who cause harm
11 can use other system systems as tools against
12 survivors.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And do you know how many
14 criminal court defendants or folks with open cases
15 are served by the FJC's annually?

16 CECILE NOEL: No, I do not have that information
17 here but we can certainly look to providing you with
18 that information.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And can you describe the
20 FJC's relationship with the collocated DA's offices?
21 So, for example, how would a survivor who might be
22 uncomfortable being around law enforcement or the
23 DA's Office be served and how would such a survivor
24 be made aware of other options?
25

1
2 CECILE NOEL: I think it's important to
3 understand the layout of our FJC's first and
4 foremost. We have five FJC's in there and there's
5 one in each borough. In two of our – in four of our
6 buildings, we are managed by DCAS, they're DCAS owned
7 buildings, city-owned buildings and they manage that
8 space.

9 There's one building in Brooklyn that's a leased
10 building. Two of our facilities in Staten Island and
11 Queens are not collocate our street level facilities
12 that are stand alone facilities, where one can enter
13 and it is a standalone building. In the other three
14 locations, we are located in high rise buildings that
15 also house the district attorney's offices. Our
16 offices are separate and distinct from the district
17 attorney's offices. We understand, we absolutely
18 understand that that collocation in the spaces can be
19 a chilling affect for survivors. And we have
20 explored in every way possible, ways of making
21 survivors feel more comfortable accessing our
22 services in that space.

23 For example, we have had providers reach out to
24 us, expressing the fears of their client where we've
25 met them downstairs, met them in person, ushered them

1
2 in, welcomed them to the family justice center. And
3 at every juncture have them understand that we are
4 separate from that system and they do not have to
5 engage with the criminal legal system. We've done
6 that.

7 We message that on the phone in every way that we
8 can, so that clients coming into our space, survivors
9 coming into our space who may feel trepidation fear
10 about that, we can manage it in those ways. We are
11 also actively working with our criminal legal
12 partners to think about their services and how they
13 can be more welcoming to individuals who might not
14 feel as comfortable as others in coming into that
15 space, and what that takes to do it. And how we're
16 using survivors voices to inform their practice.

17 But we again will connect survivors to community
18 resources if that's a better answer for them. But we
19 will go above and beyond to actually make that space
20 as welcoming as we can and protective for those who
21 are coming in. And what we have found is that even
22 those clients who express fear and trepidation after
23 the first time, will come back time and time again to
24 receive services.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and can you
3 describe how FJC's utilize restorative justice
4 practices to meet the needs of survivors and whether
5 they are effective addressing those needs?

6 CECILE NOEL: We do use restorative justice
7 practices and have been using them, especially around
8 our programming, our recently launched programming
9 with individuals who are causing harm. We engage
10 with a consultant in a year long process to develop
11 really a paper about how we can in fact in moving in
12 this direction, use restorative justice practices to
13 create change in individuals who are causing harm.
14 And that's part of the programming that we are now
15 rolling out in community with city led, with city
16 contracts and partners in addressing how we can do
17 that programming for an abuser, for folks causing
18 harm.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And in addition to some of
20 the restorative justice practices that you all
21 incorporate, which just for context for other folks,
22 addresses the specific conflict between a survivor or
23 victim and offender or somebody who has caused harm.
24 Transformative justice is a model that strives to use
25 the conflict as an opportunity to address larger

1
2 sociopolitical injustices. And so, if it's
3 applicable at all, can you describe the ways in which
4 the city utilizes – additionally utilizes a
5 transformative justice approach?

6 CECILE NOEL: In developing the curriculum that
7 we're using in our programming with those causing
8 harm, we take a look at the overall trajectory or the
9 overall spectrum of institutional harm. Long harms
10 that have been caused, historical harms that have
11 been caused primarily to marginalized populations,
12 people of color and considering how those harms are
13 still being operationalized today, managed today and
14 again, recognizing for the folks who are
15 participating in our programming there, that these
16 are real issues that we want to talk about in this
17 space as we begin to address their individual
18 behaviors that are also causing harm.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and how can City
20 Council help in – how can our Council help in
21 achieving transformative justice reform?

22 CECILE NOEL: We can, in the space of domestic
23 and gender-based violence, we look forward to
24 partnering with you to really looking at communities
25 and historical harm in communities, putting that in

1
2 context of how we can help survivors achieve safety.
3 Understanding that within their community and
4 connecting folks to services. Actually acknowledge
5 some of those harms as well as delivering services
6 that our clients entered in trauma inform and moving
7 survivors forward as well as those who caused harm,
8 addressing that as well.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. And Chloè, if
10 there are any present Council Members that want to
11 ask questions as well.

12 MODERATOR: Yes, I would like to remind Council
13 Members that you may use the raise hand function in
14 Zoom and you will be called on the order of hands
15 raised if you have questions for the administration.

16 At this time, I see Council Members Riley,
17 Narcisse, Avilès, and Brewer and we will go in that
18 order. Please remember to keep your question and
19 answers to five minutes. The Sergeant at Arms will
20 maintain a clock and a member of our staff will
21 unmute you. You may begin after I call on you and a
22 Sergeant gives you the queue. We will now hear
23 questions from Council Member Riley.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Moderator.
3 Thank you Sergeants and thank you Chair Cabàn. Thank
4 you to the Administration for presenting. I don't
5 know if this is the proper platform to ask this
6 question but I just wanted to address it because I
7 had a meeting with this group today that was
8 addressing human trafficking.

9 So, I just wanted to kind of speak on what
10 resources that the administration has to address
11 human trafficking. I think it was alarming because a
12 few weeks ago, after I was speaking to this group,
13 there was a young lady who was trying to take a Lyft
14 cab and was very scared because the Lyft driver was
15 driving very slow and then a white van pulled up and
16 she had to run out of the car and it was just you
17 know a scary situation. So, I just wanted to ask, is
18 there any resources or what are we doing to address
19 the human trafficking that's happening within our
20 city?

21 CECILE NOEL: Thank you for that question and yes,
22 human trafficking is a serious issue in our city and
23 nationwide as well. Our office works with providers
24 in this space. Community-based providers in this
25 space to really consider access to services. How do

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2 we ensure that survivors know and have access to
3 services? What are the services that are available.

4 On our NYC Hope website, there are resources
5 there listed for folks who are experiencing
6 trafficking that they can call. There's a
7 specialized trafficking resource out of Gouverneur,
8 which is a resource for folks who have been
9 trafficked, where they can actually receive not only
10 healthcare but services and immigration services and
11 legal services. We in our family justice centers
12 also see trafficking survivors. We provide services,
13 we provide civil legal services and counseling and
14 connection to services for those who have been
15 trafficked.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner and
17 is there any preventative services you provide with
18 like signs of trafficking to families? Because
19 another thing that was brought to me in this meeting
20 today is that even with the younger kids, they're
21 actually using kids their age to help them traffic.
22 So, is there any like signs or what can we do as an
23 administration? Is there more funding that we need
24 to provide the CBO's to kind of get them to you know
25

1
2 educate our parents and our community about what's
3 going on?

4 CECILE NOEL: Absolutely right that this is a
5 significant issue particularly for young people. We
6 worked with the Department of Education in 2021 to
7 actually implement a trafficking training for
8 students and for teachers. We can happily share some
9 of those trafficking resources that are out there
10 that are available for parents to download and take a
11 look at some of the signs, which are out there. And
12 many of our providers in the community also do that
13 kind of work and so, Council Member, if you would
14 love to host a forum, we would be happy to come –

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: I would love that, yes.

16 CECILE NOEL: And talk about trafficking so that
17 we can see the signs and provide resources as well.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner.
19 Thank you Chair.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you Council Member Riley.
21 Next, we will hear from Council Member Narcisse.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Hi, good
24 afternoon everyone and thank you again. I'm not sure
25 if there's – anyone can answer that question from you

1
2 or the Commissioner. I'm not sure if there's a law
3 on this possible question. Is the NYPD mandated to
4 offer information to victims, to crime victims,
5 families on available compensation? What's available
6 to them?

7 CECILE NOEL: I know that the NYPD and the DVPO
8 officers offer information when they are going out on
9 home visits to survivors. Whether it is mandated or
10 not, we can certainly follow-up and get back to you
11 but NYPD, DVPO's, the Domestic Violence Police
12 Officers provide information when they do their
13 follow-up visit about community resources, about our
14 Family Justice Centers. They truly offer a wealth of
15 information.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Chloè, before we move on, can
18 I jump in with a few law enforcement related
19 questions to piggyback on Council Member Narcisse?

20 MODERATOR: Yes, of course.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Alright, thank you. Okay, so
22 can you describe more generally if and how, exactly
23 how ENDGBV partners or works with Law Enforcement and
24 the NYPD in particular?

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2 CECILE NOEL: We partner with several law
3 enforcement agencies. We definitely, the Department
4 of Probation and Correction. We work with MOCJ. We
5 work with many agencies who live in that spear. We
6 work with the sheriff. Because we understand that
7 domestic and gender-based violence crosses into many
8 of these spears as well. And how we work with them
9 is we do lots of training. We collaborate with them
10 on policies and that they're rolling out on
11 programming. Making sure that we are keeping
12 survivors at the center of that conversation of
13 policy to make sure that we're doing the best job
14 that we can to ensure that when they're rolling out
15 policies and the like, that it truly is informed by
16 survivors experiences and it's coordinated across
17 city agencies, which is always a challenge in a big
18 city. But we do our very best to make sure that
19 we're aware of policies that PD is rolling out and we
20 can think about that and work with them and we do a
21 lot of training with the agencies that I've just
22 named.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. And victims and
24 survivors – and you mentioned this earlier, don't
25 always report DV or DV to law enforcement for a

1
2 variety of reasons. Beyond NYPD radio runs, does the
3 city have any other way to capture the full scope of
4 the DV and ENDGBV across the five boroughs?

5 CECILE NOEL: That's the primary metric that we
6 use in terms of the number across all five boroughs
7 would be the runs, yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay and very often LGBTQ
9 plus survivors are arrested along with or instead of
10 the person causing harm. How can the city do better
11 to not further traumatized the survivors and victims'
12 when they are at their most vulnerable?

13 CECILE NOEL: We are working with NYPD to really
14 improve the training that's done there to really
15 recognize how we can support survivors more. We are
16 currently working on a system of trying to think
17 about how we can engage NYPD, particularly patrol,
18 around their response to these incidents and how we
19 can make sure that the situation that you just named
20 is unlikely to occur.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And then my last question
22 related to this is other than cooperating with law
23 enforcement, how can undocumented survivors wary of
24 being detained or deported get assistance with
25 immigration proceedings through the U Visa process?

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2 CECILE NOEL: They can come into our Family
3 Justice Centers. They can clearly do that. We can
4 connect them to community based providers who can
5 help them through the T and U Visa process. That is
6 a challenging process and we work with survivors on
7 it every day.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: But are those survivors
9 ineligible for adjustment of status through a U Visa
10 application if they decide not to report to Law
11 Enforcement or cooperate in a Law Enforcement
12 investigation?

13 CECILE NOEL: I think a lot of that can be -
14 generally the DA set the policies around the U and T
15 Visa process. We have seen in our work and
16 collaboration that we have been able to work with the
17 DA's around difficult cases where we can have that
18 status adjusted. Sometimes without some of that
19 heavy law enforcement involvement.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and I apologize; I
21 have one more question on this area. We know from
22 the National Center for Women in Policing and books
23 like 'Police Wife,' The Secret Epidemic of Police
24 Domestic Violence that those in law enforcement, the
25 law enforcement profession are at least two to four

1
2 times more likely to abuse their intimate partner
3 than the average American family. And furthermore,
4 we know that the uniquely difficult barrier, spouses
5 of and partners of law enforcement facing access in
6 care. So, knowing this, you know, my question for
7 you is, is ENDGBV aware of this and is there
8 programming that specifically address this reality?
9 And then finally, do you track the number of
10 survivors that you support that identify this law
11 enforcement as the harming party?

12 CECILE NOEL: So, we do not track those who
13 identify as law enforcement parties but we are
14 working with NYPD to look at their process for having
15 survivors within their system come forward and feel
16 supported. In fact, we just past or in the last
17 administration pass EO85, which is an Executive Order
18 for all city agencies to appoint a liaison that would
19 be there to help survivors not only come forward but
20 connect with services outside of their agency through
21 the Family Justice Center or any system that they
22 choose. But what it does do is ensure that survivors
23 that training is happening on the ground in the
24 agency and that to, survivors can feel that they can
25 come forward and feel supported in reporting and

1
2 finding resources. And we are at the implementation
3 stage of EO85.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: So, what I'm hearing in your
5 answer is specifically that there are efforts to
6 reach survivors in the law enforcement who are
7 actively employed in the law enforcement community,
8 but more specifically, my question is about
9 programming that reaches out to, addresses survivors
10 whose partner or who's being harmed. The party that
11 is doing the harming is a member of the law
12 enforcement community.

13 CECILE NOEL: And specific programming to address
14 that no but what we know is as we train more, as we
15 do more training with not only NYPD but across the
16 city agencies and with city employees, we will also
17 begin to have identification of abusive partners and
18 we will have programming that we can refer these
19 partners to as well. Which is our programming around
20 individuals causing harm.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And I'll -

22 CECILE NOEL: [INAUDIBLE 56:07].

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Oh, go ahead. Go ahead,
24 sorry.

25 CECILE NOEL: No, that's fine. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And I'll just turn it back to
3 my colleagues. I know there's a few members ready to
4 ask their questions.

5 MODERATOR: Yes. We will now hear questions from
6 Council Members Avilès, Brewer and Stevens. The
7 Sergeant at Arms will maintain a clock and will call
8 on you when you're ready. Next, we will hear from
9 Council Member Avilès.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Great. Can you hear me
12 okay?

13 MODERATOR: Yes, you may begin.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Okay. I'm sorry. Thank
15 you so much Chair Cabàn for hosting this hearing
16 today. I had some questions in regards to the
17 ecosystem of organizations that you know support
18 survivors of harm across the city. I heard a lot
19 about how robust FJC has been in terms of you know
20 having serving 42,000 New Yorkers. I would like to
21 hear a little bit more about – and also how much
22 referrals are done to community-based organization.
23 We know a healthy ecosystem is robust organizations
24 at every level, so I'd love to hear a little bit more
25 about how many community-based service providers are

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2 working with FJC. I'd love to learn a little bit
3 more also about the funding mechanism. What
4 percentage of the funding actually goes to support
5 those on the ground organizations, right?
6 Organizations that are within communities that are
7 culturally competent, that host those kinds of like
8 direct services with communities. And would love to
9 hear a little bit more about in terms of those
10 referrals to the community-based kinds of services.
11 What are the services the referrals are based on? I
12 felt like I said a lot of referral there, so excuse
13 me.

14 CECILE NOEL: She did but I'm going to try to
15 tackle those one at a time. So, first, I want to say
16 that ENDGBV on a whole has a robust portfolio of
17 partners in this work. Over 100 community-based
18 organizations that work with us throughout the city
19 and all the boroughs. FJC's on average have about 40
20 community partners who work onsite. Some of them
21 work one day, some work five days. You know, these
22 are partners who are doing the work with us every
23 day. So, on average, it's about 40 and a lot of them
24 are based within that borough.

25

1
2 So, in Queens, you're going to have a lot of
3 organizations whose main office is based in Queens
4 and they are out posting staff to the Family Justice
5 Center. We work in kind. They often – our
6 community-based organization are in fact the case
7 managers on site. They are following that client
8 through the Family Justice Center, connecting that
9 survivor and family to the services that they need in
10 the space but they're also connecting the survivor
11 and children to services outside of the space if
12 that's what's needed. And that's how our model looks
13 and so, in terms of the resources that we bring
14 there, we offer space that providers can use. They
15 come in, they have offices and space and everything
16 that they need and in turn they give us the services
17 in kind. They provide the case management and all of
18 those services in kind.

19 And so, was there another part to your question?
20 So, a number of community-based providers, FJC's and
21 how we relate. How that community referral pathway
22 goes and also, I want to say we have providers who
23 are not collocated in our space, sending us referrals
24 when appropriate as well. Sending survivors to the
25 Family Justice Center. Walking survivors into the

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2 Family Justice Center because they may have
3 trepidation or may have some fear. Walking them in,
4 handing them off to us, so it truly is a warm handoff
5 both ways. It's a warm hand off back into community
6 but it's also a warm handoff from community to us
7 when it's appropriate.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Awesome, thank you so
9 much. Could you tell me a little bit about in terms
10 of the funding, in terms of how much of the kind of
11 entire funding pot is distributed to more kind of
12 localized community-based partners, as opposed to
13 maybe the larger agencies? Like, the larger FJC and
14 how it subgrants to smaller community-based partners.

15 CECILE NOEL: I think one has to look at the
16 individual funding pots. We are funded like any
17 other city agency is funded through OMB to provide a
18 definite service that we have and it's through our
19 FJC's. Many of our partner agencies apply for
20 federal funding pots or state funding pots that we
21 cannot apply for as a government and they receive
22 funding that way. They then will either decide to do
23 that program in community and some of them partner
24 with us and say, you know what, we've gotten this
25 funding. What we want to do is put a service in -

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

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3

CECILE NOEL: At the family justice center and really do some work out of there while also connecting to our community program. So, it really is a partnership on many, many levels. We can't apply for some of those funding pots. We often aren't able to apply for private grants and other things that community partners can. Our funding comes directly through OMB and it supports the Family Justice Centers.

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MODERATOR: Thank you. We will now hear from Council Member Brewer.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Thank you very much. I have four quick questions. You are doing great Madam. I know what it's like.

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First of all, I know that in some cases, at least at St. Luke's and Roosevelt, there are volunteers when there is a victim who will go to the hospital. Because with all due respect, sometimes the doctors are not the most supportive of DV. So, I want to know if that's a citywide program? Should it be? Is it effective? Number one.

1
2 Number two, the order of protection, it's a
3 challenge. Challenge to get it. Challenge that's
4 it's enforced and I just was wondering if there's any
5 ideas that you have. Is it working well or is it
6 just my wrong impression that it needs help? Even
7 though it's not an easy task.

8 Number three, is I believe there are 24 hour -
9 no, that's the problem. There are individuals at
10 precincts who focus on DV but they're not 24 hour and
11 that's one of the problems or maybe that's been
12 changed.

13 And finally, the biggest challenge of all is
14 housing for individuals that is not in the shelters.
15 There's just never enough. I just wondered if you
16 had any statistics on that? Thank you very much.

17 CECILE NOEL: Okay, so let's start, I have
18 hospitals. Hospitals, we have a working group right
19 now working with HHC facilities and others to think
20 about best practices for survivors who are coming
21 through their doors and how can we make that response
22 better and much more robust. And so, that's a
23 working group that we have going on right now. We
24 look to have recommendations come out of that, that
25 will not only be for H&H facilities but we hope for

1
2 every hospital in the city, so that our response to
3 survivors can be stronger and consistent across the
4 board.

5 Orders of Protection. Orders of Protection are a
6 tool, just like any other tool in a tool bag, right?
7 For some survivors this works and for others, it's a
8 challenge. We understand, I understand. There was a
9 time where it was really very difficult. I think in
10 this country and the city nationally, to be able to
11 even get a police officer to respond to a survivor.
12 I think we've come a long way and this is one tool
13 among many. It is not always the right answer for
14 every survivor for a lot of different reasons. And
15 we now respect that and understand that but it
16 definitely for those who need that response, it is an
17 effective tool.

18 You said individuals at the precinct and that's
19 CVAP and that's a contract that the city has to
20 really put advocates in the precinct to better
21 respond. I think there's a whole analysis underway
22 looking at the CVAP program. Thinking about how we
23 can strengthen that program and that's certainly a
24 consideration as we move forward to think about how
25 to make that program that's operating right now

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2 stronger and more effective. And that's certainly
3 one consideration.

4 And finally, housing; housing is often the single
5 biggest barrier to having survivors have long term
6 safety and stability. And we know that it's not only
7 a challenge for us, it's a challenge across the city
8 with a city that is pressed in terms of housing and
9 also pressed in terms of cost. And so, having the
10 two marry, both availability of housing and something
11 that one can afford is really a challenge for
12 survivors and many other populations across the city.

13 What we have found and what we are very, very
14 excited about for the first time ever is the Section
15 8 vouchers that have come into the city. And it's
16 the first time ever that there's been a designation
17 for survivors in community. Its always been the only
18 way to access those vouchers, was from shelter.
19 There's actually an allocation that was made to
20 ensure that survivors fleeing domestic violence can
21 actually have access to these Section 8 vouchers for
22 the very first time.

23 So, that's a major accomplishment both on the
24 side of the city and recognizing that survivors, if
25 they can find safety without going into shelter, than

1
2 we should be making that avenue available. And for
3 those in shelter, it's great they can have that as
4 well. And again, the other housing options that are
5 out there continue to be there. There's some
6 supportive housing, there's FEPS, there's City FHEPS
7 but now they also have Section 8, which we are a big
8 part of supporting and processing those applications
9 through the Family Justice Centers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many do you have
11 available or is it sort of when necessary, they're
12 there? How many estimates?

13 CECILE NOEL: There was an allocation that was
14 made to us and we can get back to you with the exact
15 number.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, just I just want to
17 know if the - because what happens is nobody's going
18 to leave the home if they don't have something to go
19 to that is appropriate. So, you're going to - it's
20 like a catch 22.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, that's what I want to
23 make sure happens. That number would be helpful.
24 Thank you.

25 CECILE NOEL: Okay.

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2 MODERATOR: Thank you Council Member Brewer. We
3 will now hear from Council Member Stevens.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello - good -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon. Thank
7 you Chair, Commissioner and Moderator. You guys are
8 doing a great job. I just had - I have one very
9 specific question than I have more of a general
10 question. So, I have a constituent that I've been
11 working with who was sex trafficked when she was much
12 younger and was part of that, she was forced to marry
13 several men along her way and she's been having
14 tremendous legal issues of just trying to get support
15 and get anyone to like support her through this
16 process.

