

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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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2023

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: HON. TIFFANY L. CABÁN, CHAIR

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

JAMES F. GENNARO
JENNIFER GUTIÉRREZ
KRISTIN RICHARDSON JORDAN
KEVIN C. RILEY
ALTHEA V. STEVENS
INNA VERNIKOV

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING: Farías, Louis and Hanif

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

A P P E A R A N C E S

Saloni Sethi
First Deputy Commissioner, Mayor's Office to End
Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

Jamal Alsarraj
Executive Director of Community Initiatives,
Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based
Violence

Daniris Espinal
New Destiny Survivor Voices Project
Representing: Self

Stephanie Woodbine
New Destiny Survivors Voices Project; Co-chair
of the Advisory Council at the Mayor's Office to
End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence
Representing: Self

Jayeanne Santos
New Destiny Survivors Voices Project
Representing: Self

Kallo Fatima
Urban Resource Institute
Representing: Self

Krystle Campbell
Urban Resource Institute
Representing: Self

Teal Inzunza
Program Director of the Economic Empowerment
Program at the Urban Resource Institute and Co-
Chair of the Domestic Violence and Economic
Justice Taskforce

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Kristen Houlton Shaw
Director of Strategic Initiatives at
New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

Gabriela Sandoval Requena
Director of Policy and Communications at New
Destiny Housing Corporation

Ella Grace Downs
Policy and Government Affairs Manager at Girls
for Gender Equity

Jimmy Meagher
Policy Director at Safe Horizon

Evie Litwok
Executive Director of Witness to Mass
Incarceration

Joann Kim
Assistant Director of Community Engagement at
The Korean American Family Service Center

blair doroshwalther
Manager of Economic Empowerment at Safe Horizon,
Co-Chair of Consumer Law Working Group, and Co-
Chair of the DV Residential Housing Coalition
Subcommittee

Mari Moss
Representing: Self

Stephanie Henri Mansfield
Representing: Self

Dinatalia Farina
Counselor Advocate for the Violence Intervention
Program at Casa Sandra

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Katie Zhang
Housing Specialist at Womankind; and member of
the Domestic Violence Economic Justice Housing
Stability Coalition

Lauren Schuster
Vice President of Government Affairs, Urban
Resource Institute

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COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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SERGEANT PETUVI: This is a microphone check for the Committee on Women and Gender Equity recorded in chambers on October 25, 2023 by Nazly Paytuvi.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to the New York City Hearing of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. At this time, please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

If you wish to testify, please go up to the Sergeants' desk to fill out a testimony slip.

At this time, and going forward, no one is to approach the dais, I repeat, no one is to approach the dais. Thank you for your cooperation.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you

[gavel sound] [gaveling in]

Hello, and welcome everyone, My name is Tiffany Cabán, my pronouns are she/her, and I am the Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

Today's oversight hearing is about Microgrants for Survivors of Domestic and Gender-based Violence. And, additionally, we will hear Resolution Number 165 of 2022, sponsored by Council Members Louis, calling on the State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.1847/S.843, authorizing certain shelters for

2 victims of domestic violence to be reimbursed for any
3 payment differential for housing a single individual
4 in a room intended for double occupancy.

5 We are going to have a couple of opening remarks.
6 First I am going to turn it over to my colleague,
7 Council Member Farías.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you so much, Chair
9 Cabán, Good morning everyone, and thank you for
10 hosting this important hearing today.

11 As the co-chair of the Women's Caucus, I can say
12 with pride that the women of The City Council have
13 been hyper focused on pushing legislation forward
14 which codifies protections and support for survivors
15 in the New York City Charter. Thanks to the
16 leadership of Chair Cabán, this is now the second
17 hearing for this Domestic Violence Month of October,
18 where we have focused on actions New York State needs
19 to take to ensure the safety of survivors of domestic
20 and gender-based violence. New York City has taken
21 important strides in stopping the cycles of violence
22 of poverty that are often correlated with domestic
23 violence. Gender-based violence is among the leading
24 causes of homelessness in New York City. While
25 anyone can be a victim of such violence, women,

2 particularly Black and Latinx women, are
3 disproportionately impacted. Individuals who
4 identify as LGBTQIA+ are also 21% more likely to
5 experience poverty than their cisgender, heterosexual
6 counterparts, and are additionally disproportionately
7 impacted by gender-based violence and face
8 homelessness as a consequence. This is a devastating
9 reality for far too many, and few survivors receive
10 the support they need to heal and move past the
11 trauma they have experienced.