17 And so, I know we're talking about survivors and
18 things like that but like, what are some of the bene-
19 like, things that we have in place for people who are
20 survivors long term because you know we've been
21 getting a lot of run around, around legal services
22 and things like that.

23 And then my other more general question is
24 around, the Office of Crime Victim Services. They
25

1
2 have an annual report. Do you have access to the
3 2021 report and if so, can you send that to Council?

4 CECILE NOEL: We can certainly look for your last
5 question at the report and see if we can get that to
6 you. I can't answer that question now without sort
7 of going back and huddling with my team but if we
8 have access and available, I'm sure that we can try
9 and send that to you.

10 Now on the first question of the client that
11 you've been working with. It's important to
12 recognize that the FJC has a whole compliment of
13 services that can help trafficking victims. Not only
14 can we help address some of the immediate crisis of
15 housing and shelter and all of the other things like
16 that. We can also use long term work. We have
17 mental health staff there that can provide long term
18 counseling and support. We can help with benefits.
19 We can help with getting someone connected to public
20 assistance if that's what they need. We can help
21 with the housing application. We can navigate some
22 of those legal issues.

23 You know I would say that the person that you're
24 working with have they come to an FJC? Is that an
25 appropriate model? I can have someone reach out to

1
2 you and talk with you about would your constituent be
3 comfortable coming in. If not, we can make
4 connections in the community. But there's a lot of
5 long term services, long term work that we do with
6 survivors over the long haul just to ensure. We know
7 that these issues are really complex and they are
8 really deep. And the answers are not as simple for
9 every case. But what we want to ensure that we're
10 doing is recognizing some of the immediate needs in
11 addressing them and then making sure that over for
12 the long term issues, we're connecting them to
13 appropriate resources.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm sorry, I accidentally
15 muted myself again. That was helpful. Just my other
16 question to is around I believe Alexa was already
17 asking some of these but like, how are we working
18 with like cultural institutions to really support
19 some of this work, because I'm finding too that the
20 cultural response sometimes isn't appropriate right.
21 And so, each culture, each group, they react in
22 situations differently. What are some of the
23 services around does your office offer to support
24 that piece?

25

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2 CECILE NOEL: We have a lot of cultural
3 organizations in the city. We do a lot of training,
4 which I mentioned in my testimony. We have a
5 training team where we go out and we really work with
6 smaller orgs to really recognize how to identify
7 domestic and gender-based violence survivors. How to
8 help them access services. How to work in a trauma
9 informed way. Lots of people care but are they –

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm sorry, not to cut
11 you off because I know my time is running out but my
12 question is more around like, are you working with
13 folks who are actually training your people around
14 cultural and how to be culturally appropriate.
15 Because it's okay that obviously you will go out to
16 do trainings with folks but how are you training
17 folks to be able to respond culturally appropriate?

18 CECILE NOEL: We work with providers who are from
19 that community. Often who are also domestic and
20 gender-based orgs who understand the culture and
21 understand some of the nuances of that culture and we
22 train together to ensure that one, the message is
23 heard, right in a culturally appropriate way as well
24 as ensuring that the services are delivered in ways
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1
2 that are consistent with our understanding of the
3 dynamics of domestic and gender-based violence.

4 And so, our partners in that work, in the space
5 that you're talking about are the many orgs who work
6 in that community, who also work with domestic and
7 gender-based violence survivors.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Council Member Stevens, I'm
9 happy to extend your time if you have additional
10 questions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, I'll come back.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Okay, thank you and I'd like
14 to follow-up on some of Council Member Stevens
15 questions starting with a couple of questions around
16 legal services and then going back to some of the
17 questions around cultural competency. But more
18 specifically broadly, the demographics that are being
19 served. So on legal services, what kinds of legal
20 services are clients seeking?

21 CECILE NOEL: Many of our clients are seeking
22 civil legal service. That's family law, matrimonial,
23 eviction services. Those are really big ones for us.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And are there other services,
3 legal services that our clients are seeking in
4 addition to the big ones that you mentioned?

5 CECILE NOEL: Immigration as well. They are
6 seeking immigration and those are primarily the big
7 drawers of legal services for us.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And are there needs being met
9 at the FJC's?

10 CECILE NOEL: With our partner agencies, yes. We
11 connect them, we work with them through the FJC's and
12 we work with them in community. So, yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And do clients have an
14 opportunity to assess and maintain vertical
15 representation once they are pursuing some sort of
16 legal support with an attorney?

17 CECILE NOEL: What's important here is that the
18 district attorney's decide about vertical
19 representation. What we are clear about is our
20 ability to meet the survivor who can be the
21 complainant or the witness in making sure that they
22 are accessing the services we have or connecting them
23 to services within the community. Every DA has their
24 own vertical prosecution piece.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And do you find that clients
3 request consistency or vertical representation from
4 the beginning and end to whatever issue it is that
5 they are trying to resolve.

6 CECILE NOEL: I think that varies by client. I
7 think it varies by borough and it varies by the
8 situation that they're in and what makes the most
9 sense for them and their lives and the outcomes that
10 they want to see.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And just for the folks in the
12 hearing who might know. Vertical representation is
13 the ability to have the same lawyer representing you
14 from beginning to the end of a legal process rather
15 than having multiple lawyers throughout that process
16 or having your lawyer changed throughout that
17 process. What is the follow-up tracking process or
18 the tracking process to ensure each client is
19 navigating the system appropriately and with support?

20 I know that you mentioned it varies by client and
21 borough but is there a little more detail that you
22 can provide in terms of what usual or best practices
23 are?

24 CECILE NOEL: Every client that comes into an FJC
25 is first screened and then they are assigned to a

1
2 case manager. And with that case manager in a
3 client, in a trauma informed client centered way,
4 that client is explained all the services available
5 and then selects the services that they would like to
6 engage in.

7 The case manager then is responsible for ensuring
8 that the client really accesses those services. The
9 case manager becomes a point of contact for the
10 client around the services and ensures that the
11 services that were identified were actually
12 delivered, monitors the outcomes. That's the point
13 of a case manager in our process.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: And I want to zoom back a
15 little bit and talk some about the demographics. So,
16 according to the three most recent annual reports on
17 DV initiatives and indicators and factors, the number
18 of clients utilizing FJC's most popular services,
19 including safety planning, civil legal services, and
20 criminal legal system services have virtually halved
21 between 2019 and 2021. And assuming that this drop
22 in the delivery services is a result of the pandemic
23 and related stay at home orders, what is ENDGBV doing
24 to determine an actual need?

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CECILE NOEL: We definitely have seen an impact just because of the pandemic but we are also increasing our outreach. We are now, as the city begins to open up more, we have an outreach team that's going out to communities really talking about the FJC services, spreading the word about what's available. We are looking at online campaigns. We're looking at social media and how to get the word out there in these ways as well.

CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: How many people are on the outreach teams?

CECILE NOEL: Our outreach teams have in total approximately ten. One housed in our Family Justice Center that works with the borough. But also a centralized team as well. But each FJC has an outreach person on their team but we also have a central team that works with each boroughs representative to make our team a little bit more robust.

CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Can you describe how the pandemic impacted the delivery of FJC services as well as staffing and how it continues to inform the future of delivery of services?

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2 CECILE NOEL: The pandemic I think, I know for us
3 as well as every provider in this space brought many,
4 many new challenges about how to deliver services and
5 how to do them safely. Particularly when we know
6 that survivors were not safe at home to begin with
7 and now, we have stay at home orders that are
8 mandating that survivors stay there. But I know that
9 collectively, this community of domestic and gender-
10 based survivors went above and beyond to figure out
11 ways to deliver services virtually. To figure out
12 times and ways that were safe and survivor informed
13 and ways to connect with survivors so that we could
14 ensure that we were delivering the services that they
15 were asking for in a way that was safe and also
16 making sure that they could be connected into
17 community, if that's what they chose or come into the
18 Family Justice Center if that's what they needed.

19 We've all learned to I think that we can do some
20 of these services virtually. Which I think for many
21 of us, if you had asked five years ago, we would have
22 said, no, we can't do this virtually but we've
23 learned how to do that. As I think many other
24 sectors have as well. How can we do that and how can
25 we do it safely. That's the biggest lesson I think

1
2 that is a takeaway, not only for ENDGBV and our
3 family justice centers but for every provider that
4 works in this space as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: And do you anticipate
6 increased demand for certain services, whether it is
7 a function, an increase of incidences or challenges
8 posed by a continuing pandemic? And what do you
9 believe it will take to meet those anticipated needs?

10 CECILE NOEL: Well, you know, I think our focus
11 has always been on ensuring that survivors have
12 continued access to services and resources are
13 available widely. But there definitely are
14 challenges and we will continue to explore ways. One
15 I mentioned is technology. You know as we go to
16 virtual, we need to ensure that survivors have access
17 to technology. Hence, we have a public private
18 partnership with T-Mobile and we're distributing
19 1,000 devices. 1,000 isn't enough but it's a great
20 start.

21 How do we integrate and sustain you know virtual
22 service options? How do we do that? How do we
23 coordinate with our partners around doing that? How
24 do we ensure that you know services — we expand
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2 services to all survivors including you know family
3 violence and microgrants.

4 Survivors need access to low barrier resources
5 and dollars to meet their needs. How do we do more
6 of that? How do we think about that? How do we
7 strengthen our communication with providers and
8 ensure that survivors voices are at the center of
9 that? We want to make sure that that continues. How
10 do we identify specific challenges around certain
11 topics? I mentioned that healthcare is a challenge
12 and how do we get consistency across the board? How
13 do we manage strangulation in better areas? How do
14 we lift up our programs you know that are working
15 with abusers and people causing harm? And then
16 finally, how do we actually tackle and really elevate
17 our prevention programming? Which is critical in the
18 long term to really ending this.

19 And things like the ABC's of health relationship,
20 it's a huge step forward and how do we expand that
21 and lift that up in meaningful ways? These are all
22 significant areas that we are looking at, that we're
23 challenged about. And we're accepting that challenge
24 and we're looking to see how we can elevate these
25 areas and make them stronger.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: How does funding impact the
3 delivery of certain survivor services?

4 CECILE NOEL: Right now, we are funded adequately
5 for the work that we're doing but certainly if the
6 Council would like to offer us more dollars, we can
7 certainly look at how we can expand that through
8 Council dollars.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: So, I want to ask you a
10 little bit about the finances. Can you provide a
11 breakdown of funding for DV services by borough?

12 CECILE NOEL: We can certainly look at that. I
13 don't have that available but we can certainly look
14 at that and it would be ENDGBV services by borough.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, yes. And then if in
16 addition to looking into that, not just by borough
17 but also by Council district?

18 CECILE NOEL: We can get back to you on that.
19 We'll look at that and we'll get back to you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Great, thank you. And what
21 percentage of total city DV services funding goes
22 towards contracting legal and safety planning or
23 counseling?

24 CECILE NOEL: We'd have to look at the
25 proportion. Those are all very detailed questions

1
2 that we'd have to go back along with OMB and our
3 partners and other city agencies where our budgets
4 lie and really answer those questions for you in
5 depth.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and I understand
7 that you might not have the information available
8 today but I want to flag also you know how much
9 funding is spent on outreach and advertisement for
10 victims and survivors to understand their options and
11 their rights.

12 CECILE NOEL: Hmm, hmm.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And then, you know what
14 additional funding was included in the Fiscal 2023
15 Preliminary Budget for DV services.

16 CECILE NOEL: Okay, we're noting that and we will
17 get back to you on all of that.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you, really appreciate
19 it. And in a perfect world, right? What would the
20 total amount of funding do you think would be needed
21 to equitably and effectively provide DV services
22 across the entire city?

23 CECILE NOEL: That's a challenging question
24 without honestly sitting down and looking across the
25 board. I would be remiss in throwing out a number

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2 that wasn't based in real numbers on the ground; to
3 give you a projection, even in an ideal world. You
4 know and we would want to think about some of the
5 things that we would like to see happen. Some of the
6 ones that I've named to you, like microgrants and
7 expanded programming for prevention.

8 So, I would need to weigh all of that to be able
9 to think about what the amount would look like.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Hmm, and can you describe how
11 the Mayor's Proposed Program Elimination Gap PEG will
12 impact ENDGBV and the delivery of the survivor
13 services across the city?

14 CECILE NOEL: Like all other agencies, we were
15 asked to look at our budget and really consider what
16 we can do and we can get back to you on the actual
17 impact of that.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And okay, so there hasn't
19 been an assessment on how that will impact. So,
20 whether it's staffing, you know if there is a
21 reduction in funding and particularly in the wake of
22 the pandemic and a significant drop in the number of
23 client services over the past three years. There's
24 not really an assessment yet of overall impact of
25 such a cut?

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2 CECILE NOEL: I don't have the data available
3 with me here today but I can certainly get back to
4 you on that. And again, it is a preliminary budget
5 and so, there is clearly room that our partners at
6 OMB are looking at and considering as we go forward,
7 so.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. And I want to go
9 back to the FJC's for a moment. You started - you
10 talked about this a little bit as you testified
11 earlier, the FJC's are these one stop shops to
12 connect victims and survivors to free and
13 confidential assistance in each borough and you
14 talked a little bit about the physical layout of
15 being accessible wide wheelchair etc. But can you
16 describe the physical location and layout of each of
17 those FJC's? You already mentioned ADA compliance,
18 can you name sort of the types of staff that are
19 present at each location? How they present? For
20 example, whether they are uniformed or ununiformed
21 staff and a demographic breakdown of the FJC staff?

22 CECILE NOEL: We don't collect the demographic
23 information of FJC staff. Remember, I said that we
24 work with over 40 different providers in each of our
25 FJC's and we just don't collect that information. I

1
2 can tell you this much. The FJC's look a little bit
3 different depending on the borough that you're in.
4 With the exception for when we're all housed in DCAS
5 maintained buildings. The Brooklyn FJC is a leased
6 space, so it's a commercial space that's maintained
7 by the Brooklyn District Attorney or the Kings County
8 District Attorney. Queens and Staten Island are
9 standalone facilities. So, they are street level
10 standalone facilities you can walk in.

11 All of our facilities have security. Uniformed
12 security, so they're clearly visible. All of them
13 are ADA compliant. The types of staff present at
14 each facility. We have an administrative team that a
15 small administrative team at each FJC that's employed
16 by ENDGBV and they all report to a deputy
17 commissioner. So, that we can ensure that, we have
18 government agencies that are collocated with us. So,
19 we have a DSS HRA representative on staff to help
20 staff. To help clients with any benefit entitlement
21 issues, resolving issues, having them apply for
22 services. We have a DoITT representative on staff
23 because we have computers and when they break down,
24 someone needs to be there to fix them. We have a
25 DCAS cleaning crew that sits inside and ensures that

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2 our facilities are always clean and neat and orderly.
3 We have NYPD on staff for folks who choose to file a
4 police report on site with an officer that is not in
5 a uniform, in plain clothes.

6 And understands the dynamics of domestic and
7 gender-based violence. We train all of the staff,
8 everyone who works in an FJC must go through our
9 training and the training is rigorous. Even our
10 security folks, they have to go through training for
11 us, so that they understand what it is to work in a
12 trauma informed environment. What it is that we do
13 and how to interact with the clients who present and
14 as I said before, we have numerous not-for-profit,
15 nonprofit partners who work out of this space
16 alongside with us.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and just to follow-
18 up on Council Member Stevens questions about cultural
19 competency. So, there's no recording of demographics
20 based on staff who are providing services for folks?
21 Just for like, for my curiosity is that whether or
22 not the staff reflects the folks that they're
23 providing help to or providing support to?

24 CECILE NOEL: I think that's an excellent
25 question and in every single borough, the on site

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2 partners are genuinely reflective of the community of
3 that borough. For instance in Queens, we have Saki,
4 we have Women Kind, we have you know Garden of Hope.
5 The partners in that borough are truly reflective of
6 the community at large.

7 In the Bronx, we have VIP and other agencies that
8 work out of the Bronx where it makes sense, so that
9 our partnership aligns very much to the community,
10 the local community of the Bronx but also to the
11 communities within the Bronx. So, we have Sauti-Yetu
12 in the Bronx because we have a significant African
13 population that lives in the Bronx and they provide
14 services to that community out of our Family Justice
15 Centers.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Got it. So, just for
17 clarity, those are community-based organizations that
18 partner with the FJC's that work out of the physical
19 FJC locations?

20 CECILE NOEL: Yes, that is correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Great, awesome, thank you.
22 And can you provide; I know that you hit a lot of the
23 programming and services of the FJC's already. Can
24 you name anything else that maybe you didn't mention
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2 yet? And then, can you highlight any programming
3 differences at the respective FJC's?

4 CECILE NOEL: I think that we spoke very heavily
5 about the services that we provide. It's safety
6 planning, case management, shelter, housing advocacy,
7 counseling for adults and children, mental health
8 services, legal services including immigration,
9 housing eviction, family matrimonial legal services,
10 criminal justice, criminal legal advocacy, economic
11 empowerment, public health assistance. We also work
12 with health insurance and wellness.

13 So, some of the difference would be maybe around
14 some of our economic empowerment programs and some of
15 our financial literacy. What we found is that we do
16 do some of that programming in each of the Family
17 Justice Centers but we have also found that in
18 Manhattan in particular because it's central, that we
19 have a training room there. It's easily accessed
20 from all the boroughs, so we tend to do more of that
21 work in Manhattan. Only because if there's one class
22 that's going to happen, it's easier for the other
23 centers to send clients there. But where possible,
24 we will have that programming happen in the borough
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1
2 as well. Recognizing that a lot of these programs
3 are done by our community partners out of our space.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and can you
5 describe the childcare services that are available at
6 the FJC's?

7 CECILE NOEL: So, we have a - each FJC has a city
8 contracted children and youth services program, which
9 provides a childcare while the parent or caregiver is
10 receiving services or seeking services. The FJC's
11 are all trauma informed in therapeutic counseling and
12 we provide therapeutic counseling and support groups
13 for families as well, and family activities as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and then one more
15 point on this. I noticed that ASL is not listed
16 among the languages spoken by contracted staff in
17 your annual report on domestic violence initiatives,
18 indicators and factors. What do you all do to make
19 sure that the need is met for survivors who are hard
20 of hearing?

21 CECILE NOEL: We provide ASL to any client that
22 needs it. Every single person who works out of our
23 FJC, must go through training to not only know how to
24 use our telephonic language interpretation services
25 but also, to request ASL if needed. So, you can't

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2 work in a Family Justice Center basically is what I'm
3 saying to you if you don't go through the cadre of
4 training, which is all about how we do that services,
5 but also how to access the individual pieces that are
6 a part of how you deliver services.

7 So, understanding how to work with someone whose
8 first language is not English is central to how you
9 can deliver the programming there. And so, every
10 single person must do that work as well.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And then just my last
12 question for you is, can you just dig into a little
13 bit more detail on what it means to provide trauma
14 informed care and what that looks like in terms of
15 shorter term services that are being provided and how
16 the FJC services are programming help to address
17 stabilizing the client, processing trauma and then
18 thriving after trauma. And I recognize that some of
19 this is synthesizing different points that you had
20 made but I would love if you could highlight how you
21 all work to pull all of that together.

22 CECILE NOEL: Okay. The FJC services are
23 delivered through our trauma informed lens and
24 clients are offered a range of short-term and long-
25 term services that they can engage in. Some of our

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2 short term services include crisis intervention.
3 It's shelter, it's housing, it's advocacy, it's
4 criminal legal advocacy if needed. And it's also
5 assistance with really practical needs and economic
6 supports if we can do them, like microgrants, like
7 connecting into public assistance if that's needed.
8 Some clients come in without health insurance. We
9 help them process that. We help them get through the
10 short term crisis pieces.

11 The longer term pieces which are you know a major
12 part of how trauma affects us in the long term
13 include mental health work and counseling over the
14 long haul. It includes support groups. Wellness
15 services that we have, we have yoga and economic
16 empowerment and financial literacy and job readiness
17 but we also have our voices group, which are
18 survivors who've used our services who find that
19 meeting this way and sharing their experiences
20 empowers them in many ways to become voices, stronger
21 voices and advocates out of this space, not only for
22 the community at large but around the FJC in
23 particular.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you. And I'll hand it
25 back over to the Moderator.

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2 MODERATOR: Thank you Chair Cabàn. We have two
3 other Council Members who have questions for this
4 Administration. First, we will hear from Council
5 Member Avilès.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Hi there, I am now on a
8 laptop, so I can manage what's happening here. Thank
9 you Commissioner for your patience. I just wanted to
10 go back to the community service providers to make
11 sure I was hearing. So, how often does FJC actually
12 refer out? I know you have the four that are on
13 site. Do you keep track of how much you refer
14 outside of that network?

15 CECILE NOEL: Track it, no, we don't. We don't
16 track it in that way. But there is a robust
17 connection between our community providers and us.
18 And we think that it's a strong partnership. I think
19 providers who work with us truly believe that it is a
20 partnership. That we support them whenever we can
21 and they're supporting us in ways that we can also.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Sure, in terms of the
23 providers that you do host on site, what is the
24 arrangement for that partnership? Are they given
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2 subcontracts for that stuff for their work at the
3 site or what does that look like?

4 CECILE NOEL: So, we have a base contract that
5 provides standard services across all the FJC's. And
6 that contract allows for our screening and some case
7 management. And that's a contract that we have with
8 a specific provider to deliver those services across
9 the five FJC's. In addition to that contract, we
10 have an in kind relationship with many community
11 providers where they might get like say a grant from
12 the federal government to do work. And they decide
13 in partnership with us, you know what, we would love
14 to do this grant for the specialized service but we
15 want to come to the FJC and do it.

16 In kind, means that we provide the space. We
17 provide the lining and the paper and access to
18 everything that they need and they in turn, will do
19 their work. Be that case management work or legal
20 advocacy work or immigration work our of our Family
21 Justice Centers. That's the relationship.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Got it, thank you. I
23 guess in terms of the - part of the reason why I was
24 asking around you know whether or not you track what
25 you are referring to outside based community services

1
2 providers, is to get a better understanding of you
3 know where might potentially be the gaps, right.
4 Where do we need to – you noted earlier that you know
5 obviously some community based providers have access
6 to other resources. And we know it's probably fair
7 to say while you feel adequately funded and could
8 accept more, the whole ecosystem of service providers
9 needs significantly more resources, right? To
10 provide the services our residents truly deserve.