12 The issue of housing for survivors and
13 microgrants were a top priority for the Women's
14 Caucus during budget negotiations, and we were
15 disappointed that the adopted Fiscal Year 24 Budget
16 allowed it just \$1.2 million for the program, less
17 than a quarter of the necessary minimum appropriation
18 of \$6 million.

19 Many survivors are just one health scare of
20 missed paycheck away from a financial crisis. And
21 while existing support programs provide survivors
22 with a critical lifeline, they're neither immediate,
23 nor do they provide families with the flexibility
24 they need. To name a few examples: Survivors cannot

2 use vouchers to purchase food, furniture, clothing,
3 or medical supplies.

4 In light of this reality, and the strain that the
5 COVID-19 pandemic took on households throughout the
6 City, in June of 2020, The Mayor's Office to End
7 Domestic and Gender-Based Violence launched its first
8 of its kind, emergency financial relief program for
9 survivors, which directly provided them with the
10 microgrants to cover expenses ranging from rent,
11 utilities, bills, clothing, and more. At the close
12 of this program, it became incredibly clear that not
13 only is there a huge need for targeted funding, but
14 also how positive of an impact microgrants had on the
15 life and the healing of survivors. Given these
16 benefits, last June Chair Cabán, Co-Chair Louis,
17 myself, and several of our colleagues, with the
18 support of Speaker Adrienne Adams, pushed to pass the
19 Support Survivor's package, which was signed into law
20 by Mayor Adams. While this was an incredible feat
21 towards the fight to end Domestic and Gender-Based
22 Violence, we still have a lot of work ahead of us.

23 Earlier this month, we heard and passed my
24 resolution on the need for a Purple Alert System for
25 missing victims of domestic violence, and today we

2 will be hearing the important resolution, led by my
3 co-chair Farah Louis.

4 We have the potential to provide immediate
5 critically needed and direct support to help
6 survivors access safety and economic stability. And
7 I believe that, in partnership, we can address this
8 critical issue and enhance our city's public safety.
9 I look forward to hearing the Administration's update
10 on the microgrant program, as recently codified, and
11 to examining the current need for housing support for
12 survivors. Thank you, again, to Chair Cabán, for
13 your leadership on this issue.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much. The trauma
15 of experiencing domestic and or gender-based
16 violence, can cause devastating, lifelong
17 psychological and physical impacts, especially
18 without timely and effective support services.
19 Unaddressed trauma can lead to chronic emotional
20 distress, relationship problems, and substance use
21 disorders, all of which can lead to challenges with
22 maintaining employment or housing. Ultimately,
23 untreated trauma has costly consequences for
24 survivors, their families, and communities.
25 Significantly, DV is one of the leading causes of

2 homelessness in New York City, surpassing that of
3 evictions, and also contributes to overcrowding in
4 shelters. Black and brown folks are less likely to
5 report experiences of domestic violence due to past
6 experience or fear of discrimination in the criminal
7 legal system. LGBTQIA+ communities also report
8 feeling uncomfortable asking for the police for help
9 due to fears of experiencing discrimination.
10 Immigrant communities may be reluctant to report
11 domestic violence or gender-based violence to law
12 enforcement for fear of being detained or deported.
13 And people with disabilities are similarly reluctant
14 to report their concerns. Significantly, these
15 experiences are compounded for those who hold
16 multiple and intersecting identities across these
17 communities.