11 So, I guess the line of questioning is really
12 related to understanding where are the gaps or the
13 complimentary services that are really provided in
14 ernes in communities. Not necessarily at the JC
15 side, that complement each other because they are an
16 important ecosystem.

17 So, that's part of why I'm trying to get a sense
18 of you know, if you are referring out to other
19 agencies. To other organizations. What's the scale
20 and scope of that and what type of services might
21 that encompass so that we can then make sure that we
22 advocate for more robust service provision and
23 funding.

24 CECILE NOEL: The scope and the service will vary
25 by client. That's just a fundamental piece of it and

1
2 I wish we could tell you that it's ten of these or
3 five. I think it really varies depending what the
4 client needs. And I know we're talking about
5 referring out but recognize to that providers in the
6 community are also referring in to get legal
7 services. So, if they're a case management service
8 on the outside, serving a specific community, which
9 we have many of that don't work out of our Family
10 Justice Centers, they don't. Then they are referring
11 into us when they get more complex cases that maybe
12 is an immigration case and a matrimonial case and
13 some family law attached in the whole thing. So,
14 that - it truly is a partnership. We don't know the
15 number but we do know that they're in partnership
16 with us. If they can't take a case they tell us and
17 then we'll find some other provider that can. If
18 they are overloaded, be it on a case load, be it a
19 legal or a case work, they will let us know and then
20 we will find other providers in the community to do
21 that.

22 But the relationship on both sides, I think that
23 we try to hold very clearly -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

25

1
2 CECILE NOEL: What their capacity is and how we
3 can meet that need and respect the fact that no, that
4 maybe this is a case that's just one case too many.
5 And we'll find somewhere else for this particular
6 client and need and be able to do that. And many of
7 these providers also come to us for training through
8 our Family Justice Centers. We have a robust pour of
9 training that helps them understand both criminal
10 legal systems. How to navigate those. How to
11 navigate public assistance, housing, all kinds of
12 things that we're constantly training on that they
13 actually avail themselves of regularly.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you and Council Member
15 Avilès, happy to extend time if you have additional
16 questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: No, I guess I just wanted
18 to say thank you Commissioner. Definitely curious
19 if, do you keep track of those referral requests or
20 incoming case requests from your community-based
21 partners or is it the same kind of like
22 responsiveness around -

23 CECILE NOEL: It's just responsiveness and if
24 they choose to become an FJC client, then they would
25 be wrapped into our caseload and into the last year,

1
2 the 42,000 visits that we had. They would just be
3 wrapped into that number. It doesn't necessarily
4 identify them as coming from a community referral
5 service.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Yeah and you know part of
7 the question is not to question the partnership,
8 right. It's not at all obviously. I think we all
9 want robust partners and good service provision. I
10 think part of it is to see what we're losing, right.
11 If we are not tracking both the referrals, the
12 quantity the quality and the content of the referrals
13 coming in and visa versa going out. We're missing an
14 important baseline around what is needed in community
15 and where we can be more responsive.

16 So, that is part of what I'm trying to understand
17 here and with the understanding that we obviously
18 need increased funding for these services and I can
19 tell you in our community, certainly our very
20 localized community providers are despite having
21 access to resources severely underfunded. And we've
22 got to figure out ways to again, support the entire
23 ecosystem and in many ways, our on the ground service
24 providers are in deep, deep need because they are the
25

1
2 ones that get the almost immediate cases in
3 community.

4 So, that I just wanted to let you know wasn't a
5 question of your – the quality of your partnership.
6 It was really to understand the baseline of what is
7 happening and really encourage that we do track what
8 the referrals are coming in and coming out because if
9 not, we don't understand that scope properly.

10 CECILE NOEL: And we can certainly look at that
11 and you know and look at our system and see what's
12 possible but I truly appreciate your concern for the
13 ecosystem because I think it is truly important. The
14 providers on the ground are simply outstanding, both
15 in commitment and delivery of service and we want to
16 ensure that they continue to feel supported in every
17 way that we can and lift up their work as well.

18 MODERATOR: Okay, Council Avilès, great, thank
19 you. Seeing no other Council Members waiting to ask
20 questions. I will now turn it back to Chair for
21 additional questions. Chair Cabàn.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Oh, I have no additional
23 questions. Thank you.

24 MODERATOR: Great, I will now – we have now
25 concluded the Administration's testimony and we will

1
2 now turn to public testimony. First, I'd like to
3 remind everyone that I will call up individuals in
4 panels. Once your name is called, a member of our
5 staff will unmute you and you may begin your
6 testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock
7 and gives you the queue.

8 All testimony will be limited to three minutes.
9 Remember that there is a few second delay when you
10 are unmuted before we can hear you. Please wait for
11 the Sergeant at Arms to announce that you may begin
12 before starting your testimony. The first panel of
13 public testimony in order of speaking will be Yurika
14 Min, Polina Osterenkova, Jayne Bigelsen, Stephanie
15 McGraw, and Alexander Stein. I will now call on
16 Yurika Min.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 YURIKA MIN: Yes, hello. Hi, I'm Yurika, well,
19 I'm one of the human trafficking survivors here that
20 I had to testify today. I have received one of the
21 Covenant House programs called Spire that is for
22 human trafficking survivors and it is a small program
23 where you know I received help from like mental
24 health and my daily basic needs. Also, I would like
25

1
2 to start to speak about my own experience as a human
3 trafficking survivor.

4 When I was, I'm sorry. I was trafficked when I
5 was ten-years-old and this cycle of abuse and
6 suffering it ended when I decided to run away to
7 Covenant House at the age of 19 or so, in early
8 September of 2020. By that time, I was only legal in
9 the United States for at least four years and I also
10 attended high school and some college as well.

11 I'm now both receiving a Covenant House as well
12 as attending the Leadership Survivor Program. That's
13 where I learned how to use my voice to like help
14 others as well as help people that has gone through
15 human trafficking as well. It's really experience
16 that fulfills me and then it's giving me a lot of
17 self-confidence and also, it teach me to use my own
18 story, not as a weapon to myself. But as a way to
19 like give empowerment to other people as well.

20 So, when I first moved to New York here, I was
21 16-years-old and I was very excited to go to high
22 school because you know I thought that after I
23 finished all this abuse back there and that human
24 trafficking back there in my country, I thought that
25 I finally would be able to live a normal life here in

1
2 the United States but it didn't went as I planned or
3 anything at all. So, I was receiving some counseling
4 back in high school because I have some problems with
5 depression and just anxiety and mental health in
6 general because of the trauma it caused me, human
7 trafficking. So, I resorted to counseling and my
8 counselor always used to say that whatever we discuss
9 today in that room, it will always stay there. Like,
10 there will be complete privacy.

11 Unfortunately, they did not keep the promise or
12 that privacy that they say was going to be in the
13 matter. And even though it might sound like it's
14 really bad, it's something that happens a lot. It
15 happened to me. It happened to my friends who went
16 to high school and received counseling as well. And
17 it also happened to all kinds of people as well.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: We can extend time for a few
20 seconds so that you can finish your testimony.

21 YURIKA MIN: Okay, yeah, I'm sorry. I believe
22 this wouldn't have happened if there were programs
23 that allow students, especially the students or
24 survivors of crime and students of all grade levels
25 to access to free psychiatric help or resources and

1
2 connect them to organizations who can help them
3 through more complex situations like legal matters,
4 healthcare, scholarships or housing. Because as an
5 immigrant myself, those are one of the most – but
6 like, that's the reality that we as immigrants face
7 when we first came here. Like we faced all those
8 issues.

9 Also, as an immigrant myself, with a case, with
10 an immigration case and process, I think the city
11 does not do enough for us. We are one of the most
12 vulnerable communities to human trafficking. Whether
13 it is labor trafficking or sex trafficking, all we
14 want is just to feed our families.

15 Well how can we if we are being underpaid,
16 overworked? Our sisters and brothers are desperate
17 to find money to pay college and better our futures
18 and studies. Universities and colleges should have
19 funding and scholarships for young immigrants and
20 survivors who want to further their studies.

21 I had this personal experience back in 2019 when
22 I first applied to college. I was working an off the
23 book job that they made me work from 7:00 p.m. until
24 10:00 a.m. with no rest or eating time but you know I
25 was ready to put my soul into it, my blood, sweat and

1
2 tears just to get the education that I wanted to get
3 for myself. Unfortunately, even though I explained
4 to them that I was homeless because I lost my job in
5 [INAUDIBLE 1:53:29], the college that I applied, did
6 not want to help me. They say all that I heard from
7 them was that my debt will be sent to collections in
8 a single letter. And even though it was \$3,000, I'm
9 still struggling to pay \$3,000 because I cannot
10 legally work and I don't have any kind of support
11 besides Covenant House support.

12 So, I do, I do believe, I do believe, I strongly
13 believe that people like me should have a chance to
14 live a better life and not find themselves to resort
15 to off the book jobs or to methods that will put us
16 and our families at many great risks. Having the
17 city's support is crucial and our voices should be
18 heard as well. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Thank you so much
20 for sharing your experience with us here today.

21 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next
22 we will hear from Polina Osterenkova.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 POLINA OSTERENKOVA: Good afternoon all. My name
25 is Polina Osterenkova and I'm speaking here today to

1
2 underline the importance of services for victims of
3 human trafficking, being a victim of labor and sex
4 trafficking myself.

5 Currently, I live in a safe house run by Covenant
6 House New York and receive services that help me to
7 recover from physical and mental trauma and get
8 access to dire needs. However, I face significant
9 barriers regarding immigration status and
10 opportunities enrolling in schools.

11 I left my home seeking for a safe space and
12 freedom and that escape resulted in me being
13 exploited. In 2019, I was arrested and faced a
14 number of criminal charges. At this time, I thought
15 my life was over. The aftermath created a huge issue
16 for me obtaining immigration status and continue a
17 successful life.

18 By the advice of my attorney, I plead to
19 misdemeanor charges along side three years of
20 probation, which delayed getting immigration status
21 and developing my career. I either want to start
22 social work or a law in order to advocate for people
23 but without immigration papers and documents,
24 everything feels unachievable. Survivors of human
25 trafficking face severe barriers that hold them from

1
2 safe and independent lives in the U.S. These
3 barriers include difficulties with obtaining legal
4 documents, including work permits and citizenship.
5 Access to public services, food, clothes, and basic
6 needs, child support and stable housing. They may
7 have a hard time understanding due to language
8 barriers, physical and mental trauma or disabilities.

9 The help of professional workers is required to
10 approach a traumatized individual. I urge people to
11 be trained on the subject of human trafficking.

12 Undocumented people are strongly afraid of ICE and
13 Police Officers because of fear of deportation.

14 Victims of human trafficking do not have knowledge of
15 where to seek for help and have to ask for it. Some
16 of them do not know about the existence of the
17 services or have no opportunities to reach out.

18 I am asking to continue fund Covenant House,
19 alongside with all nonprofits that helps survivors of
20 human trafficking. Funding these programs will help
21 people to deal with PTSD, trauma, legal, and
22 immigration issues, health benefits, insurance,
23 scholarships and access to housing and food are the
24 things that will give a solid start to improve broken
25 lives. And will give motivation or creating

1
2 independent life after being forced and controlled by
3 exploiters.

4 I also believe that there -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 POLINA OSTERENKOVA: should be scholarships for
7 survivors including those who are undocumented. I
8 thank New York City Council Committee on Women and
9 Gender Equity for the opportunity to testify today.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you so much for your
11 testimony.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
13 we'll hear from Jayne Bigelsen.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 JAYNE BIGELSEN: Hello, for some reason my camera
16 just stopped working now but I will give oral
17 testimony. Good morning, my name is Jayne Bigelsen
18 or afternoon. I'm the VP of Advocacy at Covenant
19 House New York. I'd like to thank the entire
20 Committee, especially Chair Cabàn and Council Member
21 Stevens for the opportunity to testify today.

22 Before I start, I just want to say how proud I am
23 of the two young people who spoke before me. I am
24 privileged to work with them every day and awed by
25 their resilience and their tenacity. One of the

1
2 greatest needs for survivors is mental health care.
3 Yet, there are no dedicated survivor beds or youth
4 beds in New York City. This is something we brought
5 up frequently in the runaway and homeless youth
6 context but we have a huge mental health team at
7 Covenant House and we can handle all sorts of mental
8 health issues.

9 In recent years, we're seeing more schizophrenia,
10 psychosis, and developmental disabilities and active
11 suicidality among both of our survivors and young
12 people. And they need treatment or places that can
13 provide them 24/7 mental health care. Survivors like
14 all New Yorkers require living wage jobs and
15 permanent housing. They need internships,
16 scholarships, housing and rental assistance and those
17 internships need to be paid.

18 Additionally, New York has cut human services aid
19 by five percent since 2012. This leads to low wages
20 for our frontline staff and high turnover rates,
21 which is detrimental for our young people who are
22 trying to build rapport with staff. So, there must
23 be a COLA increase in all human services contracts.

24 Like the two survivors who just spoke before me,
25 survivors of trafficking without legal U.S.

1
2 immigration status face additional roadblocks in
3 their quest for safety. Both of these young women
4 are trafficking survivors and currently undocumented
5 and it is heartbreaking to see how they both belong
6 in college and eventually maybe law school but their
7 education is on hold due to their lengthy immigration
8 cases. Since they can't apply for federal loans,
9 perhaps some sort of scholarship for trafficking
10 survivors who may or may not be undocumented would be
11 wonderful. And maybe at all CUNY schools there
12 should be staff who's dedicated to help you through
13 our undocumented or who are experiencing
14 homelessness.

15 One of the most significant gaps in services for
16 survivors of trafficking is the need for additional
17 housing with accompanying holistic services. It is
18 extraordinarily difficult to leave a trafficker when
19 there is no where safe to go. We offer housing and
20 services, including a safe house where female
21 identified survivors can heal and thrive. However,
22 the financial costs of operating this safe home are
23 exorbitant. And this year, we are asking the City
24 Council to provide us with financial operating
25 support needed to continue to meet these needs.

1
2 And finally, survivors must be able to access
3 compensation funds regardless of whether they want to
4 cooperate with law enforcement.

5 Exploiters and abusers rob their victims of many
6 things including -

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

8 JAYNE BIGELSEN: Safety and security. Can I just
9 finish one sentence? And their ability to be in
10 charge and in control. So, they need to make the
11 choice of whether they want to cooperate with law
12 enforcement or not. So, we strongly support the City
13 Council's call for the passage of the bill in Albany
14 of A.8619. Again, many of my survivors do not want
15 to work with law enforcement and they should still be
16 able to access the Survivor Compensation Fund. Thank
17 you and I'm sorry my camera is not working.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: No, thank you.

19 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
20 we will hear from Stephanie McGraw.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 STEPHANIE MCGRAW: Good afternoon. How are you?
23 My name is Stephanie McGraw, I'm the Founder and CEO
24 of W.A.R.M.. W.A.R.M. stands for We Are Really
25 Matter, it is the leading domestic violence service

1
2 in Harlem that offers wraparound services and I'm
3 here to represent the Black and Brown women and the
4 challenges of domestic violence. You know, we are
5 here in this community giving services in our
6 community. We serve over 500,000 PPE's and over
7 350,000 meals during the pandemic.

8 We are embedded and invested because we are from
9 the community. I'm a survivor. I'm a Black woman.
10 I grew up in poverty. I grew up in the housing
11 projects. So, we have a unique different approach to
12 getting to victims of domestic violence because we
13 are in the community and we're grass roots of roots
14 on the ground. We dig deep into our community and
15 one of the deep things that we did during the
16 pandemic was start this partnership with NYPD. When
17 everybody else was running from them, we knew the
18 importance of Black and Brown women getting services
19 and we have a tumultuous relationship with the NYPD.

20 But what we did is how we wanted to reimagine the
21 police and let me just give you a quick story about
22 my 12 partnerships I have with NYPD. On a Sunday on
23 December 5th, I got a call from Captain Anthony
24 Mascia from the 41st Precinct in the Bronx. He had
25 absorbed all his resources, try to get a victim

1
2 somehow. He reached out to Safe Horizons, Safe
3 Locks, with no progress. He called down to One
4 Police Plaza and asked Chief Hart, who I worked very
5 closely with because he needed help with this woman
6 because he had his officers guarding her door because
7 he couldn't get any service. He caught me on a
8 Sunday at 9:30. I got out of my bed, came into my
9 office, serviced this woman with six children. Got
10 her into shelter, changed all the kids clothes, and
11 this officer Mascia came into meet me. He brought
12 his two officers to bring this woman from the Bronx.
13 Having grassroot boots on the ground organizations
14 that's out here connected with the police, it is
15 vital. Because we know how much a gallon of milk
16 costs in the bodega and we meet the exact needs and
17 we handle very high profile cases.

18 So, we are excited to announce that we have been
19 funded by the state, so we will be expanding into 30
20 precincts but what I want to say to everyone on this
21 meeting. It is very difficult for us to place single
22 women. We need shelter for single victims of
23 domestic violence and the work that we're doing here
24 in our community with the NYPD, we reimagine how we
25 wanted to work with them and not only that, Black and

1
2 Brown and Latino women are more comfortable coming
3 when they see us out in the community doing outreach
4 with NYPD. It is a very successful program and it's
5 starting to expand. I'm just excited that I'm here
6 to -

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 STEPHANIE MCGRAW: Testify on the Committee about
9 the importance of the partnership that we have built
10 with NYPD and we are expanding but we are just so
11 happy that - it takes a village. It's not one person
12 that could do it. It takes a village and during the
13 pandemic, everything shutdown. We was the only
14 organization that was physically open because we just
15 didn't know how do you rescue somebody virtually.
16 So, I just want to thank the Committee. I want you
17 all to hear me. I want you all to understand what we
18 have done here in our community. We reimaged what
19 we wanted to do and how we wanted to work with NYPD
20 as Black and Brown women. Thank you so much for
21 allowing me to testify today.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABAN: Thank you.

23 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Last
24 on this panel, we will hear from Alexander Stein.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 ALEXANDER STEIN: Thank you so much for having me
3 and guys, I'm going to tell you something, the issue
4 is, is there are some people that are excluded from
5 services, especially myself. I have a unique
6 situation.

7 I was dating a woman that I met on the internet
8 and we'd been going out. We were living together.
9 We were engaged to get married. Come to find out,
10 she ends up having a boyfriend. That guy assaulted
11 me. They ended up moving into the apartment. I had
12 nothing, I had no where to go. I went and looked at
13 every social service possible. Telling them I was a
14 victim of not only domestic violence but because I
15 was hit by my fiancé's new boyfriend, I didn't
16 qualify for this help. I literally had to relocate.
17 I lost my job. I had to move back to Texas and I
18 want to get back to Manhattan. I have my records
19 there. I have so much stuff in that apartment and I
20 was denied these services based on the fact that I'm
21 a man.

22 Not only did she do physical stuff to me, she has
23 photos of me. She has black mail of me doing stuff
24 that I would have never have ever done without her
25 influence but because I'm a man, I don't get to be a

1
2 victim. Somehow she can manipulate me. She can
3 drain my bank account. She can post pictures of me
4 on the internet and send to my Facebook friends to
5 humiliate me and get me fired from my good job that I
6 built up at a bank that I worked for eight years.
7 I'm gone. They sent pictures of me in positions that
8 I regret doing. Under the influence of alcohol and
9 drugs that she gave me. I was completely sober. I
10 met her in a drug rehabilitation chat room and that
11 was the worst mistake of my life and when I go and I
12 try to ask from Covenant House, they said no. Oh, we
13 don't care about your fiancé's boyfriend hitting you.
14 Oh, we don't protect you.

15 That is a male on male crime. That's not under
16 our jurisdiction. So, now, what am I? I don't have
17 a car. I have nothing. I'm freezing. It's a
18 pandemic. And because I'm a guy, because I was born
19 with a wrong chromosome, I get no help. I get denied
20 social services. When I was exploited, just as bad
21 as any man has ever exploited any woman. Losing
22 every single thing I had. The only thing that I kept
23 luckily is I still have our dog. That's the only
24 thing I got to keep. That's the only thing that
25 brings me any joy anymore.

1
2 And now, she's with some 19-year-old guys who's a
3 personal trainer with a bunch of tattoos, who looks
4 like he's some sort of MS13 gang banger. And what am
5 I supposed to do when I need help? You deny me.
6 Why? Because I'm not he right sex. How is that
7 inclusive? How is that equity? Ask yourself that.
8 Why do we base everything on gender, only helping
9 women? Why can't we help men that are victims of
10 this?

11 So, we need to really look at this from an
12 outside perspective that is not excluding people
13 because they are male. Thank you very much for
14 addressing the Council.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you for sharing your
16 testimony.

17 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Before
18 I turn to Chair Cabàn for additional questions, I'd
19 like to remind Council Members to use the raise hand
20 function in Zoom to indicate that they have a
21 question for this panel. Chair Cabàn.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, I mean just before I ask
23 a question, I just want to reiterate my gratitude,
24 especially for the survivors and victims who offered
25 their very personal testimony.

1
2 A question I have for I'm sorry, I'm just going
3 to refer to our line up to make sure I'm asking the
4 right folks but Yurika and Polina, if you could just
5 elaborate a little bit on what specific barriers you
6 faced in the process of trying to engage in
7 adjustment of your status or the current process that
8 you are engaging in in terms of trying to adjust your
9 status?

10 YURIKA MIN: Well, for me, I'm applying for
11 sieges visa and I was very [INAUDIBLE 2:10:05] and
12 one of the biggest setbacks was because I didn't have
13 a legal guardian and they wanted me to contact my mom
14 which was also my abuser and there was no way I would
15 get my mom to be my legal guardian in this case.

16 So, they just kept me in this limbo telling me to
17 keep looking, keep looking. But it wasn't really any
18 help at all. So, there was - really because of
19 COVID, we couldn't meet, so there was nobody by my
20 side telling me okay, this is the plan. We're going
21 to do this. We're going to that. They just told me,
22 look for somebody who's over 21 and it can help you
23 to be able to a legal guardian.

24 And because I came here by myself and I only have
25 my mother and my two brothers that are my family here

1
2 and I didn't have anybody else to resort to. And
3 when I was talking to my lawyer, he told me that it
4 was actually not very uncommon this kind of issue.
5 That many young people like me who just went through
6 neglect and abuse have faced the same situation over
7 and over and because of that single detail of not
8 having anybody, a legal to support them, they
9 couldn't apply for sieges and I just believe that
10 it's really unfair and atrocious. Because I mean, I
11 don't believe it's none of our fault that we came
12 here by ourselves and we don't have nobody in our
13 lives that care about us or give a damn about us to
14 support us. There should be something or somebody or
15 any organization that could come and help us when
16 this happens. I was lucky enough to get in contact
17 with the Door, but they also helped me to get in
18 contact with Covenant House and through the Door, I
19 got an attorney. I signed a contract with her and
20 she actually helped me getting a legal guardian who
21 I, I've only been friends for like six months to put
22 it in a way and we bonded so good. We became friends
23 like deeply in the heart. So, it's - we need that.
24 We need organizations that can help us in this kind
25 of situation and not just tell us like hey, this is

1
2 happening. You are not going to get it because this
3 single team that you're missing. There should be
4 more doors or windows for us.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you.

6 YURIKA MIN: Uhm, hmm.

7 POLINA OSTERENKOVA: Thank you so much for
8 bringing attention to this question. For me
9 currently, I feel stuck with the convictions on my
10 record and probation and I'm afraid of being denied
11 of immigration status because of that. I'm doing
12 everything towards, get everything dismissed and my
13 team, my attorney is working on it but I still have
14 this fear. I would like to ask for opportunities to
15 in all universities maybe outside of New York State
16 or City and the opportunity to travel because with
17 this situation, I'm not able to leave New York City.
18 The five boroughs basically and I would like to
19 explore my options for school, trips and yeah,
20 basically I am concerned about the citizenship and
21 study.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you. Those are my
23 questions for this panel. Moderator, I don't know if
24 there are any other members that have questions.

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2 MODERATOR: There are no Council Members with
3 questions at this time. Should we – would you like
4 me to announce the second public panel?

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, thank you.

6 MODERATOR: Great. Just a reminder that I will
7 name people in the order of speaking and to please
8 wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin
9 before starting your testimony. In order of
10 speaking, we will hear from Shamara Kelly, Raquel
11 Singh, Angelina Rosado, Joyce McMillan and Margarita
12 Guzman. Shamara Kelly, you may begin when the
13 Sergeant gives you the queue.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 SHAMARA KELLY: Good afternoon to the Committee
16 on Women and Gender Equity and all those present
17 today. My name is Shamara Kelly. I am a survivor of
18 domestic violence and Community Organizer at the
19 Voices of Women. At VOW we are a survivor led
20 organization that has been built on improving the
21 systems that survivors and their children turn to for
22 safety, justice and assistance.

23 One of our main goals at VOW is to implement
24 strategy to hold accountable the governmental system
25 that should protect survivors and their families from

1
2 violence and poverty. Most specifically, the child
3 welfare, the courts, the housing, and homelessness
4 systems.

5 Through train and workshop leadership
6 opportunities and healing activities, survivors gain
7 the skills and confidence needed to analyze practices
8 and attitudes, document systemic failures, create
9 recommendations and meet with public officials and
10 policy makers to engage and important policy
11 compensations for systemic change.

12 Survivors of domestic violence are often engaged
13 in many systems immediately when they seek help and
14 some systems are not by choice. Access and services
15 should also include the right to Council when
16 enforcement agencies like the Administration for
17 Children Services arrive at survivors homes to
18 investigate them. The Administration for Children
19 Services has found many survivors unfit to care for
20 their children because of domestic violence.

21 While we recognize that early defense programs
22 exist, many survivors do not know of their worth.
23 So, we go through these ACS applications alone when
24 the power lies with ACS and survivors will be
25 victimized all over again.

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Let me walk you through it. ACS knocks on my door and shows me some documentation of who they are and expect to be let into my home. I fail, deny and entry into my house. It might make things worse. They might tell me who they are here. Tell me why they are here or they may not. I don't know my rights and I am terrified that they will take my children because they are judging me as a survivor of domestic violence. They are expecting my home and my kid. They want to know how much food I have and my child's dentist and doctor's contact information. Can it get worse? Yes, it can.

I should have the right to legal counsel immediately. Having someone present to tell me how to protect my rights is important to me and my children's safety. ACS investigations are harmful and can undermine parental rights. I still say it when I hear a knock on the door and a ring at my door bell, ACS wants to know everything about me but can't even tell me my rights.

Survivors need legal counsel at the beginning of any investigations to protect their rights and families. More resources should be devoted to

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2 protect the families rights against ACS, which has
3 too much power. Thank you.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
5 we will hear from Raquel Singh.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 DANA HANUSZCZAK: Hi, good afternoon. I'm
8 sitting in under Raquel's name; however, name is Dana
9 Hanuszcak. I would like to say good afternoon to
10 the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and all of
11 those present today. I am a survivor of domestic
12 violence and I am Community Organizer at the Voices
13 of Women.

14 Shamara already told you what VOW does, so I'm
15 going to continue on. Domestic Violence should never
16 equal homelessness. Although it has become the fate
17 of countless survivors who have exhausted their stay
18 at a domestic violence emergency shelter or they're
19 seeking housing options to protect themselves and
20 their families.

21 One of the major breakdowns to accessing housing
22 and shelter services is the required documentation.
23 That is why we're urging the City Council today to
24 address this issue. We have engaged with many
25 survivors who do not obtain the proper documentation

1
2 to access shelter and affordable housing. It can
3 range from a New York City ID to proof of date of
4 birth to possible immigration status.

5 When fleeing an abusive relationship, survivors
6 often don't have all of the documentation for
7 themselves and their family to access shelter and
8 housing. You don't have time to gather it all. We
9 have experienced survivors being asked to leave
10 domestic violence shelters because they don't have
11 all the required documentation and they've had to
12 organize against this unjust treatment.

13 Moreover, we are often times baffled by the
14 development or acceptance of a new housing initiative
15 yet finding new innovative ways to help survivors
16 with documentation requirements can now be developed.
17 The system creates a pathway to homelessness. While
18 simultaneously attempting to help.

19 At VOW, a part of our goal in relation to our
20 mission is to educate survivors of domestic violence
21 on the existing housing system. So that they are
22 truly empowered by knowing how to navigate New York
23 City's complex housing market.

24 Documentation requirements being a barrier to
25 safe and affordable housing is not a new problem. It

1
2 has existed for years and we are puzzled by the lack
3 of unified voices demanding systemic change. In
4 order for survivors to successfully access shelter
5 and housing services, this problem must be resolved
6 as it will save lives. Thank you.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
8 we will hear from Angelina Rosado.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 ANGELINA ROSADO: Hi everyone and thank you for
11 having me. My name Angelina Rosado, I am the Founder
12 and Executive Director of Returning Hope. We're a
13 nonprofit domestic violence organization based in the
14 lower east side of Manhattan. I'm a domestic
15 violence survivor. I'm a domestic violence advocate,
16 activist, educator, public speaker. I basically do
17 it all when it comes to domestic violence, along with
18 assisting you know survivors, assisting the youth.
19 Assisting and helping the education to abusers so
20 that they know what they're doing is absolutely
21 wrong. When we're talking about barriers, the
22 domestic violence survivors face, I know them first
23 hand. I'm a survivor that went through the system to
24 get housing. I went through a domestic violence
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2 shelter. I can tell you first hand it was the most
3 horrendous situation I've ever been in my life.

4 You know, when we're talking about barriers,
5 let's talk about the lack of awareness overall. The
6 lack of education on domestic violence when it comes
7 to the people that are supposed to be providing
8 assistance. There is no form of education and
9 training enough for the people that are put into
10 these shelters. And I'm talking about the people
11 that actually work there. I was a victim of domestic
12 violence and I was victimized even more when I got to
13 the shelter. You know, I can't explain to you how I
14 was threatened by workers to physically assault me in
15 a shelter. You know, I've had workers who turned off
16 the heat to our apartment because they didn't like
17 that I spoke up as a survivor. You know, as a victim
18 of domestic violence, I was conditioned to be
19 controlled. So, my voice didn't matter.

20 Once I got out of that relationship, you know I
21 found that voice and I no longer wanted to be shut
22 up. That was not an option for me anymore. And when
23 I got to the shelter where you know they were
24 conditioned to run the way they ran, and I seen the
25 in just that happening, I refused to stay quiet.

1
2 Right then and there, you know my organization was
3 born and I realized that someone had to advocate for
4 the survivors that are in here to where I'm not only
5 you know going through the situation and the mental
6 situation that happens after a victim of domestic
7 violence escapes that relationship. I now have to
8 advocate not just for myself but also for my sisters
9 that are in this shelter with me. And it was a
10 barrier that I was probably not ready to tackle but I
11 was willing to tackle because I knew that someone had
12 to stand up because no one was in there fighting for
13 us.

14 And as I found my way of advocacy in this
15 community you know, I started - once I started my
16 organization advocating for not just domestic
17 violence victims but for also the children that
18 suffer the abuse as well. You know, I had a three-
19 year-old who watched me be abused. So, advocating
20 for children and getting the help that they also need
21 is extremely important and -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 ANGELINA ROSADO: I'm sorry. Can I finish my
24 statement or no?

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2 MODERATOR: You may finish your thought. Thank
3 you.

4 ANGELINA ROSADO: Thank you. So, advocating for
5 the youth, as far as education, you know my
6 organization personally, we go into community centers
7 and we educate. We have programs that educate the
8 youth on teen dating violence. I am also a victim of
9 teen dating violence, so that education part is
10 extremely important but I think that what's even more
11 important is educating the educators, right? We have
12 to make sure that service providers, educators and
13 people who work closely were not just victims of
14 domestic violence but the teams, they are educated in
15 domestic violence so they can better help service
16 these people. Thank you.

17 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
18 we will hear from Joyce McMillan.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 JOYCE MCMILLAN: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
21 you for allowing me to be here today. My name is
22 Joyce McMillan. I am the Founder and Executive
23 Director of JMacForFamilies and Parent Legislative
24 Action Network and what we do is we work with
25 families that have been impacted by the

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2 Administration for Children Services. Some people
3 call them child welfare agents. I call them the
4 family police and this is important because many of
5 the women that I work with are survivors of DV and
6 the response to mandated reporters, which we
7 shouldn't have. We should have mandated supporters.
8 Safe Horizon, one of the number one places that
9 people with DV are referred to has reported about six
10 of the families that I work with to child services.
11 Hospitals, police, teachers, every one, a family
12 should be reasonably be able to go to - to seek
13 support, direction, comfort or any of those things to
14 help change the position that they are in are people
15 who are mandated to report the families and to put
16 the risk of the family remaining intact in jeopardy.

17 There is nothing more violent than separating
18 families without any consideration to the trauma that
19 that causes. Parents, women who survived domestic
20 violence situations, never asked to be there, don't
21 want to be there but lack the resources to do
22 something different. And when I listen to people
23 talk about services, people need less services and
24 more real support, like financial support. Services
25 is not going to help me pay the rent at a different

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2 location. Services is not going to help me buy my
3 children the things they need without being a part of
4 the abusers life.

5 So, we are spending our money in the wrong
6 places. The money has to be spent not on people who
7 do case management and say, I saw 400 women. But it
8 has to be spent on people or community organizations
9 that is making sure there is supplemental income
10 provided to people who are trying to escape and/or
11 survive after they've escaped and don't feel
12 compelled to go back because life is too difficult
13 outside of that relationship.

14 And the response to those who report families
15 under this idea of mandated reporter ship, shame on
16 you because your job is to support families and to
17 help survivors, not add additional stress. So, I ask
18 that we look at the work that the Administration of
19 Children Services is doing in conjunction with other
20 organizations that claim to help families because
21 separation is not support and poverty is not neglect.
22 And it's incumbent upon all of us to begin to do
23 something different than just providing services.
24 Especially, we like to say, everyone is mentally ill
25 and the first thing we want to say that we're doing a

1 good job with is providing those mental services.

2 Well, let's stabilize the persons life first and then
3 let's give them the other things they need. Thank
4 you.
5

6 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
7 we will hear from Margarita Guzman.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 MARGARITA GUZMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon.
10 My thanks to the Committee Members for hosting this
11 hearing and to all of the panelists who've spoken
12 before me for sharing their courageous stories,
13 especially of survivorship.

14 My name is Margarita Guzman. I'm the Executive
15 Director at the Violence Intervention Program. We
16 were founded in East Harlem in 1984 by Black and
17 Latino grassroots activists and we are New York
18 City's only culturally specific organization working
19 with Latinx survivors to address domestic and sexual
20 violence.

21 We operate a live 24/7 hotline. An emergency
22 domestic violence shelter, a transitional housing
23 program, three community-based social service
24 programs and a robust community engagement program
25 that includes community organizing and outreach. We

1
2 also provide specialized and innovative economic
3 justice, sexual violence and child and adolescent
4 programs. All of our offices are located in low-
5 income Latinx communities in Queens, East Harlem and
6 the Bronx.

7 I want to quickly note that VIP fully supports
8 the Proposed Resolution with respect to expanding the
9 Victims Compensation Fund and thanks Common Justice
10 for their leadership in the Fair Access to Victim
11 Compensation Fund Campaign.

12 I also want to note that VIP is currently
13 developing our first ever restorative justice
14 programming here and I'm so happy to hear the
15 interest and support that this Committee has
16 expressed for those strategies to address violence
17 outside of the legal system.

18 For today however, I really want to focus my
19 testimony on one of the underpinning challenges that
20 face the Latinx and immigrant survivor community here
21 in New York City, and that is poverty and the
22 inequity of solutions for long-term economic security
23 for immigrant women and their children, especially
24 when overcoming domestic and sexual violence. It is
25 not news to anybody that Black and Latina women and

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2 girls are more likely to live in neighborhood with
3 high levels of concentrated poverty. For those rates
4 can exceed 40 percent.

5 But when that intersects with the devastating
6 impact of domestic and sexual violence on a survivors
7 employment and economic wellbeing, it presents the
8 kind of financial disaster that can inadvertently
9 lead to homelessness and further entrench
10 intergenerational cycles of both poverty and abuse.

11 The Latinx and immigrant victims are especially
12 vulnerable to economic destabilization after violence
13 because of limited English proficiency or lack of
14 employment authorization, which often means financial
15 dependency on an abusive partner or taking work in
16 degrading conditions just to survive.

17 Immigrant victims have little or no access to the
18 public assistance safety net that might mitigate the
19 severity of these harms for other people. Without
20 economic stability, nearly all other interventions
21 and healing supports become ineffective and the
22 healing process is stalled while survivors struggle
23 to secure basic needs.

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2 There are many excellent workforce development
3 projects in New York City and there are many trauma
4 informed financial education programs for survivors.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 MARGARITA GUZMAN: But there are very few that
7 address – just to finish my statement. The
8 intersection of economic security for immigrants who
9 cannot participate in the traditional workforce. So,
10 my ask to this Committee and this is detailed in my
11 written testimony. I apologize for going over time.
12 Is to please consider investing in the intersection
13 of solidarity economy practices, like worker justice
14 – worker cooperatively owned businesses and small
15 business development, and gender justice
16 organizations. So, that we can increase the access
17 that undocumented survivors might have to ongoing
18 economic security outside of traditional workforce
19 models. Thank you so much for the time and for your
20 attention.

21 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. In
22 order to address the time constraints of two
23 additional witnesses, we are going to add Bianey
24 Garcia and Victoria Galeana to this panel.

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2 Bianey Garcia, please begin when the Sergeant
3 gives you the queue.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 BIANEY GARCIA: Thank you. So, I want to share
6 the testimony of one of our community members. So,
7 she have to work, so that's why she leave.

8 So, good afternoon to all the Council Members in
9 this hearing and my appreciation to the Women and
10 Gender Equity Committee on the City Council for
11 organizing this hearing.

12 My name is Bianey Garcia, I'm a transgender woman
13 from Mexico and I am a Leader of the Trans Immigrant
14 Project of Make the Road New York. Today, I'm here
15 to share my experience on the importance of removing
16 the barriers that exist in accessing the violence
17 survival funds.

18 In the past, I worked in a construction company
19 where I was constantly harassed and mistreated by
20 other employees and bosses. They calling me bad
21 words because of my feminine expression and the way I
22 speak. Despite of all the bullying, I continued
23 working there because I need to pay my housing, send
24 money to my family and also to be able to cover my
25 medicine.

1
2 In 2020, I was assigned to work on our building,
3 using scaffolding. The person was assigned to work
4 with, hated me so much and he was so transphobic. He
5 had already bullied me in the past while we were
6 working on the height of the building, he began to
7 tell me, "die mother fucker, die fucking dog." I
8 asked him to please stop and to respect me and also
9 to let him that I'm also a human being but he didn't
10 care.

11 When we get down from the scaffolding, he started
12 kicking me and pushing me on my face. I was just
13 trying to protect myself into the ground. When he
14 stopped beating me, I told my boss what happened and
15 he also asking me - I also asked the owner of the
16 building to check the cameras. However, they do
17 nothing and they really don't care about me.

18 Being undocumented, being a transwoman and not
19 have videos to provide that I was the one who
20 survived the violence, I decided not to go to the
21 police, not to report it. I was afraid of being the
22 one who be deported instead of the person who was
23 assaulting me. I had only been in the United States
24 for two years and I didn't know my rights. The
25 following days I continued working there with fear

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2 and a lot of pain in my body because I needed money
3 to support myself. However, at the end of the week,
4 the boss told me that he fired me.

5 He also told me that faggots didn't get attention
6 by the police.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 BIANEY GARCIA: And then, I had the opportunity
9 to tell my history today and that's why I'm here to
10 share my experiences. Our experience as a
11 transgender women is not isolated. Many of the
12 transgender community, when we have the chance to go
13 to the police to report a crime, they make laugh for
14 us and they really don't care. That's why I'm here.
15 Thank you.

16 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next
17 on this panel, we will hear for Victoria Galeana.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 VICTORIA GALEANA: [SPEAKING IN SPANISH 2:37:11].
20 My name is Victoria Galeana. [INAUDIBLE 2:37:24-
21 2:37:28] Make the Road New York. [SPEAKING IN OTHER
22 LANGUAGE 2:37:30-2:40:13] -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 VICTORIA GALEANA: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGAUGE
25 2:40:14-2:40:17].

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CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Thank you.

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MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. I'd like to remind Council Members to use the raise hand function in Zoom to indicate if they have a question for this panel.

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CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: And I just want to take a moment to thank everybody for sharing their experiences. I especially want to commend Angelina for starting your own org after experiencing re-traumatization from the people who should have helped you and I want to thank Joyce for raising those points around mandated reporters and the problem of child services. And just everybody else who spoke and highlighted the experience and major gap that undocumented survivors are experiencing. So, thank you.

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MODERATOR: Thank you Chair Cabàn. Seeing no Council Member questions at this time, I will move to the next public panel. In order of speaking, I'm sorry, I lost my document, hold on one moment.

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I apologize for that. In order of speaking, we will hear from LoriKim Alexander from AVP, Sarah Telson, Alethia Ramos, Jasmine Bowden and Bravo

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2 Corazon. You may begin when the Sergeant gives you
3 the queue LoriKim Alexander.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 LORIKIM ALEXANDER: Good afternoon everyone.

6 Thank you for this time. My name is LoriKim

7 Alexander. My pronouns are she, her and we, ours.

8 I am a Community Organizer at the New York City Anti-

9 Violence Project and I am also a survivor of multiple

10 forms of violence. Hate violence, sexual violence,

11 intimate partner violence, and multiple instances of

12 police violence, the last of which left me with

13 permanent physically damaged. I am a survivor

14 working directly with LGBTQ and HIV affected

15 survivors every day.

16 The city and EMDGBV's testimony today is a

17 testament to how there's really no comprehensive way

18 of getting survivors what they need outside of

19 contact with law enforcement, which is not accessible

20 for the survivors I work with. 2021 was the

21 deadliest year for violence against transgender non-

22 conforming and non-binary community members. LGBTQ

23 survivors, especially Black, indigenous, and other

24 people of the global majority, like us, are likely to

25 experience violence from all fronts.

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2 In general, trans and gender expansive folks have
3 reported sexual and other assault from police while
4 in custody and on the street and are harassed or
5 dismissed when reporting violence. These numbers
6 more than double when it comes to Black trans and
7 gender expansive people. LGBTQ survivors are less
8 likely to report to the police because of police
9 violence. They are reporting to trusted community
10 organizations like AVP and are getting services, but
11 more and direct funding is needed for survivors to
12 get their basic needs met.

13 Black and Latinx trans and queer survivors
14 routinely tell me that they are not able to get
15 access to services due to housing insecurity,
16 joblessness, and as a result, low access to tech
17 needed to be in continual communication at all. We
18 need more solutions for survivors that don't put us
19 further in harm's way. AVP supports Resolution 153,
20 but survivors also need real access to long-term
21 housing. Proper and appropriate survivor-focused
22 emergency housing. Direct funds to survivors and to
23 organizations who support survivors. We are
24 compliance with ADA guidelines and equitable access
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2 to services, information, and opportunities for
3 survivors with all forms of disabilities.

4 LGBTQ plus survivors are often left out of tech
5 information and hardware offerings that can bridge
6 the digital divide that is widening since the
7 pandemic. You've heard all this here and you will
8 hear more. Thank you for your time and your
9 consideration.