18 In June of 2020, The Mayor's Office to End
19 Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, also known as
20 ENDGBV, launched a first of its kind emergency
21 financial relief program for survivors of domestic
22 and gender-based violence. This program as designed
23 to directly provide survivors domestic and gender-
24 based violence with microgrants to cover expenses
25 ranging from rent, utilities, clothing, and other

2 items. And while the program's goal was serve to 312
3 families with an average microgrant of \$1,500.00 and
4 the end of the program, 693 applications had been
5 received, and had provided an average microgrant of
6 \$1,243.37 per applicant to a total of 377 total
7 clients. At the close of the program, ENDGBV
8 conducted an evaluation, which revealed not only the
9 need for such targeted funding, but also the positive
10 impact of such a program. The program evaluation
11 showed that those who received microgrants reported
12 positive impacts on their mental health and well-
13 being, financial and housing securities, and their
14 children's feelings of safety and well-being. And I
15 just quickly want to say that ENDGBV, like, did an
16 incredible job standing this up at a really, really
17 difficult moment, super fast, and it saved lives.

18 On June 14th of 2022, the Committee on Women and
19 Gender Equity, this committee, held a hearing on the
20 Support Survivor's package of legislation, which
21 included Introduction 153, cosponsored by myself and
22 Council Member Hanif, in relation to establishing a
23 Domestic Violence Survivor Housing Stability program,
24 codifying a program based on the microgrant program

2 launched my ENDGBV. On November 22, 2022 the bill
3 was adopted becoming Local Law 112.

4 Now, today's hearing the Committee looks forward
5 to receiving an update on ENDGBV's administration of
6 the microgrant program, as recently codified, and to
7 examining the current need for housing support by
8 survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

9 The Committee is also interested in receiving
10 testimony that can inform policies to assist
11 survivors of domestic and gender-based violence with
12 expenses related to maintaining housing on an ongoing
13 basis.

14 I would like to thank the representatives of
15 ENDGBV, advocates, impacted individuals, and members
16 of the public who will be providing testimony today.
17 And in closing, I would like to thank Madhuri Shukla,
18 my Legislative and Budget Director; Jesse Myerson,
19 Director of Communications; as well as our committee
20 staff, Sahar Moazami, Legislative Counsel; and Cristy
21 Dwyer, Senior Legislative Policy Analyst for their
22 work on this hearing. And also a special thank you
23 to Mara Davis for her contribution to this hearing as
24 well.

2 I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are
3 here with us today, you have already heard from
4 Council Member Fariás, Council Member Riley is here,
5 Council Member Louis, and Council Member Hanif.

6 I will now turn it... Oh, actually, I am going
7 to turn it over to Council Member Louis for opening
8 statements, and then we will turn it over to our
9 committee counsel. There you go.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you so much.

11 Good morning, Chair Cabán, and committee members,
12 and thank you for the opportunity to speak about
13 Resolution 165, a resolution calling on the State to
14 authorize shelters for victims of domestic violence
15 to be reimbursed for any payment differential for
16 housing, a single individual in a room intended for
17 double occupancy.

18 Through the work done in this council, I know the
19 strides we are collectively taking to address the
20 current housing crisis whether that is through
21 championing affordable housing in our districts, or
22 urging the Administration to provide recourses for
23 those experiencing homelessness across the City.

24 Today my legislation specifically addresses the
25 gap in housing for domestic violence victims and the

2 hurdles they experience in seeking shelter due to
3 arcane and inflexible State law. Domestic violence is
4 a leading cause of homelessness in New York City. In
5 addition to evictions and overcrowding, domestic
6 violence survivors often cannot stay with family
7 members for fear of running into their abusers. And
8 many lack the income to find permanent housing
9 quickly. The provision of state emergency shelter is
10 a primary tool for those fleeing domestic violence.
11 Through countless Budget hearings, rallies, and news
12 reports, we have all seen our shelter system buckle
13 under the weight of the housing crisis in our city.
14 There are women and their families who now see
15 waiting countless hours to be housed - whether by
16 themselves, at the Franklin or Help Women's Center,
17 or at Path Center with their children. Due to the
18 current state policy, the shelters wait hours and
19 possible days to get much needed shelter and relief
20 from their abusers, often restrict what is available
21 for these women who are simply trying to escape the
22 violence from their household. There are beds
23 available in double occupancy rooms, rooms that two
24 people who would be placed to be housed together
25 dormitory style, that cannot be used to house these

2 individuals, because the shelters would only be
3 allowed to house two individuals at a time, and not
4 allow them to give their client a place to call home.