10 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
11 we will hear from Sarah Telson.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 SARAH TELSON: Good afternoon Committee. I am
14 Sarah Telson and I am the Deputy Director of Legal
15 Services at the New York City Anti-Violence Project.
16 I use she, her pronouns. I appreciate the
17 opportunity to share my perspective on and
18 experiences with barriers to service access. The
19 clients of AVP experience while they are trying to
20 move towards safety and the instability in their
21 lives after experiencing violence. The Legal Service
22 Department at AVP is our youngest department created
23 just under a decade ago. We serve LGBTQ and HIV
24 affected survivors in a wide variety of legal
25 services. We represent our clients in divorces and

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2 family offense petitions in family court and
3 immigration cases in housing court and in
4 discrimination complaints before the Commission on
5 Human Rights. LGBTQ survivors are referred to AVP's
6 legal and clients services departments by calling our
7 free 24/7 hotline and through referrals from our
8 community partners.

9 The hotline is a longtime cornerstone of AVP's
10 work and is a service that community members access
11 regularly. As a Lawyer, Manager of Legal Services at
12 AVP and a queer survivor of violence, I regularly
13 witness and try to navigate around systemic barriers
14 to service access. In the past year, we've seen the
15 following: Extreme delays in family court, family
16 offense proceedings seeking orders of protection with
17 trials being scheduled over six months from the
18 filing of the petition, lack of access to secure,
19 easy to use technology and reliable Wi-Fi, where
20 clients were not able to meet in person because of
21 COVID, court provided interpreters who did not have
22 LGBTQ sensitivity training or training around
23 intimate partner and sexual violence, requests for
24 women interpreters often ignored by the courts. We
25 see difficulty in setting meetings with clients

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2 because of lack of employee COVID productions that
3 lead to people getting sick, losing their jobs and
4 losing economic security which in turn impacts their
5 ability to prioritize their cases.

6 Court information is not made available online in
7 any accessible way. Pro se clients are not getting
8 the information they need to adequately advocate for
9 themselves. Court processes are regularly changing
10 without proper notice to pro se litigants, especially
11 those with language access needs.

12 Many resources and services for survivors are
13 tied to law enforcement or policing. Non-citizens
14 who are survivors of violence, seek legal immigration
15 status in the form of U-Visa. However, this requires
16 that the survivor be helpful to law enforcement into
17 the prosecution of a crime. Similarly, here in New
18 York, these survivors must report to the police in
19 order to access the states Victims Compensation Fund.
20 This requirement disproportionately impacts Black and
21 LGBTQ survivors and prevents survivors who cannot or
22 do not go to the police after violence from accessing
23 financial assistance. This is why I and the AVP
24 support Resolution 153 to remove this barrier, so
25

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2 more of survivors can access funds and meet their
3 long-term needs. Thank you.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
5 we will hear from Alethia Ramos.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 ALETHIA RAMOS: Hi, I just wanted to say real
8 quick, thank you to all of the panelists and
9 survivors for sharing their story. This is my first
10 time presenting, so I'm a little bit nervous but
11 [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 2:48:35-2:48:47]. But
12 without further ado, good afternoon Committee Chair
13 Cabàn and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

14 My name is Alethia, and my pronouns are her, she,
15 like the chocolate bar. I am a community member, and
16 a member of the TGNC Leadership Academy of the New
17 York City Anti-Violence Project or AVP for short. It
18 is an organization that empowers LGBTQ and HIV
19 affected communities with the goal to end all forms
20 of violence.

21 I am a survivor; I don't know what specific form
22 of survival I would identify with because I've been
23 through them all. I want to acknowledge that 2021
24 was the deadliest year of violence for trans, gender
25 non-conforming, and non-binary community members.

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2 And I am here today to speak about the barriers to
3 services and resources for survivors, in the hopes
4 that you do something to address it.

5 Finally, many LGBTQ survivors, especially the
6 ones of color, do not report violence or seek support
7 from law enforcement because when we do, we often
8 face dismissive or negative attitudes, or more
9 violence including homophobia and transphobia.

10 I am a survivor of sexual abuse ever since I was
11 about seven-years-old. And when I came out about it
12 at 13, it created a legal case, which in turn was
13 extensive especially for someone who was young and
14 having to navigate the legal system.

15 I was under the impression that I had to tell my
16 story under the terms of healing my pain, but I see
17 that my story and the stories of other survivors are
18 not taken seriously, because the system is still
19 flawed. Most resources and services for survivors
20 are tied to law enforcement or policing. As someone
21 who holds intersectional marginalized and stigmatized
22 identities, my truth is often dismissed and not taken
23 seriously.

24 We as survivors often repress harmful events, and
25 when we do remember and feel empowered to report more

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harm, our collective experiences are seen as lies, which is exactly what occurred to me. That is why I support Resolution 153 to remove the barrier of law enforcement so more survivors can access funds. Survivors need reliable financial support, and culturally competent social services and organizations that also hire us. I need to say that again, that also hire us to create safety within our communities. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we will hear from Bravo Corazon. Oh, I apologize, Chair Cabàn please.

CHAIRPERSON CABÀN: Yes, thank you. Once again, I want to thank folks for their powerful testimony. I want to deeply apologize to the folks that are here. I have to step away for a little bit. My dog is terminally ill and currently experiencing like an acute health emergency. I have to rush him to the vet but my wonderful colleague Council Member Kevin Riley has agreed to step in and Chair the remainder of the hearing briefly. Hopefully I will be back to continue Chairing the rest of the hearing in time and either way, I look forward to following up with each

1
2 and every one of you about these issues. So, thank
3 you.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you Chair Cabàn. Sorry about
5 that. Next, we will hear from Bravo Corazon.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 BRAVO CORAZON: Thank you so much and my
8 sincerest condolences to Committee Chair Cabàn. Good
9 afternoon, my name is Bravo Corazon and I'm a
10 Community Member of the New York City Anti-Violence
11 Project, also known as AVP from 2019. I'm also, a
12 survivor of every kind of violence you could imagine.
13 And today, I am here to discuss some of the barriers
14 that prevented me from getting help and reaching out
15 for such a long time.

16 Also, I would like to thank the previous speakers
17 for speaking up about the different variations that
18 you know harm comes in and takes shape and place.
19 So, today I'm here to talk about barriers to services
20 for survivors. As a trans myelinated person it is
21 hard getting services. As a transgender or non-
22 conforming, and non-binary survivor, getting service
23 a lot of times turns into being a traumatic event
24 over and over again.

1
2 Oftentimes, services are geared towards cis
3 heterosexual women and women with children. To get
4 these services, we, as people who identify different,
5 a lot of times face significant transphobia from
6 service providers who aren't properly trained or it
7 could equally be the situation that the provider is
8 openly hostile towards trans people and willfully not
9 inclusive. Transgender and non-conforming and non-
10 binary survivors are extremely vulnerable and the
11 least likely to get the services we need. And these
12 are some of the reasons why. To add to this, getting
13 gender affirming identification is difficult and for
14 some of these services, they pay specific attention
15 to your ID, meaning your assigned gender requiring
16 trans and gender-nonconforming and non-binary
17 community members to misgender themselves in order to
18 get services, and due to their gender, are left out
19 of funding for services. And because they do not
20 have children who identify as cis, to get these
21 services, they must endure systemic abuse. As a
22 result, a lot of people who do identify as trans or
23 gender non-conforming, suffer silently and forgotten.
24 Getting funds to organizations and departments that
25 provide and support survivors will allow training for

1
2 follow-through needed to support LGBTQ survivors
3 properly. Because there's a lot of gender-based
4 assumption attached to abuse, abusers and survivors
5 and diversity of options for survivors, recovery is
6 what's crucial. It will also give these institutions
7 help outside of law enforcement because police aren't
8 what we need in these institutions or in these
9 matters. Funding is what's needed. Survivors
10 actually need safe and reliable resources. We need
11 direct opportunities for funding that are easy,
12 appropriate, and diverse.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 BRAVO CORAZON: Thank you so much for allowing me
15 to express my perspective.

16 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Before
17 I turn to the next panel, I'd like to ask Council
18 Members to use the raise hand function in Zoom if
19 they have questions for this panel.

20 Seeing no hands raised, we will turn to the next
21 public panel of testimony. In order of speaking we
22 will have Dania Darwish, Narbada Chhetri and please
23 excuse me for mispronunciations and please feel free
24 to correctly pronounce your name for the record.
25 Salma Mohamad, Heehae Fischer, Sonia Elromum and

1
2 Gabriela Sondoval Requena. We will start with Dania
3 Darwish.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 DANIA DARWISH: Good afternoon. My name is Dania
6 Darwish and I'm the Founder and the Executive
7 Director of the Asiyah Women's Center. My intentions
8 in participating in this call today is to talk to
9 City Council Members today to work with me on
10 building power for domestic violence survivors. It's
11 about time we build power for survivors that fall
12 through the cracks of a broken law enforcement
13 system.

14 It's about time that survivors have somewhere to
15 go after they've escaped their abuser and they're
16 asked for ID from a shelter but they're undocumented,
17 so they're not going to give their ID. They don't
18 have one and it's about time that women of color no
19 longer suffer through these cracks. The Asiyah
20 Women's Center is the first and only survivor led
21 gender justice advocacy organization in New York City
22 that has a shelter that addresses the gap of
23 appropriate residential services for our middle
24 eastern Muslim, South Asian women and Black
25 indigenous people of color.

1
2 Our mission is to provide temporary housing for
3 domestic violence survivors and women facing eviction
4 and we do that by connecting under resourced women in
5 our community to job opportunities to a range of
6 mental and medical health services, permanent
7 housing, and we hope to empower women to get back on
8 their feet and overcome deeply traumatic
9 circumstances that they've endured at the hands of
10 abusers.

11 We are the people that show up. We know AW shows
12 up. We are the people that are in the hospital room
13 at 1:00 a.m. after Valentine's Day when everyone is
14 celebrating love, we're in the hospitals rooms at
15 1:00 a.m. when all of the other organizations are
16 closed for business promptly at 5:00 p.m. When the
17 hotlines stop at 8:00 p.m. We are the people that
18 show up at the hospitals and we pick women up and we
19 take them to a shelter. We are the people that show
20 up to the police stations when a woman is too afraid
21 to report the rape of her abuser and now, she has now
22 had to endure an unwanted pregnancy. And we are the
23 people that respond back to police officers when
24 police officers tell survivors, "well, did you want
25 it or did you not want it?"

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So, in our three years since I founded the organization, the Asiyah Women's Center has played a tremendous role for our community. We've sheltered over 300 women and children and we've helped connect women to thousands. We've connected thousands of women to services. Our first client actually came through by Council Member Shahana Hanif. Shahana Hanif, before she was elected into City Council, she picked up a survivor from the hospital. She called me at 12:00 and by 2 a.m., within two short hours, this survivor had somewhere to go and had somewhere to stay.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DANIA DARWISH: Okay. I'm just going to end here by saying that 94 percent of the women that we serve are people of color and that women of color are two times more likely than the eight times that it takes people to leave. For women of color, it's 16 times and that City Council funding only gives one percent of funding to Muslim organizations, even though our population is at ten percent in New York City. And so, I'm looking to build power with City Council members and thank you for your time.

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2 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
3 we will hear from Narbada Chhetri.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 NARBADA CHHETRI: Good afternoon everyone, my
6 name is Beth and I'm speaking on behalf of my
7 colleague Narbada Chhetri. We are speaking from
8 Adhikaar. Adhikaar is an immigrant worker center.
9 We're women-led and we serve and organize the Nepali-
10 speaking community on workers' rights, immigrants'
11 rights, access to healthcare and language justice.

12 We are often referred in the community as our
13 community's 911, the 311 line, and we serve more than
14 10,000 Nepali-speaking people a year. Most of our
15 members work in the informal sectors, Muslim workers,
16 domestic workers, etc., and a large majority are
17 women. They're mothers and they are sole bread
18 winners for their families. Through these programs
19 and services we build trust and create pathways for
20 our members to become leaders and advance systemic
21 change, including trafficking survivors.

22 I just wanted to share with you all the story of
23 Suhanna, who is one of members leaders and
24 trafficking survivors today. In 2006, she was 17.
25 Suhana moved from her home in India to New York City

1
2 to work for an employer and excited for American
3 dream, unfortunately Suhanna's passport was seized
4 and for the next three years, she worked more than
5 16-hours a day and was regularly denied enough food.
6 Was forced to sleep on the living-room floor, and
7 even though they had vacant bedrooms.

8 Over the course of this entire time, she only
9 received \$120 in total payment for all of these years
10 of work. As a domestic worker, she was in an
11 extremely precarious situation and she unable to
12 continue living in this situation and thankfully she
13 fled after meeting another domestic worker in the
14 hallways of the apartment that she was living in in
15 2010. She learned about Adhikaar and she came here
16 seeking support.

17 At first she was too scared to publicly share her
18 story to detail the violence that she endured because
19 of this labor trafficking but with support from her
20 Adhikaar family and her desire to ensure that others
21 would not endure a similar fate, she went public and
22 that act has really empowered other members to
23 publicly share and demand accountability.

24 12 years later, Suhana is one of our really
25 strong leaders in the Beyond Survival campaign,

1
2 where we focus on building leadership and empowering
3 Nepali-speaking trafficking survivors to become
4 agents of change. And through this work, Suhana's
5 become a worker council member of NDWA for two years
6 and she's become an anti-trafficking fellow at
7 Adhikaar. She regularly helps develop curriculum to
8 teach other survivor members through peer to peer
9 work. Know Your Rights, leadership, and survivor and
10 membership counseling. And the survivor members were
11 part of winning Intro 339 in the New York City
12 Council last year. Together, we are creating space
13 for our now 20, almost 30 survivor members to engage
14 in anti-trafficking strategy and movement work that
15 responds to the needs and demands of those directly
16 impacted.

17 None of this work is possible without language
18 justice and immigration case support. I wanted to
19 highlight that. At Adhikaar we see the challenges
20 that our members face in accessing information and
21 services. For example, housing, legal, mental health
22 due to language and cultural barriers.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 NARBADA CHHETRI: I wanted to — the last piece I
25 wanted to say at Adhikaar, we have to create in-

1
2 language, and culturally appropriate resources and
3 training and the way language justice is important in
4 terms of bridging the barrier.

5 So, just to brief summary of our work and to
6 share Suhana's story, I really thank you all for the
7 time and really hope that City Council continue to
8 fund organizations like ourselves and thank you for
9 your time and consideration.

10 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
11 we will hear from Salma Mohamad.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 SALMA MOHAMAD: Hi everyone, I'd like to begin by
14 thanking the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and
15 all of the incredible panelists that have shared
16 their work and their experiences here today. My name
17 is Salma Mohamad and I'm the Partnership and Capacity
18 Building Specialist at the Arab American Family
19 Support Center. I'm a survivor of gender-based
20 violence, like many of you here today and I'm a
21 Muslim Arab-American daughter of Egyptian immigrants.
22 I'm honored to testify today on behalf of
23 marginalized immigrant and refugee families throughout
24 New York City.

1
2 At the Arab-American Family Support Center, we
3 promote well-being, prevent violence, prepare
4 families to learn, work, and succeed, and communicate
5 the experiences and needs of the people we serve.
6 Understanding that our services are more essential
7 than ever, we have expanded our reach across programs
8 and launched new initiatives to meet the heightened
9 need for domestic violence case management support,
10 mental health services, academic enrichment, etc. We
11 welcome all those who are in need, but with 27 years
12 of experience, we have developed a research-driven,
13 community-focused, culturally responsive, and
14 linguistically-competent approach to serving New
15 York's growing Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and
16 South Asian AMEMSA communities. Communities that
17 have been historically underrepresented and
18 underserved. Our staff is representative of our
19 client base, we speak 36 languages, including Arabic,
20 Bangla, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu, and we take a
21 trauma-informed and intersectional approach to all of
22 our work, enabling us to serve populations that
23 mainstream providers are largely unable to
24 effectively reach.

1
2 We provides services out of all five boroughs out
3 of 13 physical locations. In 2021, we served 10,000
4 people. With gender-based violence occurrence and
5 severity on the rise, we saw a 40 percent increase in
6 demand for our services and, subsequently, our Anti-
7 Violence Program provided case management, crisis
8 intervention, court accompaniments, and safety plan
9 assistance to 1,862 survivors.

10 Since 1994, we have dedicated ourselves to
11 centering the lived, intersectional experiences of
12 the communities that we serve in all of our work to
13 ensure we are adequately addressing the issues our
14 communities face. In our work providing direct
15 services, as well as members of a Collective with
16 partners such as Sakhi for South Asian Women, and
17 WomenKind and the Korean American Family Service
18 Center, we understand the following are barriers
19 survivors face in accessing services: Fear of
20 retaliation by the partner; fear of deportation,
21 incarceration, community isolation, discrimination,
22 and trauma, lack of financial resources, limited
23 availability of linguistically accessible mental
24 health services and restorative justice approaches
25

1
2 and housing costs. These issues have historically
3 hit minority women –

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 SALMA MOHAMAD: Transgender, and gender non-
6 conforming individuals in severe and distinct ways
7 and we ask that City Council address this with a
8 culturally competent and linguistically competent
9 approach. Thank you.

10 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Due to
11 time constraints, I will be adding two more witnesses
12 to this panel after Gabriela Requena and that will
13 include Rebecca Fisher and Jess Persaud. Jeehae
14 Fisher, you may begin.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 KATHERINE YOEM: Thank you. My name is Katherine
17 Yoem and I am the Director of Community Engagement
18 and Operations at the Korean American Family Service
19 Center. I'll be speaking on behalf of Jeehae Fisher,
20 our Executive Director. Thank you Chair Cabàn and
21 members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity,
22 and the New York City Council for giving us the
23 opportunity to testify today.

24 KAFSC provides social services to immigrant
25 survivors and their children who are affected by

1
2 gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual
3 assault, and child abuse. All our programs and
4 services are offered in a culturally and
5 linguistically appropriate setting. 98 percent of
6 our clients are immigrants, 98 percent are women, and
7 100 percent of our staff members are immigrants
8 themselves or children of immigrant parents. Over 95
9 percent of our clients' first language is not English
10 and come from low-income backgrounds.

11 KAFSC is proud to be an on-site partner at the
12 Queens Family Justice Center and we have worked with
13 QFJC as an on-site and off-site partner for more than
14 ten years. We are also grateful for the partnership
15 with Safe Horizon, Mayor's Office to End Gender Based
16 Violence and Commissioner Noel. Our Executive
17 Director, Jeehae Fischer, is also an appointed member
18 of the Mayor's Domestic Violence Fatality Review
19 Committee.

20 In 2020 all our best practices and expertise were
21 challenged and stretched in ways we could never have
22 imagined. KAFSC never closed its doors to the
23 public. Within the first few months of 2020, the
24 COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down and
25 highlighted already existing disparities in our

1
2 immigrant community in frightening and tragic ways.

3 KAFSC's 24 hour hotline saw a 300 percent increase in
4 call volume within the first six weeks of the New
5 York State on pause, with 88 percent being related to
6 gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual
7 assault and child abuse.

8 In 2019, KAFSC received 2,119 calls on our 24
9 hour bilingual hotline. We surpassed that number in
10 just the first six months of 2020 with 2,150 calls to
11 its 24 hour bilingual hotline. Met a 49 percent
12 increase in gender-based violence, domestic violence
13 and sexual assault child abuse cases, a drastic
14 increase between January and June with 4,062 calls
15 for the entire 2020. KAFSC services 1,957 survivors
16 of domestic violence, sexual assault and provided
17 close to 40,000 services to immigrants of violence
18 and their children related to gender-based violence,
19 domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.
20 We saw an alarming upward trend in not only the
21 frequency of abuse, but also the severity of the
22 abuse in addition to children who previously were
23 only witnesses of DV now becoming primary targets
24 themselves.

1
2 Our frontline essential workers met the increased
3 need and provided in person crisis intervention.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 KATHERINE YOEM: Counseling case management and
6 other supportive services, all in a culturally and
7 linguistically appropriate setting. Thank you for
8 this opportunity to testify. We look forward to
9 working with all of you to establish an effective
10 system for all our immigrants and immigrant
11 survivors.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
13 we will hear from Gabriela Sandoval Requena.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Good afternoon Chair
16 Cabàn, Council Member Riley and all members of the
17 Committee on Women and Gender Equity. Thank you for
18 your leadership and the opportunity to provide
19 testimony on behalf of New Destiny Housing. I also
20 want to thank the survivors for their courage to
21 share their experiences. Certainly, no one
22 understands this better than them.

23 My name is Gabriela Sandoval Requena, I am the
24 Senior Policy Analyst of New Destiny Housing. Our
25 mission is to end the cycle of abuse and homelessness

1
2 for domestic violence survivors and we do this by
3 developing supportive housing for homeless domestic
4 violence survivors, assisting survivors who are
5 fleeing DV to obtain subsidies and find apartments
6 and by advocating for more housing resources for
7 survivors.

8 New Destiny is also a co-convener of the Family
9 Homelessness Coalition, a broad group of
10 organizations and New Yorkers with lived experience
11 that came together in 2017 with a common goal of
12 tackling homelessness among families in our city. On
13 behalf of New Destiny, I'd like to express our
14 gratitude to Council Member Cabàn and the members of
15 the Committee for focusing this first oversight
16 hearing of the year on examining the barriers to
17 accessing survivor services of New York City.

18 Today, I'm here to speak about an important
19 hurdle domestic violence survivors are faced within
20 New York City, that is barriers to housing. As
21 Commissioner Noel mentioned, it is the biggest
22 barrier for survivors to attain safety and stability.
23 According to the most recent federal data, more than
24 one in every four American is experiencing family
25 homelessness in the country or in New York City. And

1
2 the number one driver of family homelessness in New
3 York City is domestic violence.

4 In 2020, more than 9,400 New Yorkers stem through
5 the human resource administration domestic violence
6 shelter system while thousands of other families and
7 through the December Department of Homeless Services
8 Shelter System identified domestic violence as the
9 prime reason for their homelessness. With housing
10 resources once in shelter, domestic violence victims
11 are far more likely to exit shelter for another
12 shelter rather than to move to a permanent home.

13 53 percent of the families with kids that left
14 HRA Domestic Violence Shelter in 2020 were
15 transferred to other shelters upon reaching their
16 time limit. That is more than one and two families
17 that left shelter for shelter.

18 Family homelessness is a gender and racial equity
19 issue. A single mother of color are overwhelmingly
20 impacted. In the DHS system, 94 percent of families
21 with children are headed by Black or Latinx New
22 Yorker and nine of ten percent – nine out of ten, I'm
23 sorry, are headed by women.

24 There's a need and limited opportunity for the
25 city to take much needed steps to expand equitable

1
2 access to housing and address the cycle of trauma for
3 survivors and their children. The city should open
4 the door to HPD homeless set aside units and city
5 funded supportive housing to domestic violence
6 survivors. And I'm going to take a minute to expand
7 on these. The Department of Homeless - I'm sorry,
8 the Department of Housing Preservation and
9 Development, HPD requires developers to - who receive
10 certain capital subsidy to set aside at least 15
11 percent of their units for homeless individuals and
12 families. While this program creates over 2,000
13 homeless set aside units annually, none of them are
14 made available to households in the HRA -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: HRA Domestic Violence
17 Shelter System. If I may continue?

18 MODERATOR: You may finish your thought, thank
19 you.

20 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Thank you so much.
21 So, as I was saying, the program creates 2,000
22 homeless set aside units annually but none of them
23 are made available to households in the HRA domestic
24 violence shelter system. Youth shelters or any other
25 population that serves specialized non-DHS shelter.

1
2 Currently the only individuals and families in the
3 DHS system can access these units. And this clear
4 inequity based on classification, is highly
5 inefficient since it leave many apartments
6 unnecessarily vacant for extended period of time.

7 New Destiny urges the city to allow HRA shelter
8 residents equal access to housing and similarly,
9 domestic violence survivors and their children are
10 excluded from city funded supportive housing despite
11 comprising the largest share of New Yorkers in DHS
12 and HRA family shelters.

13 I'm going to leave it at that. We're going to
14 submit written testimony but on behalf of New
15 Destiny, I would like to thank the Council for the
16 opportunity to testify and welcome the opportunity to
17 continue collaborating together and happy to answer
18 any questions. Thank you.

19 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. I had
20 inadvertently missed someone earlier and that would
21 be Jennifer Phillips. I will add them to the end of
22 this panel. Next, we will hear from Rebecca Fisher.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 REBECCA FISHER: Good afternoon and thank you to
25 Chair Cabàn, Council Member Narcisse and the

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2 Committee on Women and Gender Equity for the
3 opportunity to testify here today. My name is
4 Rebecca Fisher and I'm the Executive Director of New
5 Yorkers Against Gun Violence.

6 New Yorkers Against Gun Violence is a statewide
7 nonprofit organization and for over 25 years, we've
8 been advocating for sensible gun violence prevention
9 policies and programs at the state, local and federal
10 levels. Today, I'm testifying in support of this
11 Resolution calling upon the New York State
12 legislature to pass and the Governor to sign Senate
13 Bill 7573, Assembly Bill 8619A, sponsored by State
14 Senator Zellnor Myrie and Assembly Member Demond
15 Meeks.

16 The state legislation would expand eligibility
17 for victims and survivors of gun violence and other
18 crimes to fairly access the states Victim
19 Compensation Fund. Despite New York's relatively
20 strong gun safety laws, gun violence is a growing
21 public health crisis in New York and it's been made
22 worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to
23 a rise in gun sales and a legal gun trafficking into
24 New York from weak gun law states.

1
2 COVID-19 has also caused unemployment and poverty
3 to surge and deepened other systemic inequities in
4 the poorest sections of New York State cities from
5 housing to education to healthcare. These factors
6 combined easy access to guns has caused a spike in
7 gun violence that has disproportionately impacted
8 Black and Brown New Yorkers.

9 According to the New York State Division of
10 Criminal Justice Services, the number of New Yorkers
11 killed or injured by gun violence in 2021 has nearly
12 doubled the number of New Yorkers killed pre-pandemic
13 in 2019. Before and during the pandemic, gun
14 violence has disproportionately impacted Black and
15 Brown Americans including Black and Brown New Yorkers
16 who are ten times more likely than White Americans to
17 be victims of gun homicide. Black Americans under
18 the age of 25 are 18 times more likely than young
19 White Americans to be victims of gun violence.

20 It is clear that we need a comprehensive plan
21 with evidence-based solutions to tackle this complex
22 epidemic. And this includes ensuring that Black and
23 Brown LGBTQ plus victims and survivors of gun
24 violence are equitably and adequately compensated for
25

1
2 the physical, emotional and financial harm and
3 injuries that each individual person has suffered.

4 Victims compensation is essential support for
5 survivors of gun violence. The funds are a critical
6 remedy and a form of justice as they cover cost due
7 to the impact of violence. These funds are also
8 essential because they help disrupt and end cycles of
9 violence and incarceration.

10 Research has shown that when a person is a victim
11 of gun violence, which includes witnessing a shooting
12 or losing a loved one, there is an increased risk and
13 probability that this individual will be a victim
14 again. Or may engage themselves in gun violence.

15 National studies have shown that being a victim
16 of a crime as a child, increases the likelihood of an
17 arrest as a teenager by 53 percent and of arrest for
18 violent crime as an adult by 38 percent. On the
19 other hand, studies also indicate that when survivors
20 of gun violence are compensated and they do receive
21 the support they need and are entitled to, they are
22 more likely to thrive and less likely to become
23 engaged in the criminal justice system.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

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2 REBECCA FISHER: The Federal Victims of Crimes
3 Act allocates funding to New York States Office of
4 Victims Services each year to directly reimburse
5 crime victims for crime related expenses such as
6 medical expenses including mental healthcare, funeral
7 and burial related costs, lost income and employment
8 and other relevant costs related to this harm.
9 However, under our current law in New York State,
10 many victims of gun violence, particularly those from
11 communities of color and other marginalized
12 communities do not have equitable access to the
13 states funds appropriated by VOCA. In order to
14 qualify for victim compensation, a claimant is
15 required to report the crime to law enforcement, file
16 for compensation with one year of the date of that
17 crime and cooperate with law enforcement in an
18 ongoing investigation of the crime. And a
19 substantial percentage of crime victims, as many of
20 the crime victims that have testified in this hearing
21 have said, do not report to law enforcement and/or do
22 not report with in a requisite period of time. Too
23 frequently, Black and Brown LGBTQ community members,
24 immigrants, women who are victims of domestic abuse,
25 and other marginalized New Yorkers do not report due

1
2 to justified mistrust of law enforcement and or fear
3 of retaliation from their abusers.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you. Excuse me, thank you.

5 REBECCA FISHER: I have two more sentences that I
6 want to include about the bill please. To provide
7 greater access to victims and survivors of violence
8 who would otherwise be disproportionately fired from
9 financial compensation, this state bill will expand
10 eligibility of victims and survivors of qualifying
11 crimes in three major ways. It will lengthen the
12 amount of time outside of having good cause for delay
13 that a victim is required to file a claim with OBS.
14 Lengthen the amount of time that a victim is required
15 to report a crime to proper authorities and extend
16 the type of evidence victims may use to show that a
17 qualified crime has occurred. Thank you to this
18 Council for supporting this Resolution and I urge the
19 state to pass this bill as well. Thank you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
21 we will hear from Jess Persaud.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

23 JESS PERSAUD: Hi, thank you. Hi, I'm Jess
24 Persaud, I'm Director of Policy at Common Justice.
25 First, I want to thank Chair Cabàn for hosting this

1
2 hearing, as well as Council Member Narcisse for
3 sponsoring the Resolution that's before the Committee
4 today. Common Justice operates the first alternative
5 to incarceration for violent felonies in the nation.
6 We also operate a victims service program where we
7 become very familiar with victim compensation.

8 Victim compensation is funding that compensates
9 victims of crimes for expenses associated with that
10 crime, including hospital expenses, replacement of
11 essential personal property, burial expenses,
12 everything that really helps victims of crime regain
13 stability after experiencing a traumatic event.

14 However, in New York State, there are many barriers
15 that restrict access to many marginalized
16 communities. The most pervasive being that there is
17 a law enforcement reporting requirement, which
18 essentially makes victims have to file a police
19 report in order to file for victim compensation.

20 In the U.S. over 50 percent to violent
21 victimizations go unreported every year. These
22 numbers are reflected in multiple different states
23 because marginalized communities and those numbers
24 occupy the biggest number of unreported crimes.
25

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2 New York State recognize this as an issue because
3 in 2019, there was an Executive Order that was
4 executed that lifted the reporting requirement for
5 domestic violence victims to access victim comp.
6 because they knew that this was an issue. But since
7 the state of emergency has ended, the EO has expired
8 and that reporting requirement is not only in doubt
9 on domestic violence victims but all victims of crime
10 in New York State.

11 So, because of that, Common Justice and it's
12 partners, many of which are here today and have
13 testified and we're very appreciative of that.
14 Formed the Victim Fair Access to Victim Compensation
15 Campaign, which is a statewide campaign aimed at
16 educating the public and lawmakers on the victim
17 compensation program, as well as the barriers that
18 exist and we hope to propose many legislative bills
19 to address these barriers.

20 So, the first bill that's associated with the
21 campaign is the one that's reflected in the
22 Resolution today, which would essentially remove the
23 reporting requirements by providing for alternative
24 forms of evidence, including victim attestation,
25 witness attestation, statements from physicians,

1
2 statements from victim service providers as well as
3 video and photographic evidence that could be used in
4 lieu of a police report.

5 If passed, this bill would create a great amount
6 of access to marginalized communities that would
7 otherwise be barred due to the current eligibility
8 requirements and it's also a very important first
9 step to decoupling law enforcement from victim
10 services. So, thank you for letting us testify
11 today.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Before
13 I turn to the last panelist, I would like to
14 acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
15 Member Hanif.

16 Next, we will hear from Jasmine Bowden who is
17 listed under Jennifer Phillips.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 JASMINE BOWDEN: Hi, good afternoon Committee
20 Chair Riley and all present. My name is Jasmine
21 Bowden and I am a community member of the New York
22 City Anti-Violence Project. I am a survivor of
23 violence. I am here to talk about the barriers to
24 services and resources for survivors. Violence
25 against transgender non-conforming, non-binary people

1
2 in New York is up and to emphasize as people said
3 before, 2021 is the highest it's been in decades.
4 The relationship we had with the police has been
5 volatile since stonewall.

6 We, in the LGBTQ community, have never had a good
7 relationship with the police because of transphobia,
8 homophobia and racism. So, a lot of LGBTQ survivors
9 do not report violence directly to the police. On
10 top of that, if they are detained by the police, they
11 experience violence in custody and from predators
12 when they get out of incarceration.

13 The resources we need as survivors are not
14 available to us because often we are asked to go to
15 the police first. Many LGBTQ survivors are fearful
16 of law enforcement and therefore miss out on
17 services. That's why I also support Resolution 153
18 to remove these barriers. So more survivors can
19 access funds. Everyone is aware of the NYPD's \$18
20 million budget. Some of this money must be diverted
21 to organizations to provide services to survivors of
22 violence.

23 Many sex workers are survivors and don't receive
24 the services, care and resources they need.
25 Survivors suffer financial instability, which makes

1
2 them more unsafe. Solutions and more financial
3 support is needed. Housing is the major priority
4 that can stop violence, especially for sex workers.

5 LGBTQ survivors deserve more safe ways to report
6 violence and get support through organizations like
7 AVP. Hopefully you'll champion the opportunity to
8 get survivor support without the barriers we
9 currently face. Thank you again for your time and
10 attention. Jasmine Bowden from the New York City
11 Anti-Violence Project. Thank you.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Now, I
13 will ask Council Members to use the raise hand
14 function in Zoom if they have any questions for this
15 panel.

16 Seeing no hands, I will turn to the next public
17 panel. In order of speaking, we will hear from Andy
18 Bowen, Jared Trujillo, Laura Russell, and Diane
19 Orengo. Andy Bowen, you may begin when the Sergeant
20 gives you the queue.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 ANDY BOWEN: Thank you so much. My name is
23 Andrea Bowen, my pronouns are she, her and hers and I
24 am an Associate Director of Government Affairs at Sex
25 Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center. I'm

1
2 also a transgender woman and testifying in solidarity
3 with Black, Latinx, indigenous and other transgender
4 people of color who are survivors of violence. Thank
5 you Chair Cabàn. Thank you Council Member Riley for
6 your support and stepping in in the moment of need
7 and thank you to all Council Members and staff
8 present.

9 The Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice
10 Center which I'll refer to as SWP, works in
11 collaboration and part of impacted communities and we
12 offer legal advocacy to survivors of human
13 trafficking and people who engage in sex work,
14 regardless of whether they do so by choice,
15 circumstance or coercion.

16 We want to thank Council Member Narcisse for her
17 Resolution calling upon New York legislature to pass
18 and the Governor to sign A.8619A and S.7573. Our
19 legal staff has found it really, really, really
20 challenging to get our survivors and recipients of
21 our legal services any funding through the State
22 Office of Victim Services. And of course that is
23 compounded by the structural barriers faced by the
24 communities specifically listed within the
25 Resolution.

1
2 So, we are extremely supportive of this
3 Resolution and really grateful for you supporting the
4 state legislatures work on this and also, adding your
5 own voices to this. As to the broader subject of
6 today's discussion, while it might not be obvious to
7 everyone, Sex Workers Project feels it really
8 important to ensure that we talk about dismantling
9 NYPD's Vice Unit. And doing so for some mutually
10 reinforcing arguments.

11 One, the Vice Enforcement Division, which they're
12 rebranding themselves is Human Trafficking Vice or
13 Vice Human Trafficking, it needs to be disbanded.
14 Even it has reduced its process related arrests and
15 is claiming to refocus on trafficking, it maintains
16 officers who are violent and coercive towards
17 survivors. That's both historically and recently.
18 They've also been flat funded for the last several
19 fiscal years at \$18.2 million exclusive of overtime
20 and that funding would be better directed towards
21 truly trauma informed services for survivors. Not
22 what Vice is currently doing, which is not trauma
23 informed care. And Vice's funding should be
24 distributed to organizations as determined by sex
25 workers, sex worker and trafficking survivors.

1
2 Vice, just to go through a couple example in my
3 remaining few seconds, you know there's a remarkable
4 pro publica article from December 2020 that outlines
5 their history. Even in the last year, last summer,
6 we heard stories about them basically stalking a
7 trafficking survivor who didn't want their services—

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ANDY BOWEN: And also, jailing someone who would
10 successfully pursue a vacatur motion for trafficking
11 or for you know sex work or prostitution — sorry, my
12 brain is not working.

13 For prostitution while being trafficked, Vice
14 referred to her as a whore and threw out her drugs or
15 her medications that she had with her. We just hear
16 endless stories of even Vice's in arresting people.
17 Them harassing people and if they engage in human
18 trafficking work, it is coercive.

19 So, we ask that the city continuously stop
20 supporting spending on Vice activities and spend that
21 money on services as guided by the sex worker
22 community. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to
23 answer any questions.

24 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
25 we will hear from Jared Trujillo.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

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JARED TRUJILLO: Good afternoon. I'll be brief.

4

My name is Jared Trujillo. My pronouns are he, him,

5

his. I am Policy Counsel at the New York Civil

6

Liberties Union and I want to briefly talk to you

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about the over criminalization and over incarceration

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of survivors of violence.

9

We know that nationwide in particularly in New

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York about 86 percent of incarcerated women and

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nonbinary folks are survivors of violence. About 77

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percent of those are survivors of intimate partner

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violence and we know that 47 percent of Black trans

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women are incarcerated at some point of their lives

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largely as over criminalized survivors.

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This criminalization matters beyond just being

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thrown into a cage but there are several collateral

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consequences going from potential child welfare

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complications and potentially losing one's kids, to

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immigration consequences, to the inability to access

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housing, to the inability to access another job and

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to the inability to access childcare. All those

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collateral consequences makes someone more likely to

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be recriminalized. It makes someone more likely to

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be revictimized. It makes it more likely that these

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2 same cycles that we're trying to end just get
3 perpetuated. There's several ways that survivors are
4 over criminalized but one of the ways I want to talk
5 about is through the Vice Squad.

6 Ms. Bowen previously just spoke about the Vice
7 Squad but Vice is a unit within the NYPD that is
8 supposed to be engaged in preventing trafficking.
9 However, what we actually know Vice to do is, almost
10 all of the people that they actually go after are sex
11 workers. Are people that are engaged in a licensed
12 message and are even survivors of trafficking.

13 This isn't new. The sins of Vice have been known
14 by this city since the Mollen Commission investigated
15 Vice back in 1970. The same thing happened when the
16 city investigated Vice in the 1990's. In 2017, when
17 Vice allegedly changed their focus from going after
18 sex workers, to going after people that were involved
19 in coerce of sex trade. That is not what Vice did.
20 That exact same year, seven of about 96 Vice Officers
21 were caught engaging in a coercive trafficking ring.

22 Two years later, Yang Song lost her life to
23 coercive Vice practices. Two years before that,
24 Michael Golden in the Vice Squad was also found to be
25

1
2 weaponizing his badge to go after sex workers,
3 message workers, and survivors of trafficking.

4 So, we really need to think about – the city
5 really needs to think about why is the funding Vice
6 to the tune of \$18.2 million per year. That money
7 could be better served by serving the same
8 communities that have been long targeted by Vice. In
9 addition, there are several other ways that the city
10 can support survivors as other people have noted. We
11 need to be decoupling law enforcement from receiving
12 services. We also need to make sure that people who
13 – and I'm wrapping up really quickly.

14 We also need to make sure that people that have
15 open cases –

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 JARED TRUJILLO: Are able to access services. We
18 know that the binaries between perpetrators of
19 domestic violence and survivors and victims of
20 domestic violence are not always clean cut
21 differences that we think of. There are many
22 instances where survivors of violence are
23 criminalized and they are actually paying court fees
24 that go to their abuser.

1
2 So, we really need to make sure that we are also
3 funding serves for people with open cases and make
4 sure that we are decoupling law enforcement from
5 receiving services. Thank you.

6 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
7 we will hear from Laura Russell.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 LAURA RUSSELL: Good afternoon, sorry, good
10 afternoon and thank you members of the Committee on
11 Women and Gender Equity for having this hearing. My
12 name is Laura Russell and I'm the Director of the
13 Family Domestic Violence Unit at the Legal Aid
14 Society.

15 The Legal Aid Society is the oldest and largest
16 provider of legal assistance to low income families
17 and individuals in the United States. We operate 14
18 neighborhood offices and citywide units to assist
19 residents in all five boroughs of New York providing
20 comprehensive legal assistance. We're grateful for
21 the opportunity to testify before the Committee
22 regarding access to resources for victim survivors of
23 New York City.

24 I want to begin with discussing the need for a
25 local multilingual media campaign to counteract the

1
2 damage done by the Trump Administrations harmful
3 police policies against noncitizen survivors. New
4 York City is still reeling from this damage. Despite
5 New York City's Executive Order 41, this has had a
6 profound impact on immigrant survivors of domestic
7 violence, trafficking, and sexual assault. We fear
8 that they could face deportation if they contacted
9 the police. And push survivors back into the shadows
10 and left many of them vulnerable to further abuse and
11 exploitation.

12 Survivors seeking protection orders and child
13 support refuse to go and drop their civil cases for
14 fear of deportation. The Trump policies penalize low
15 income immigrant communities at trying to access
16 public benefits as well. We know that the COVID-19
17 pandemic has exacerbated these rights of intimate
18 partner violence and human trafficking and there is
19 much work ahead.

20 We urge the Council to provide the city with
21 funding to engage in a multilingual media campaign to
22 reassure vulnerable immigrant survivors that New York
23 City remains a sanctuary city and that they can seek
24 help from the police and access our courts.

25

1
2 It is in New York City's best interest to create
3 as many avenues as possible for undocumented
4 survivors of intimate partner violence to obtain
5 lawful status and citizenship. One way to do this,
6 is by issuing law enforcement certifications, often
7 called a U-Visa. Unfortunately, in New York City,
8 ACS, family courts, NYPD and the five boroughs
9 district attorney's office, both all of whom have
10 embraced the notion of issuing new certifications
11 have made it difficult for survivors.

12 Some law enforcement agencies, specifically the
13 NYPD, will wait for the District Attorney's Office to
14 issue them. District Attorney's Offices will fail to
15 provide them unless and until the case is completely
16 closed and the survivor has assisted in the case.

17 The NYPD also runs routine background checks on
18 individuals, thus denying new certifications to
19 anyone who may have had a criminal record. We would
20 encourage local law enforcement agencies to rethink
21 these new certification gate keeping policies in
22 order to more fully embrace the promise.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
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2 LAURA RUSSELL: That the federal U-program offers
3 to as many vulnerable New Yorkers as possible. Thank
4 you.

5 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
6 we will hear from Diane Orengo.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 DIANE ORENGO: Good afternoon Chair Cabàn and
9 members of the New York City Council Committee on
10 Women and Gender Equity. Thank you for the chance to
11 testify today on barriers to accessing services for
12 survivors and for the agency that I work for.

13 My name is Diane Orengo, I am a Social Worker for
14 Bronx Community Solutions. I program for the Center
15 for Court Innovation. The Center conducts original
16 research, operates direct service programs and offers
17 technical assistance on justice reforms across New
18 York City with a vision to reduce unnecessary and
19 harmful involvement in the justice system wherever
20 possible and builds safety through sustainable
21 community driven solutions.

22 Bronx Community Solutions is both a core and
23 community-based program. I work for the Alternatives
24 to Incarceration Department. My main duty with the
25 department is working with the Human Trafficking

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2 Intervention Court. I have worked with many clients
3 who are both engaged in sex work and were or are
4 trafficked and the many barriers I have noticed, the
5 clients I work with are experiencing are immigrants,
6 education, employment, housing, sexual identity,
7 discrimination, substance use, language barrier,
8 access to benefits, their voices are not heard and
9 fear. Within Visa's there are barriers are well.
10 The biggest barrier is that I'm located inside a core
11 house and clients have expressed fear of coming into
12 the office. Even though the rent has gone down, that
13 can be a barrier because I'm not getting clients and
14 it's also a great thing because the numbers of
15 arrests are decreasing.

16 Although folks don't have to be arrested to get
17 services, this can limit my approach and outreach to
18 this and other potential clients. Our services are
19 short term and former clients do not stay connected
20 because to them, they have met their mandate but
21 there is much more work to be done if they stay
22 longer.