5 If we want to seriously commit to addressing this
6 crisis, we have to address these obstacles and
7 increase a systemwide capacity for single adult women
8 who otherwise would be blocked from accessing shelter
9 to keep themselves safe.

10 My legislation Resolution 165 compels the State
11 to pass A.1847, sponsored by Assemblymember Hevesi
12 and others, the New York State Office of Children and
13 Family Services to prioritize safety and allow
14 shelters to use all of their available beds for
15 single women to be reimbursed. Temporary housing
16 that gives them space and safety should be paramount.
17 A family or individual needs the services of the
18 community and organizations, but the nonprofits are
19 having difficulty, and must have the assistance and
20 assurances their fiscal needs will be timely
21 addressed. This resolution supports both providers
22 and our vulnerable neighbors. And I urge our
23 colleagues to pass this legislation so that we can
24 actively participate in the protection and healing of
25 families and individuals, thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much. I will
3 turn it over to the committee counsel to administer
4 the oath.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. We will now
6 hear testimony from members of the Administration.
7 Will you please raise your right hand? Do you affirm
8 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
9 the truth, before this committee, and to respond
10 honestly to council member questions?

11 [ADMINISTRATION AFFIRMS]

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin when
13 ready.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Good morning,
15 Chair Cabán and members of The Committee on Women and
16 Gender Equity. I am Saloni Sethi, First Deputy
17 Commissioner of The Mayor's Office To End Domestic
18 and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV). I am joined by
19 Jamal Alsarraj, ENDGBV's Executive Director of
20 Community Initiatives.

21 ENDGBV operates the City's five Family Justice
22 Centers and directly manages a contract portfolio of
23 prevention and intervention programming. Our office
24 builds capacity for agency staff and community
25 members to identify and respond to domestic and

2 gender-based violence (DV/GBV) through outreach and
3 training, and we develop policies and best practices
4 to strengthen the City's approach to these issues. We
5 collaborate with city agencies, over 100 nonprofit
6 providers, community stakeholders, and people with
7 lived experience to reduce barriers and ensure access
8 to inclusive services for survivors of DV/GBV.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you
10 about the implementation of Local Law 112 of 2022
11 related to microgrants for survivors of domestic and
12 gender-based violence.

13 Our implementation of Local Law 112 is informed
14 by our 2020 emergency financial relief microgrant
15 program. This program provided microgrants to
16 survivors in response to their acute and unique needs
17 during a period of crisis and uncertainty. Within two
18 months, this program successfully allocated
19 \$468,750.00 to 377 unique survivors, with an average
20 grant amount of \$1,243.00.

21 ENDGBV has made substantial progress on our new
22 microgrant initiative -- what ENDGBV is calling
23 "flexible" financing." Over the past year, ENDGBV has
24 been working with OMB, the Law Department, and other
25 agencies to minimize potential barriers to accessing

2 funding. We are pleased to share that eligibility for
3 flexible funding will not be tied to immigration
4 status, and we plan to offer survivors diverse
5 disbursement methods, including checks, payments
6 directly to vendors, and physical or electric gift
7 cards and debit cards.

8 We are pleased to have \$1.2 million in baseline
9 funding for this initiative, which we anticipate will
10 serve at least 900 survivors based on our previous
11 program. In addition to providing grant relief, our
12 services encompass safety planning, housing focused
13 case management, and direct connection to additional
14 DV/GBV services. As we move forward with
15 implementation, we have two goals in mind: maximizing
16 the amount of funding that can be disbursed directly
17 to survivors, and ensuring that we work as
18 expeditiously as possible to begin programming. We
19 are working closely with The Department of Social
20 Services ACCO team to identify the best procurement
21 methods to meet these goals given City processes and
22 timelines.

23 We also continue to be in conversation with our
24 community base providers, especially those focused on
25

2 housing stability, to insure their input is
3 incorporated into the program's design.

4 This includes finalizing implementation details
5 like data collection, community outreach, and best
6 practices for low-barrier disbursement. Our goal is
7 to begin dispersing flexible funding to survivors in
8 the next few months.

9 We look forward to continued collaboration with a
10 Council, our sister city agencies, and our community
11 base partners to support safe and stable housing for
12 survivors. Thank you for the opportunity to appear
13 here today. I welcome any questions you may have.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, uh, I guess I'll
15 start at the end of your testimony. You testified
16 that your goal is to begin dispersing flexible
17 funding to survivors in the next few months. What
18 does that mean? Could you give me a tighter window
19 that's like a little bit more identifiable,
20 quantifiable? And could you walk me through sort of
21 why it's taken the amount of time that it has? For,
22 like, a lay person, right? Because this is a program
23 that you all stood up very, very quickly during the
24 pandemic. And, so, I'm wondering what challenges
25 have there been in getting these funds out the door

2 in the sort of same kind of speed and with the same
3 kind of urgency that you were able to do so during
4 the peak of the pandemic?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, uh, so, I
6 can speak a little bit to all of it, I think ,you
7 know, in terms of... in terms of the challenges. We
8 received the appropriation as of July 1, 2023, which
9 is when we received the funding, which is this fiscal
10 year. I think ,you know, the key difference between
11 the pandemic program and the current program is that
12 the pandemic program was funded by private dollars
13 and this is funded by City dollars. And, so, the
14 ,you know, the rules and processes that come along
15 with City funding are different. Right? So, I think
16 even our initial negotiations we sort of mentioned
17 that our procurement timelines would likely be
18 longer. So, that is kind of what we are dealing
19 with. And I think some of the wins really in terms
20 of ,you know, thinking about the different
21 disbursement methods, it is the first time that we
22 have sort of been here as a city doing this and
23 saying we can give survivors debit cards, we can give
24 checks, we don't have to pay landlords directly,
25 right? So, all of those sort of pieces I think is

2 what we have been working on. And that has taken
3 some time. In terms of, uhm, more clarity in a few
4 months, we are ,you know, can't comment on sort of
5 ongoing contract negotiations, but we are in
6 conversation with the ACCO team to really figure out
7 how to launch this as quickly as possible.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Great, thank you. I am going
9 to ask just a series of questions mostly focused on
10 implementation, and then I will pass it to my
11 colleagues. And I'm sure I have additional questions
12 after that. If any of you have questions just let
13 Sahar know.

14 Uh, so, you talked a little bit about the
15 proposed timeline for the launch. It was originally
16 noted that the... that it was going to be launched
17 under Home Plus, is that still the plan?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Oh, again, we
19 cannot really comment on the ongoing negation, but we
20 are looking ,you know, working with our ACCO team to
21 look across the portfolio to figure out what the
22 quickest way to launch this is.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I mean, can you talk about
24 sort of what the ideal conditions are? Like, what
25 can you share?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think ,you
3 know, in terms of the... our providers, I think what
4 is really important to us, and some of the stuff we
5 have covered in the testimony, is really making sure
6 that these services are housed within an agency that
7 knows how to work with survivors of domestic and
8 gender-based violence, and who can provide some of
9 sort of all the wrap around supports that we
10 mentioned. Right? We want to make sure that safety
11 planning is a part of this. We want to make sure
12 that case management focuses on housing and longer
13 term housing needs are a part of this. We want to
14 make sure that survivors have access to any other
15 ,you know, uhm, any other programs and services that
16 might meet their economic empowerment needs, their
17 legal needs. So, I think that that's really
18 critical, and that is sort of what we are looking at
19 and kind of reviewing ,you know, our existing
20 contract portfolio to figure out what makes the most
21 sense.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, uhm, but it... And just
23 to be clear, in terms of where it ends up living,
24 understanding that we're not quite sure where that
25 will be, uhm, are you ruling out it living in a