23 At the Center's Bronx Human Trafficking
24 Intervention Court, referrals continue to go down due
25 to the meaningful and shared understandings of the

1
2 harms traditional punitive system impose on
3 survivors. The Centers Bronx Community Solutions
4 pivoted to pilot Bronx healing and empowerment
5 through advocacy and leadership, with the assistance
6 of the center and the Office of Victims of Crime,
7 Project Heal has been developed to further our
8 services, to change our typical approach and engage
9 clients voluntarily and non-voluntarily to give them
10 a voice and the change they want to see through a
11 rigorous programming that would involve, support
12 education, advocacy and leadership skills. By
13 bridging the gap between community and institutions,
14 programs like Project Heal would allow for survivors
15 to meaningfully reimagine systems.

16 Project Heal is a survivor leadership and peer
17 support initiative for human trafficking survivors.
18 Driven by an advisory, council comprised of survivors
19 and national experts, Project Heal engages survivors
20 in designing a national leadership training program,
21 centered on their unique needs and diverse
22 experiences.

23 Bronx Project Heal is rooted in the understanding
24 of best practices, extensive consulting with local
25 leaders and interviews with practitioners.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DIANE ORENGO: I just have one more sentence to go. H - is a council funded program seeking renewal and redesigned funding this year. I am available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Chair Riley, this is Malcolm Butehorn, Counsel for the Education Committee and the backup Moderator for Chloè today. She had to step away, so I'm going to continue the hearing.

Next, we're going to hear from Patrick Boyle, Volunteers of America Greater New York. And the panel after that will be Legal Services Providers, Meghan Downes Brooklyn Defender Services, Kelly Grace Price Close Rosie's, Jane Manning Women's Equal Justice Project, and Naomi Young New York City Domestic Violence and Consumer Law Working Group. But we will now turn to Patrick Boyle.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

PATRICK BOYLE: Thank you so much. I want to thank Chair Cabàn for hosting this hearing on such an important issue and the other members of the Committee for being present and hearing everyone's testimony today.

1
2 My name is Patrick Boyle, I'm Assistant Vice
3 President for Public Policy with Volunteers of
4 American Greater New York. We're a human services
5 organization, a nonprofit developer of affordable and
6 supportive housing and we run 66 programs in the
7 region, of course helping a variety of populations.
8 One of which is people experiencing domestic
9 violence.

10 So, we have seven residences for survivors and
11 people leaving domestic violence situations that are
12 in the five boroughs of New York City at this point
13 and so, you know in talking with our staff and the
14 people that we serve, we just wanted to sort of offer
15 some of the following perspective on some of the
16 barriers to entry that is the subject of this
17 hearing.

18 So, as many others who have testified today have
19 said, you know that initial touchpoint that people
20 experience that are wanting to leave a situation is
21 very, very important. So, you know we've heard from
22 clients, whether it's law enforcement, medical
23 professionals, that sometimes that initial touchpoint
24 is very negative and you know people being told,
25

1
2 well, why don't you pray about the situation or give
3 then another chance and things like that.

4 So, we definitely need better training across the
5 board for people to have a better initial touchpoint
6 with people, so that they are you know ready to
7 accept services and kind of ready to take that step
8 and have it be positive.

9 Housing issues are a major, major issue. As we
10 work to get people from temporary residential
11 shelters to permanent housing, so the housing crisis
12 and the housing shortage is a major problem and along
13 with a lot of other advocates, we're very, very
14 concerned about the lack of increased housing capital
15 funding in the Mayor's Budget Proposal, as well three
16 percent cut to various agencies that touch upon this
17 problem, which is going to have a drastic impact.

18 Length of stay is 180 days for residential DV
19 programs in the city. We have heard from our staff
20 and clients that that's simply not enough in many
21 cases. You know, there's a process that's addressing
22 years of trauma in many instances and really you know
23 working to get clients on good financial footing.
24 Working to get people, like I said into access into
25 permanent affordable housing. And so, you know we

1
2 think there should be a looking at that 180 day
3 process and that's sort of policy in place to see
4 what makes the most sense on an individual basis.
5 There's a number of other things that you know too
6 many undocumented status is a huge, huge barrier to
7 services and to entry for our clients. So, I would
8 point the members of this Committee to our written
9 submitted testimony, which touches upon a lot more of
10 these issues and thank you for your time.

11 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. At
12 this time, I would like to ask Council Members if
13 they have any questions for this panel to use the
14 raise hand function in Zoom.

15 Seeing no Council Member questions at this time,
16 I will move onto the next public panel, which Malcolm
17 already listed, so thank you for that. We will hear
18 from Meghan Downes.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 MEGHAN DOWNES: Okay, good afternoon. My name is
21 Meghan Downes and I am the Associate Director of
22 Social Work in the Family Defense Practice at
23 Brooklyn Defender Services. Brooklyn Defender
24 Services is a public defense office dedicated to
25 providing outstanding representation and advocacy

1
2 free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family
3 separation and other serious legal harms. We thank
4 the Committee and Chair Cabàn for the opportunity to
5 testify today about the barriers victims face in
6 accessing services in New York City.

7 Nearly all of the people we represent have
8 experienced or witnessed violence at home, in their
9 neighborhoods and communities, or at the hands of the
10 state. For many, experiences of violence and
11 exploitation are a direct cause of court involvement.
12 Instead of receiving services, many victims of
13 domestic intimate partner violence, and gender-based
14 violence, particularly Black and Brown women and
15 girls, are punished for their survival and response
16 to trauma.

17 The pipeline of victims into the criminal, legal
18 family court and immigration systems has had a
19 chilling effect on people experiencing DV. Many New
20 Yorkers do not seek services when experiencing
21 violence, due the fear of becoming entangled in the
22 legal system themselves or of causing system
23 involvement for their families.

24 In our written testimony, we highlight many
25 barriers victims face but in my limited time, I'd

1
2 like to highlight the impact of the family regulation
3 system on people experiencing DV. Thousands of
4 families in New York face the possibility of
5 separation due to a wide range of circumstances
6 including intimate partner violence.

7 While the law in New York State states that a
8 child cannot be removed from their home because their
9 parents is experiencing domestic violence, ACS
10 frequently uses allegations of DV to closely monitor
11 and surveille families for long periods of time.

12 Once in court, families often face prolonged
13 separation and years of supervision by ACS. To
14 address this pipeline of victims into the family
15 court systems, BDS has specialized services to work
16 with parents through two City Council funded
17 initiatives.

18 First, DOVE funding supports a social worker in
19 our family defense practice and has enabled us to
20 develop a specialization to provide supportive case
21 management and crisis intervention services for
22 victims of DV.

23 This has allowed us to build relationships with
24 other grantees and educate other service providers
25 specifically, mandated reporters on the human impact

1
2 of reporting suspected abuse or neglect and the
3 rights parents have at each step in the process.

4 Secondly, our early defense team provides
5 advocacy to parents during the initial stages of an
6 ACS investigation with the goal of avoiding court
7 filings that have a harsh impact on families. Our
8 team of attorneys and social workers work closely
9 with victims to safety plan, access emergency
10 services, find temporary housing and childcare
11 arrangements, refute false allegations and help
12 inform parents of their rights at early stages of an
13 ACS investigation. Parents experiencing DV should
14 not have to be worried about losing custody of their
15 children or being subject to long and invasive
16 investigations and court proceedings.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MEGHAN DOWNES: Thank you.

19 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
20 we will hear from Kelly Grace Price.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 KELLY GRACE PRICE: Hi everybody. This is Kelly
23 Grace Price from Close Rosie's. Thank you so much
24 Council Member Cabàn for convening this hearing.
25 Thank you so much to the few Council Members that

1
2 have stuck around to listen to this fantastic group
3 of survivors. I'm so sorry to hear about Council
4 Member Cabàn's dog. My prayers are with them.

5 I'll turn in my written testimony. Here are my
6 six main points that I'd like to make today. Family
7 Justice Services, Family Justice Center Services are
8 often denied to survivors. We are literally banned
9 from the centers. There is a cherrypicked class of
10 survivors in this town and the Borough of DA's and
11 NYPD are still gate keepers to this privileged status
12 of being able to seek services from the Family
13 Justice Centers. It is the dirty secret that Law
14 Enforcement horse trades survivors rights to squeeze
15 abusers for intel on other unrelated investigation
16 and we are left in the cracks.

17 Confidential informants and law enforcement
18 community literally are not held accountable for
19 their DV crimes against us and their victims such as
20 myself, are turned away from the Family Justice
21 Centers.

22 We need real data on special victims case
23 complaints results. We don't have any idea on case
24 closures and results from borough DA's after NYPD
25 hands over cases that even make it that far. So, we

1
2 have no idea how many of us are being horse traded.
3 Council Member Cabàn, let's get Intro. 1488 revised
4 and heard stat. We really need this data. It's a
5 building block for all of this work.

6 I heard Council Member Cabàn ask if anyone
7 actually tracked SVU committed, allegedly committed
8 by NYPD Officers and I heard Commissioner Noel say
9 no. But in fact, there is data on open data. It's
10 data by city agency. By SVU complaints. I'll
11 include it in my testimony and there is data on
12 crimes committed allegedly, SVU crimes by NYPD. It
13 only runs from 2006 until 2014 and then they stopped
14 providing that data. But someone at sometime was
15 keeping that and I'm surprised to hear that
16 Commissioner Noel didn't know about it.

17 The number of unique Family Justice Center
18 encounters is 42,000 from last year according to
19 Commissioner Noel, but not 42,000 people. And NYPD
20 reports only SVU cases opened, not complaints made.
21 So, it's impossible to assess the efficacy of the
22 Family Justice Centers reach with not – with you know
23 all this monkey business with the SVU data. We have
24 no idea how many people are actually making
25 complaints and actually trying to seek justice using

1
2 the criminal law enforcement apparatus because we're
3 only given SVU data on the number of complaints
4 opened.

5 And this is a new thing. They just started this
6 about two years ago and I want to raise the flag
7 about this. Uhm, on this point about data, SVU data,
8 none of the data meshes.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 KELLY GRACE PRICE: The data provided by the
11 Mayor - so, anyway the data doesn't mesh. Also, uhm,
12 I want to talk just very quickly, if you'll indulge
13 me about the criminal justice legal system. New York
14 City cages more women per capital than any other city
15 in the world. We need to think about this. 78
16 percent of us actually walk free after a detention
17 and there are no services for us. The only services
18 are for people in reentry, post-conviction, post-
19 imprisonment, post-release or people that take ATI
20 programs. But 78 percent of us who are detained and
21 caged walk free and there are no services for us.
22 There are zero services for the 78 percent of us who
23 are not convicted or who do not take a plea. I'll
24 include this data of course in my testimony.

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I have a lot of things to say but I'm going to skip to my very last point. I'm skipping over three really whopper ones and I'm sorry but please indulge me. No one is talking about how the law enforcement databases are barriers to us getting services. For years, the NYPD and Borough DA's ran an algorithm that alleged to be able to discern who was a true survivor and who was a fabricator of SVU allegations. No one is talking about this. No one is talking about how many of were labeled as fabricators and are still labeled as fabricators in the law enforcement databases. No one is talking about those databases.

And also finally, how uhm, Clearview is linked up to the NYPD databases and tracks sex workers and gives law enforcement predators quick access to sex workers in their communities. No one is talking about these issues. I know that Chloè and [INAUDIBLE 3:53:33] are very familiar with my detailed data graphs and my detailed testimony, so look forward. This is going to be a whopper and I look forward to discussing it with the community. Thank you so much for indulging me with the extra time.

MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we will hear from Jane Manning.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JANE MANNING: Good afternoon. Thank you so much Chair Cabàn and thank you to all members of the City Council. Uhm, and a special thank you also to our wonderful City Council staff who do your work so often unseen and unheard but not unappreciated. Thank you for your hard work to make these hearings so effective.

My name is Jane Manning, I'm Director of the Women's Equal Justice Project and my organization assists survivors of sexual assault who are seeking assistance from law enforcement in response to sexual assault and as we know too often encounter a response that is badly flawed. And that's what I want to address today.

Criminal justice is only one of the many tools that we want to be able to use to support survivors but it is one essential tool and it's a tool that survivors turn to, and they want it work for them when they turn to it and that's not happening right now.

As we know, from previous hearings held by this Council, including one most recently in October.

1
2 There's a lot of room for improvement in NYPD's
3 Special Victims Unit.

4 It was reported last week that the NYPD Special
5 Victims Unit is going to be getting a new Commanding
6 Officer. This new Commanding Officer will be the
7 fourth Commanding Officer of the Special Victims Unit
8 in less than four years. And we really want to draw
9 the attention of the City Council to how important it
10 is that our new Commissioner get this pick right.

11 So, we're asking our friends and allies in the
12 Council who have relationships with our new Mayor and
13 with his Administration and with our new Police
14 Commissioner, to really make sure to flag this issue
15 for them. This decision over leadership is hugely
16 important. We need someone who will be a master
17 investigator. Who will be a top notch manager, but
18 also who will be deeply compassionate and committed
19 to the kind of victim centered, supportive
20 investigations that we know survivors want and
21 deserve.

22 And we need it to be someone who is going to be
23 able to make the desperately needed repairs to a
24 badly disfunctioning division. Survivors of sexual
25 assault who seek out law enforcement services, they

1
2 understand whether they are getting good work from
3 their detective or not. The advocates know what we
4 know because we hear from them and we hope this will
5 be a chance finally to get this crucial decision
6 right. It's a chance for a new start under a new
7 administration and we're asking our friends in the
8 City Council to please do anything you can do. Use
9 any influence you have behind the scenes or in front
10 of the scenes, to help us make sure that our new
11 Administration gest this very important decision
12 right. Thank you so much.

13 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Last
14 on this panel, we will hear from Naomi Young.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 NAOMI YOUNG: Thank you so much. Thanks for the
17 opportunity to speak on this panel. To Chair Cabàn
18 and the rest of the Committee and to all the
19 survivors who took the time to testify today. I am a
20 Staff Attorney at Her Justice, which is a nonprofit
21 organization providing free legal help to women
22 living in poverty in New York City but I'm also
23 speaking today in my capacity as the Co-Chair of the
24 New York City Domestic Violence and Consumer Law
25 Working Group.

1
2 This working group was established and is still
3 supported by Fordham Law School's Feerick Center for
4 Social Justice and it brings together legal and
5 social services advocates from across New York City
6 to holistically address the intersection of domestic
7 violence and consumer debt in connection with
8 economic abuse, consumer debt and credit reporting
9 issues and we do so through trainings, through
10 clinics, at shelters and through working together to
11 create an interdisciplinary approach.

12 Economic abuse is defined as abuse involving
13 behavior or tactics that control a person's ability
14 to acquire, use and maintain economic resources. We
15 as advocates see it appearing as interference with
16 someone's employment or education. Prohibiting a
17 survivors access to family income. Identity theft or
18 a much more grey area we call coerce debt, which is
19 defined as either debt that an abuser takes out in a
20 victims name without their knowledge or consent or
21 debt that the abuser pressures, threatens or
22 manipulates a victim into taking out in their own
23 name. And this occurs not only within intimate
24 partner violence relationships but also in other
25

1
2 abusive positions of trust such as between a child,
3 elderly or disabled person and their caretaker.

4 And such abuse causes financial devastation and
5 traumatizes survivors years after they leave an
6 abusive situation. Our working group did a study
7 about three years ago that showed that one in three
8 survivors who seek domestic violence related legal
9 services, also have a consumer debt issue. Resulting
10 credit damage interferes with a survivors ability to
11 obtain housing and financial stability and ultimately
12 leave poverty.

13 In fact, the number one reason that survivors in
14 national studies report for not leaving abusive
15 relationships is because they can't afford to leave
16 or to stay safe after leaving if they do so.

17 The importance of approaching this holistically
18 is because of the dearth of legal services in New
19 York City and other services. Only four percent of
20 defendants with consumer credit transaction cases in
21 New York City Civil Courts were represented by
22 Council in 2018. And the reason I'm quoting from
23 2018 is that's the most recent data from the courts.

24 During the pandemic of course, we are stretched
25 thinner than ever as we strive to meet rising demands

1
2 with limited resources during a time of economic
3 crisis. And even rarer, our services providers who
4 are cross trained to meet the -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 NAOMI YOUNG: Thank you. I'll just finish my
7 thought. Arising from economic abuse. Our working
8 group is submitting written testimony with a list of
9 recommendations. Two, the Council and the Committee
10 on how the City Council may support efforts at the
11 state and city level including by creating and
12 funding unrestricted cash assistance programs for
13 survivors. Supporting efforts to define coerce debt
14 in the law and creating interagency taskforce on
15 economic abuse in order to address these unaddressed
16 needs.

17 I'd also like to highlight the importance of
18 looking at supporting survivors in getting police
19 reports for identity theft because this is vital for
20 identity theft advocacy. Thank you again for your
21 time and we would like to offer ourselves as a
22 continuing resource for the Committee going forward.

23 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. That
24 concludes this public panel. I'd like to remind

1
2 Council Members to use the raise hand function in
3 Zoom if they have any questions for this panel.

4 Seeing no raised hands, we'll move on to the next
5 panel. In order of speaking, we will have Jennifer
6 Feinberg, Francesca Rosi (SP?), Maria Lizardo, and
7 Linda Lopez. Jennifer, you may begin.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 JENNIFER FEINBERG: My name is Jennifer Feinberg
10 and I'm a Litigation Supervisor at the Center for
11 Family Representation. Thank you Chair Cabàn and the
12 Committee for giving us the opportunity to testify
13 today. CFR is the Countywide assigned family defense
14 provider representing parents prosecuted for neglect
15 and abuse by ACS in Queens and Manhattan Family
16 Courts.

17 Since our founding, we've represented over 12,000
18 parents. Each year about 20 percent of CFR's clients
19 identify as survivors of domestic violence. Thanks
20 in large part to the DOVE funding we received from
21 City Council, CFR is able to assign a social worker
22 to support every survivor of domestic violence we
23 represent. Alongside a family defense attorney and
24 parent advocates who are parents who have direct
25 experience being prosecuted by ACS, losing their

1
2 children to the foster system, and safely reunifying
3 their families.

4 Through CFR's work with survivors of domestic
5 violence, we see the barriers and struggle survivors
6 face in finding appropriate and necessary supports
7 and resources to leave unsafe relationships while
8 remaining united with their children. Survivors are
9 often reluctant to disclose their situations or seek
10 assistance out of fear, shame, and lack of adequate
11 support.

12 The low income Black and Brown survivors CFR
13 serves grapple with the added fear that they will be
14 reported to ACS and their children will be removed if
15 they seek help from the police, mental health
16 providers or domestic violence support groups. All
17 of these supports are mandated reporters required to
18 report suspicions of child neglect.

19 But while many mandated reporters believe they
20 are reporting the perpetrator of domestic violence,
21 once ACS becomes involved, they will often assert
22 allegations, not only against the perpetrator but
23 against the survivor as well. Instead of offering
24 support, mandated reporters and ACS often add
25 addition strain on survivors and their families.

1
2 Once ACS is involved, CFR has found the biggest
3 barriers for survivors to be finding safe housing and
4 appropriate counseling services.

5 For survivors without financial resources,
6 domestic violence shelters or NYCHA safety transfers
7 are the only options. But to access domestic
8 violence shelters, survivors often have to call the
9 shelters hotline day after day until housing becomes
10 available. This is a burdensome process and can
11 discourage survivors from seeking help.

12 Similarly, obtaining a new apartment through a
13 NYCHA's safety transfer can take months. CFR's
14 clients also experience challenges with identifying
15 domestic violence counseling services. During the
16 pandemic, CFR social work staff have found long wait
17 lists of up to four months before the clients can be
18 assigned a therapist.

19 For survivors with ACS involvement, lack of
20 suitable living arrangements and delays in beginning
21 counseling, can prevent a parent from having more
22 regular and frequent visitation for a child and delay
23 reunification of the family. Time is of the essence
24 when it comes to ensuring survivors feel safe and are
25 getting the immediate support they need. As well as

1
2 to ensure that survivors and their children can live
3 safely together. We hope that City Council will
4 continue to support survivors of domestic violence by
5 directing financial support to survivors to allow
6 them better access, safe housing and services as well
7 as by supporting the programs like CFR that serve
8 them. Thank you.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
10 we will hear from Jennifer Feinberg. Oh, I
11 apologize, next we will hear from Maria Lizardo.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 MARIA LIZARDO: Good afternoon. Thank you Chair
14 Cabàn and members of the Women and Gender Equity
15 Committee for hosting this hearing and allowing me to
16 testify.

17 I am Maria Lizardo, the Executive Director of
18 NMIC. NMIC is a settlement house that since 1979 has
19 been providing services to community members who
20 reside or are connected to the communities of upper
21 Manhattan and the Bronx. We focus on six service
22 areas: Housing; immigration; benefits and finance;
23 education and career services; health; and holistic
24 services. In 1998, in response to the high number of
25 domestic incident reports and the fact that three

1
2 women had been murdered in our neighborhood, we
3 started and founded our domestic violence program.
4 Most of them, immigrant women and we provide non-
5 residential services using an interdisciplinary model
6 where legal and social services come together to
7 support survivors. In Fiscal Year '21, we serve 265
8 unique survivors and 61 percent of them are currently
9 asked to see other services, which really highlights
10 the need and the importance of providing holistic
11 services. Domestic violence survivors face barriers
12 including accessing legal, social and other support
13 services. Immigrants though face additional
14 barriers, language barriers, and lack of culturally
15 competent inclusive services among social programs,
16 benefits offices and law enforcement prevent
17 survivors from making that first vital contact or
18 from being properly heard. Survivors left out of
19 their homes and left as sole providers struggle to
20 secure affordable housing and emergency funding and
21 risk turning to the shelter system.

22 Undocumented survivors do not qualify for
23 individual benefits and those with kids will forego
24 applying for benefits for fear of deportation. They
25 don't take safety measures including not calling the

1 police or obtaining emergency care at hospitals.