2 location that is co-located with a police precinct, a
3 DA's office?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Uhm, we have not
5 ruled anything out. And, I think, again, it is ,you
6 know, the goal is to... Let's say it's with our ,you
7 know, COVID-19 program, right, one of the things was
8 easy is that we picked one provider and worked with
9 one provider. Our goal is to kind of work with
10 multiple providers to the extent that we can to make
11 sure that we are increasing access as much as
12 possible.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And the reason why I am asking
14 that is because that's all... That is one of the
15 critical reasons why this program came to be. We
16 heard directly from survivors saying -- and we know
17 just based on the data -- that there are a lot of
18 folks who do not report especially for these
19 particularly historically oppressed and marginalized
20 identities that they don't approach because of police
21 contact... Like, the possibility of police contact.
22 And, also, obviously, this came to be to remove the
23 barrier of having to cooperate with police to be able
24 to get support and funds. So, ,you know, I know that
25 you're not able to say ,you know, sort of who the

2 main partners are going to be, where it's going to
3 live, but I would urge that it does not live anywhere
4 that is co-located within something that is attached
5 to or part of the criminal legal system, because it
6 really would be antithetical to all of the testimony
7 that we heard that really informed this legislation
8 and the intention of how the provision of services
9 would look like.

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: No, and we do
11 anticipate this will live in community. Right? In
12 community with community based settings. The other
13 thing I will say like all of ENDGBV's programming, we
14 don't require cooperation with law enforcement to
15 receive services. So, the only proof that we need
16 that you are a survivor of domestic and gender-based
17 violence is self-attestation. And we anticipate that
18 it will be similar for this program.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Great, thank you.

20 Local Law 112 noted to host the program
21 [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] on the ENDGBV website.
22 Is that still where they are going to be collected,
23 or like will there be other mediums that are used?
24 And if so, could you speak to some of the
25 accessibility needs?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, so this
3 definitely something that we are working on,
4 gathering input from our stakeholders and how to
5 streamline that process. We do anticipate ,you know,
6 we want to have something on our website that allows
7 survivors to access this program. And ,you know, we
8 are in conversations with folks that are doing this
9 work on what makes sense, while also maintaining
10 privacy and confidentiality. Right? We don't want
11 the City to have too much data for survivors on their
12 website. So, we are trying to figure out what the
13 best streamlined process is. But, we do anticipate
14 that it will be a way to connect to the program on
15 ENDGBV's website.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And in addition to the
17 website, like, what other mediums are you looking at
18 in terms of accessing an application?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I mean, we
20 have our website, we have our NYCHope portal. Right?
21 We are working ,you know, planning to work with our
22 providers on an outreach plan that will involve
23 engaging other providers and referral sources,
24 because that is a critical piece. We want to make
25 sure that providers are taking referrals from

2 everywhere for this program and making sure they are
3 getting out there and talking about it. We also will
4 be translating everything as we do into the top ten
5 languages, as well as Braille, to kind of work on
6 survivors that might be facing the digital divide.
7 And, again, I think with all of our... As with all
8 of our other programs, we are ensuring that this is
9 accessible to survivors with disabilities, right, and
10 making sure that the providers have the technology
11 that the need to provide those services to everybody.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And the goal with partnering
13 with community based organizations, is that to go
14 across the digital divide? Like, making sure that
15 there is something in addition to logging onto a
16 computer and filling out the... [CROSS-TALK]

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, exactly.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Have you generated that
19 application form yet?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We are in
21 process of drafting it. So, we are still working on
22 that.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay. So, my request is, can
24 we get a copy of the former, uh, application from
25 when you all stood up the program? And, then, when

2 the new application is ready, could you send us a
3 copy of that as well?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We could
5 definitely follow up and get back to you.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. Okay, so, we have
7 not collected any applications as of yet? [CROSS-
8 TALK]

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: No.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Right? I think ,you know, and
11 these are going to be followups sort of preemptively
12 asking... I would love to know, when it does go
13 live, how many applications get collected, what are
14 the demographics, uhm, of the program applicants? Do
15 you have an idea of what the expected microgrant
16 amounts are?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we
18 anticipate, I mean, based on the previous program,
19 that we will end up at a same, similar average is
20 sort of what we are projecting, about \$1,200.00 per
21 survivor. And ,you know, but we are leaving a lot of
22 flexibility, I think, for our providers and how much
23 they can give or how... depending on survivor needs.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, the Local Law, it notes
25 that microgrants can be used to cover just really...

2 which is incredible, a really wide variety of
3 expenses, including safety plan costs, housing costs,
4 legal service costs, medical bills, cell phones,
5 moving costs, other transportation costs. Does
6 ENDGBV envision any other expenses to be allowed to
7 be covered? Or are there any types of restrictions
8 around what expenses outside of those named by the
9 Local Law would be covered?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, right now, I
11 mean, we are planning to have this cover anything
12 that relates to housing stability. Right? So, that
13 includes those direct housing related expenses such
14 as rent or moving costs or ,you know, as well as some
15 of the indirect expenses that might allow you to
16 remain stable in your home. Things like child care,
17 things like medical costs, right? And also we are
18 thinking about things like ,you know, job training,
19 things to help you get work, all of those I think
20 is... we are open to all of it. So, we have not
21 ruled anything out yet. I think it's, again, part of
22 our implementation is having conversations with
23 providers to see how best to make that link to
24 housing stability.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And is the commitment to make
3 this, uh, like, the least onerous as possible in
4 terms of having to provide ,you know, receipts and
5 details, and categories?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: And I am glad
7 you asked that, because I think that is one of the
8 biggest learning curves from our COVID-19 program.
9 As we realized that for our providers it was a huge
10 administrative burden, in kind of getting all that
11 kind of backup documentation. And I think ,you know,
12 we are really excited that we have talked with our
13 partners at DSS, and we will not need that. So, I
14 think allowing providers to give somebody a survivor
15 debit card kind of precludes that, so that the
16 survivor can spend that on whatever they want, and we
17 don't have to track it.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Great.

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Uhm, and that
20 might vary again somewhat by providers in terms of
21 what they need for their own documentation purposes.
22 But, as far as the City goes, we won't be requiring
23 that... [CROSS-TALK]

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah, that's a super critical
25 piece of it. I have represented criminalized

2 survivors in court, and just understanding that in a
3 moment of crisis, prolonged acute crisis at that, the
4 ability to get to an appointment on time, or do a
5 thing, or track something is just... it feels like a
6 mountain. So, the ability to make it as easy as
7 possible is super important.

8 So, I know that it can cover expenses that are
9 already incurred in terms of like a reimbursement or
10 the back... you know, paying back a debt, obviously
11 you can buy something on the spot with a debit card,
12 but can they also be used to pay for future expenses?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: Uh, per what Saloni
14 had said earlier, I think this is going to be
15 something that is part of the ongoing discussion with
16 community based partners we are working with to see
17 on the ground, uhm, how to make that something
18 feasible and if that's something that they believe to
19 be prevalent with the survivors that we are all
20 working with. So, we are not ruling that out.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, yeah, I know that you
22 named some of the sort of support services that you
23 are hoping to kind of connect people with when the
24 come through the door with an application for a
25 microgrant or a flexible funds, are there point

2 people at each service that have been identified
3 specifically for the program yet?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We don't have
5 point people at this time. But, I think, and, again,
6 this is where some of the conversations that we are
7 continuing to have with our providers are about, is
8 because all of our providers have their own intake
9 processes. Right? So, we want to make sure that
10 somebody who is coming for the service is not being
11 over intaked (sic) for a lack of a better word. And
12 we are working with our providers to make sure that
13 whatever we're doing becomes part of their ongoing
14 intake process, and that intake process looks at some
15 of this wrap around needs as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And will those connections
17 still be made even if the applicant doesn't receive a
18 microgrant?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, uhm, what forms of
21 outreach do you anticipate making to ensure the
22 survivors know that this is available to them, and
23 how will it be done in a way to ensure accessibility?
24 Like, we already talked about the application itself,
25