2 Some survivors do not report domestic violence out of
3 fear that they will be blamed. And last but not
4 least, limited free legal services impacts their
5 ability to go through family court proceedings
6 including child support, visitation, accessing
7 immigration benefits and relief efforts that they're
8 eligible for and of course, preventing evictions.

9 I'll give you a short story, Mali Soral (SP?), a
10 participant in our domestic violence project was
11 referred by one of her colleagues. Originally from
12 Mexico, only 24-years-old had two children. She was
13 extremely fearful of her abusive partner who had been
14 physically, sexually, emotionally and financially
15 abusive. She was immediately assigned a counselor,
16 providing counseling, safety planning and crisis
17 intervention.

18 Her counselor advocated for her to be placed into
19 shelter, translated all information on the shelter
20 process, and provided emotional support. She had
21 called NYPD but later found out that the full
22 severity of the incident had not been conveyed in the
23 domestic incident report. Our domestic violence
24 attorney connected her with NYPD's Special Victims
25

1
2 Unit and she was then able to report the full extent
3 of the abuse. He abuser was finally arrested.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MARIA LIZARDO: This is just a story that
6 highlights the need and importance of providing
7 holistic services and we ask the Council to continue
8 to support the DOVE Initiative, not to cut it but we
9 need an enhancement in order to provide services to
10 survivors. Thank you.

11 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Before
12 I turn to the last panelist, I would like to just let
13 everyone know the order of witnesses for the next
14 panel. We will hear from Emily Miles, Maureen
15 Curtis, Leah Faria, Teal Inzunza, and Taykina
16 Chowdhury. Last on this panel, we will now turn to
17 Linda Lopez.

18 LINDA LOPEZ: Good afternoon. My name is Linda
19 Lopez and I am Deputy Director of the Legal Center
20 Sanctuary for Families. New York State largest
21 provider of comprehensive services, exclusively for
22 gender violence survivors and their children.
23 Sanctuary reaches seven to 10,000 survivors of
24 domestic violence, trafficking and other forms of
25 gender violence annually through our comprehensive

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2 clinical, shelter, legal, job training and direct
3 financial assistance services.

4 Our clients are overwhelmingly low-income women
5 and families of color, immigrants and single mothers.
6 Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been
7 increased gender violence, including intimate partner
8 homicide, sexual violence and cyber sexual abuse.
9 Because of this, our clients have needed heightened
10 assistance from systems, such as family law, social
11 services and criminal justice that were very
12 difficult if not impossible to access.

13 Moreover, the majority of survivors we work with,
14 have faced other exacerbated challenges related to
15 the pandemic. In addition to the trauma of abuse,
16 increased food and housing insecurity, court closures
17 and delays, childcare and custody concerns, a steep
18 digital divide, undocumented immigrants exclusion for
19 most public relief efforts and spikes in anti-Black
20 and anti-Asian violence.

21 Though Sanctuary does everything it can to expand
22 accessibility to survivor services, there are
23 persistent barriers that make it difficult for
24 survivors to get the support that they need. First,
25 for survivors with legal cases, language access in

1
2 the courts has been an ongoing issue. A lack and
3 limited availability of court interpreters, important
4 signage being written only in English and antiquated
5 websites, meaning that many of our clients do not
6 have equal access to justice before the court
7 appearances even begin.

8 One of the primary obstacles to our client
9 spacing, permanent housing post-shelter is navigating
10 the City FHEPS Voucher system. Though the voucher
11 increase in September 2021 was crucial, many
12 survivors are excluded from the rental assistance
13 program due to the apartments sizes and income
14 restrictions.

15 Also, frequent turnover of HRA and staff
16 vacancies that are never filled have resulted in long
17 processing delay for survivors seeking vouchers or
18 other public assistance. The digital divide is
19 another significant barrier for low-income New
20 Yorkers, which has been further highlighted by the
21 pandemic and has particularly dangerous consequences
22 for survivors. Without reliable internet, a laptop
23 or a cellphone, it is increasingly challenging for
24 survivors, many of whom already very isolated as a
25 result of the abuse to access services. Beyond

1
2 services access, the digital divide inhibits job
3 searching, remote schooling, housing applications and
4 connectivity to family members outside New York City.

5 We are grateful for the efforts that ENDGBV –
6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 LINDA LOPEZ: Has made to access family barriers
8 in New York City. Finally, city contracting issues
9 that had serious ramifications on survivor services.
10 Therefore, we ask the Council to revise City FHEPS
11 housing voucher guidelines to make the programs more
12 accessible for low-income survivors, increase efforts
13 to address the digital divide, ensuring internet
14 access for all the New York City residents. Advocate
15 for an automatic cost of living adjustment. And \$21
16 hour wage for all city funded human service workers,
17 improve efficiency and payment schedule of the city
18 contracting process and advocate for improved
19 language access in New York City courts. Thank you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Before
21 I turn to the last panel, I'd like to ask Council
22 Members who have any questions for this panel to use
23 the raise hand function in Zoom.

24 Seeing no hands, I will turn to the last panel
25 and if I have inadvertently missed anyone, please

1
2 also use the raise hand function in Zoom, so that we
3 can get you in. First, on this panel, we will hear
4 from Maureen Curtis.

5 MAUREEN CURTIS: Thank you so much. I am very
6 grateful to Chair Cabàn and her colleagues for
7 holding this hearing today. My name is Maureen
8 Curtis, I'm the Vice President of Criminal Justice
9 Programs for Safe Horizon, which is the largest
10 nonprofit victim services organization.

11 I'm going to just give you a couple of highlights
12 from our testimony and we'll submit the written
13 testimony at a later time.

14 First, pressure on survivors. The burden of
15 proof falls on survivors. Society still asks, why
16 did they stay or why did they make that choice? We
17 collectively put too much pressure on survivors, even
18 though survivors are navigating complex situations
19 and often competing demands. Our systems expect
20 survivors to sacrifice, possibly give up everything
21 to access short-term solutions.

22 Limited options: Too often the systems we rely
23 on to respond to violence or for a one size fits all
24 approach, safety, healing and justice looks different
25 for every survivor. Rather than a one size fits all

1
2 approach, to public safety, survivors need the city
3 to invest in a range of safe, viable options so they
4 can make their own decisions and navigate their path
5 forward.

6 Issues with city services: City agencies must be
7 fully accountable to survivors, that includes
8 acknowledging when policies cause hardship, racial
9 harm and traumatization. Systems that provide aid,
10 must not cause further trauma.

11 Economic Justice: Economic stability and
12 independence are foundational to safety. So many
13 survivors don't have the choice to leave their
14 abusive partner, even if they want to due to economic
15 reasons rooted in systemic racism and sexism.
16 Survivors need meaningful workforce development and
17 educational opportunities and low barrier direct
18 microgrants that prioritize choice, flexibility and
19 timeliness.

20 Compensation: In the aftermath of a crime,
21 survivors and their families often turn to victim
22 compensation funding. However, in order to be
23 eligible for such funding, survivors must report
24 their harm to law enforcement or the courts. Safe
25 Horizon is a member of the steering committee of the

1
2 Fair Access to Victim Compensation campaign and
3 strongly supports the Resolution on today's agenda.
4 This legislation would expand eligibility for victims
5 by expanding the type of evidence that victims may
6 use to show that a crime occurred.

7 Access to Shelter: The emergency domestic
8 violence shelter system was configured for families.
9 Most rooms are designed to hold a family of two,
10 three, or more. Single adults seeking safety in a DV
11 shelter, then face significant obstacles in obtaining
12 this needed program. Similarly, shelter placements
13 are difficult to secure for large families with many
14 children.

15 And last, access to affordable permanent housing:
16 For too many survivors -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MAUREEN CURTIS: Safe, stable, affordable housing
19 remains out of reach. We must build more affordable
20 housing and more supportive housing units quickly.
21 We must create and invest in low-barrier, accessible
22 financial supports for New Yorkers that aren't
23 delayed by bureaucracy and burdensome requirements.
24 Thank you again for holding this hearing and let's
25

1
2 take this opportunity to improve our systems and
3 expand options for survivors. Thank you very much.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
5 we will hear from Leah Faria.

6 LEAH FARIA: Good afternoon all the Council
7 Members and everyone in attendance this afternoon.
8 My name is Leah Faria and I am the Community
9 Organizer with the Women's Community Justice
10 Association. An advocacy group led by justice
11 impacted women and family members in New York. WCJA
12 is leading the #BEYONDrosies campaign which has three
13 goals: Close the Rose M. Singer Center on Rikers
14 Island before the city's planned 2027 deadline.
15 Decarcerate the population to under 100; and Secure a
16 humane, centrally-located standalone facility, a
17 Women's Center for Justice, for the small remaining
18 population at either Lincoln or Bayview correctional
19 facilities in Manhattan.

20 Many women and gender-expansive people at Rose M.
21 Singer Center end up there because they have
22 suffered from abuse and trauma. An estimated 77
23 percent are domestic violence survivors. I am one of
24 them. When I was sent to Rosie's I was a traumatized
25 survivor of domestic violence. And the dehumanizing

1
2 treatment at the Rose M. Singer Center, only made
3 things worse.

4 The trauma informed care and the unique resources
5 I needed back then was not provided to me and it is
6 not provided to the domestic violence survivors
7 detained at Rikers today. The mothers, sisters and
8 daughters at the Rose M. Singer Center, are the
9 backbones of New York's families and communities but
10 have been treated as an afterthought.

11 This small population of under 250, who make up
12 only four percent of the Rikers' population, is
13 scheduled to be among the last groups to leave under
14 the city's plan to shut down the jail complex by
15 2027. On October 13th, 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul
16 and the city, started transferring people from Rikers
17 to state prison in Westchester to address the
18 humanitarian crisis. Four months later, they are
19 being sent back to Rikers without any progress for
20 their safety or wellbeing.

21 Keeping the Rose M. Singer Center open for five
22 more years is bad enough, but what is more upsetting
23 is that women and gender-expansive people would be
24 relocated to a place that is potentially even worse.
25 The borough-based jail plan would place them in a Kew

1
2 Gardens facility where they would share spaces and
3 staff with the male population. Best practices
4 recommend full sight and sound separation from men to
5 reduce retraumatization, but the entrance, medical
6 site and recreation areas would be shared at Kew
7 Gardens.

8 In addition, there is no dedicated staff for the
9 women and gender-expansive people, threatening to
10 replicate conditions that made Rikers among the 12
11 worst jails in the nation for sexual assault,
12 according to the Department of Justice. Many at the
13 Rose M. Singer Center would be located even further
14 from their families the Kew Gardens facility. A
15 major goal of the borough-based jail plan was to keep
16 people closer to their communities, and that will be
17 the case for most men, but not for women.

18 Manhattan is where the greatest number of women –
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 LEAH FARIA: At Riker's are charged, and families
21 who reside there will facing long commutes and
22 multiple public transportation transfers to visit
23 their loved ones.

24 Women and gender-expansive people need a more
25 readily accessible, centrally located facility that

1
2 is separate from men. When the City Council passed
3 the borough-based jail plan in 2019, it included a
4 Points of Agreement to study the feasibility of a
5 standalone, more centrally located facility. Former
6 New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, Chair of the
7 Rikers Commission, and the Mayor's Social Justice
8 Commission recommended using a closed correctional
9 site—either Lincoln in Harlem, or Bayview in Chelsea
10 for this purpose. The state can transfer one of
11 these sites to the city and create a new model for
12 justice and safety that sets the stage for closing
13 the rest of Rikers.

14 The Women's Community Justice Association and
15 supporters are calling for Lincoln or Bayview to be
16 transformed into a Women's Center for Justice that
17 focuses on gender-responsive services, family
18 unification and community safety. Using a Reentry at
19 Entry approach, successful reintegration would be the
20 goal from Day One. This would be a place that breaks
21 the cycle of incarceration and puts women, gender-
22 expansive people, and children on a pathway to
23 wellness and success.

24 As members of the New York City Council, we urge
25 you to ask Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul

1
2 to secure Lincoln or Bayview for a Women's Center for
3 Justice. We hope you will join the #BEYONDrosies
4 campaign to begin this process of healing survivors,
5 repairing families, and enhancing public safety.

6 Thank you.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Next,
8 we will hear from Teal Inzunza.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 TEAL INZUNZA: Good afternoon, my name is Teal
11 Inzunza, and I am the Program Director of the
12 Economic Empowerment Program at the Urban Resource
13 Institute, with is the largest DV shelter provider in
14 the country. And I also Co-Chair of the Domestic
15 Violence and Economic Justice Taskforce. Domestic
16 Violence is the most common reason for an individual
17 or a family to enter shelter in New York City.

18 Unfortunately, there are not enough beds to
19 accommodate every survivor who needs one and the
20 city's number of beds for singles remain insufficient
21 resulting in survivors often having to wait to be
22 placed into shelter and waiting can be dangerous for
23 a survivor.

24 For survivors who enter the DV shelter system
25 through the DHS intake shelter and are assessed by

1
2 NOVA, that process can be long and traumatic. DHS
3 intake shelters are often well-known locations to
4 abusers since they are the place where most people
5 enter the shelter system, resulting in them being an
6 easy place for an abusive partner to find a survivor.

7 Secondly, most DV survivors report that they will
8 not leave an abusive partner unless they are able to
9 take their pet with them, yet Your Eyes, the only
10 shelter provider in New York City that permits
11 survivors and their pets to live and heal together in
12 shelter through our Pals program.

13 While we are grateful for the different housing
14 programs that are offered throughout New York City
15 for survivors, there are many issues that occur when
16 survivors try to access these programs. Firstly, the
17 program eligibility requirements are often limiting
18 for example, most programs require for a survivor to
19 be in shelter or to have an active public benefits
20 case in order to qualify and to have access to
21 permanent housing. These programs are often only
22 available to documented survivors, leaving no options
23 for those who are undocumented.

24 Research has often found that even with a
25 voucher, most survivors are still unable to find

1
2 housing due to their credit, which is often damaged
3 by the perpetrator as a tactic of abuse.

4 Additionally survivors have very little time to look
5 for housing. There are not enough affordable
6 apartments available for those in need and they often
7 experience landlord discrimination.

8 Research has also found that during the COVID-19
9 pandemic, survivors in New York experience heightened
10 issues accessing public benefits at a higher rate
11 than other states. Survivors often apply for public
12 benefits and are often denied and then have to wait a
13 very long time for a fair hearing. This process is
14 slow and opaque leaving survivors without the
15 necessary benefits like SNAP for weeks at a time,
16 meaning that a family or an individual could go
17 hungry.

18 Many studies have shown that nearly all DV
19 survivors experience economic abuse resulting in long
20 term financial and economic impacts throughout a
21 survivors life. These findings demonstrate a
22 critical need for additional programming and funding
23 for economic empowerment programs to serve survivors.

24 Currently there are several programs throughout
25 the city but they are not able to keep up with the

1 needs that are present. Thank you so much for having
2 me today and we look forward to collaborating in the
3 future.
4

5 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. Last
6 on this panel, we will hear from Taykina Chowdhury.
7 You may begin when the Sergeant gives you the queue.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 TAYKINA CHOWDHURY: Good afternoon distinguished
10 members of New York City Council and all the other
11 panelists. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
12 today on behalf of Womankind and the survivors we
13 have the privilege of serving.

14 My name is Taykina Chowdhury, and I am the
15 Associate Director of Helpline and Residential
16 Programs at Womankind. We are here today as a
17 culturally-humble, gender-based violence
18 organization, with over four decades of experience,
19 to provide insight on the barriers our communities
20 face while accessing survivor services and victim
21 compensation funds. Womankind uses the
22 multidimensionality of our Asian heritage to work
23 alongside survivors of gender-based violence as they
24 build a path to healing. We provide culturally
25 relevant and linguistically accessible services to

1 survivors in 18 plus Asian languages. Many of the
2 survivors we serve face legal, institutional, and
3 societal barriers to accessing services.
4

5 Specifically accessing services and crime victims'
6 compensation is tied to reporting cases to law
7 enforcement. Survivors, especially immigrant low-
8 income Asian survivors, are less likely to report
9 cases to formal resources and instead rely upon their
10 respective community for support.

11 Early on in 2021, in order to comprehensively
12 understand the barriers to accessing these funds, we
13 conducted an organization-wide survey of Womankind
14 Advocates. Our findings show that many survivors are
15 unable to or choose not to seek solutions through the
16 criminal legal system; many are hesitant and fearful
17 of involvement with the police; and there is often a
18 cultural and linguistic disconnect.

19 In some cases, survivors' interactions with the
20 police lead to greater harm associated with
21 criminalization and revictimization. In addition,
22 the process to file a claim has been difficult to
23 understand and lengthy for our clients.

24 During COVID-19, these barriers have been further
25 heightened as Asian and survivor communities are

1
2 disproportionately impacted by the economic down turn
3 and rise in anti-Asian violence. We call on the New
4 York City Council's Committee on Women and Gender
5 Equity to support womankind and the survivors we
6 serve by increasing equitable access to vital
7 services and expanding eligibility for victims and
8 survivors of crime to access victim compensation
9 funds. We also believe in deepening investment in
10 community-based organizations that serve as the entry
11 point of access and ongoing culturally and
12 linguistically accessible support for many in our
13 communities. These steps would go a long way in
14 promoting healing, preserving safety, and ensuring
15 that survivors are provided much needed support as
16 they navigate increasingly challenging circumstances.
17 Thank you.

18 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. We
19 have now heard from everyone that has signed up to
20 testify. We appreciate your time and presence. If I
21 have inadvertently missed anyone that would like to
22 testify, please use the raise hand function in Zoom
23 and I will call you in the order of hands raised.
24 Antonia Clemente you may begin.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 ANTONIA CLEMENTE: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Antonia Clemente, I am the Executive Director of the
4 Healing Center and Founder. My pronouns is A-she,
5 hers and I want to thank this City Council Committee
6 on Women and Gender Equity for this hearing,
7 particularly Council Member Cabàn.

8 So, three things I want to say, who we are, why
9 we are and what needs to be done to move forward.

10 So, the Healing Center, we're an organization that is
11 located in Southwest Brooklyn. We provide direct
12 services to victims and survivors of domestic
13 violence, gender-based violence. We provide
14 supportive counseling, support groups through what is
15 called [INAUDIBLE 4:28:55], safety planning, advocacy
16 referrals, immigration, and other legal counsel. We
17 make referrals. We have a children's program for the
18 High Five children's program for children ages five
19 to ten who are affected by domestic violence. We
20 have a teen program called Daughters [INAUDIBLE
21 4:29:16] for teen girls where they can find a safe
22 space where this program engages youth through
23 expressive art, community organizing and self-
24 discovery.

1
2 We also do work on elder justice in the Latino
3 community. We work with faith communities. We
4 provide community education and outreach and we're
5 also the sponsors of the New York City Teen Dating
6 Violence Awareness Walkathon. I share that because
7 as an organization, we're an organization that has
8 grown organically. Has grown based on the needs of
9 the community, on the families who have come to see
10 us. The families that we serve and for me, accessing
11 services at the ground level is very, very important.

12 At the end of the day, many victims and survivors
13 are looking for services within their communities.
14 They don't want to take a train. They don't want to
15 go somewhere else. Many want to stay within the
16 community and we know that that's a fact. During the
17 pandemic, many families were looking for services
18 within the community. They weren't taking no trains.
19 They weren't going anywhere. They were staying in
20 their community. We were open during the pandemic
21 and we realized that many of the families that we
22 were working with had the same needs that they had
23 even prior to the pandemic.

24 So, the pandemic only made things worse because
25 there was not so much accessibility. So, it's

1
2 important that New York City Council begins to look
3 at organizations at the ground level that the
4 bilingual, that are culturally sensitive to
5 communities and how funding trickles down to
6 organizations that are providing direct services.
7 Many of the families that we serviced are not
8 families that are calling the police. Are not
9 families that are going to the Family Justice Center.
10 Are not families who are going to other services
11 because they're not aware of the services that are
12 available.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 ANTONIA CLEMENTE: So, I think the New York City
15 Council – it's important that New York City Council
16 begins to look at initiatives that they can expand
17 and that services will stay within the community.
18 The DOVE Initiative was a good initiative, is a good
19 initiative of how we got started to work at the
20 ground level, at the community level and I think it's
21 very important that that initiative be expanded. \$11
22 million that goes to the DOVE initiative, shame on
23 New York City. Every person I've heard since this
24 afternoon, evidence is the need of the services that

25

1
2 are needed in our city. \$11 million for DOVE is not
3 enough money.

4 So, I think that the New York City Council needs
5 to look more to how do we add more funding into the
6 DOVE Initiative, one. Number two, we do elder
7 enhancement. That's another population we don't talk
8 about. Elder abuse in our communities. How our
9 older people are accessing services on elder abuse.
10 It was only a few hundred thousands of dollars that
11 went into the elder enhanced project against abuse
12 with older people.

13 We need to expand those services and we need to
14 continue to expand services at the ground level, at
15 the grassroots level because like I said, and just to
16 reiterate, at the end of the day, people in the
17 community want to be looking and knocking on services
18 that are within the community. It is community-based
19 organizations that make the connections where clients
20 and individuals can connect with. Whether it's
21 legal, whether it's the Family Justice Center, what
22 are there needs based on their need.

23 So, I'm asking this Council to please look at how
24 more funding can be at the ground level and maybe
25 even the City Council needs to look, how much funding

1
2 is really going to organizations that are culturally,
3 culturally sensitive and culturally that are
4 bilingual and bicultural. How much – what percentage
5 of our city budget goes into grassroots organizations
6 at the ground level?

7 So, thank you for your time and I look forward to
8 partnering and continuing our conversations.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony. We
10 have now heard from everyone that has signed up to
11 testify. Once again, we appreciate your time and
12 presence. I will now turn it to Council Member
13 Riley.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Andrea and thank
15 you to everybody who testified today. Thank you to
16 the Sergeants and the Council. Thank you to everyone
17 who testified. Your testimony was really appreciated
18 and we really will take everything into account and
19 on behalf of Chair Cabàn and behalf of the Committee
20 on Women and Gender Equity, this hearing is hereby
21 adjourned. Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 9, 2022