2 but just in terms of education around its existence
3 and driving people to get the services?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think
5 ,you know, similar with some of the other programs
6 that we have launched over the past few years, I
7 think the ongoing outreach is critical. Right, so,
8 we anticipate working with our providers to develop
9 sort of comprehensive outreach plans, and work with
10 them to conduct in person outreach, online outreach,
11 ,you know, emails to other provider networks, to all
12 ENDGBV's provider networks to make sure there is
13 education around the program. But, I think it is
14 something that we will be doing sort of on an ongoing
15 basis -- going to survivor forums -- we have our own
16 ,you know, survivor leader group. We anticipate
17 engaging them potentially in this outreach as well to
18 kind of make sure that we are getting the word out as
19 broadly as possible.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: You have not identified which
21 community organizations you will work with to
22 implement the program, right?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We, yeah, we are
24 in conversations, we can't comment on the... [CROSS-
25 TALK]

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay... [CROSS-TALK]

3 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: the ongoing
4 negotiations.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, could you comment at
6 least on what role those organizations will play in
7 the implementation of the program?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we
9 anticipate, again, that the organizations will
10 obviously ,you know, be in charge of implementing and
11 disbursing the funds, and taking in the individual
12 cases, and making those assessments about need and
13 amount and kind of doing that, which they are all
14 really good at doing. I think, in addition, we
15 anticipate that they will be working with us to
16 continue to refining the program and refining
17 implementation, so that we know... I think one of
18 the things that we really want to make sure that we
19 are meeting the need where it is and making sure that
20 we are looking at the data, and looking at who is
21 coming in and ,you know, making sure that it
22 accurately reflects the need of the community that
23 the organization serves. So, I think that's an
24 ongoing partnership and conversation.

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: And just to your
3 point earlier as well to partner on the outreach end
4 as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: What do you anticipate being
6 the biggest obstacles for implementation?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I mean
8 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Besides not having enough
10 money... [CROSS-TALK]

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: The [INAUDIBLE]
12 our time is [INAUDIBLE]... I think... I think, ,you
13 know, again working with multiple providers, I think
14 thinking about uniformity across providers is
15 something that we really want to think about, making
16 sure that no matter where a survivor goes, even if
17 it's one of ,you know, three or four different orgs,
18 they are getting the exact same opportunity in
19 service. So, I think that there is definitely some
20 ongoing work that we will keep doing there to make
21 sure... And I think that the other part is really
22 around reach. Right? We want to make sure that we
23 are reaching as many folks as possible. And, so how
24 are we as a city kind of checking in on where
25 referrals are coming from, where they aren't coming

2 from, right? And, then, how are we making sure that
3 we are going to the places where maybe we are not
4 reaching, to make sure that we are meeting the need
5 accurately.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I mean, one thing that I
7 immediately think about or anticipate is just that
8 the importance of and the critical need for peers and
9 culturally competent outreach folks. And that often
10 times means, like, these really, really small
11 community based organizations that oftentimes get
12 overlooked by the Mayor's Office or the
13 Administration for funding, but they are the most
14 credible messengers and have the most intimate
15 relationships with the folks that are affected by
16 this. How are you all thinking about making sure
17 that those folks are pulled in?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, I mean I
19 think that it is an ongoing ,you know, challenge for
20 us. Like, as you mentioned, we have over 100 CBO
21 partners. So, that includes some of the larger and
22 some of these very, very small kind of localized
23 organizations. That being said, I think that there
24 is always more to be done. I think one of the things
25 that ,you know, our office is working on and

2 continues to work on, is think about what does
3 community engagement continue to look like? And I
4 think we are actually building up a team that is
5 going to be doing this work citywide which is a newer
6 team that we are onboarding. So, I think that is
7 really exciting for us to get folks that are really
8 going to be out there in community to really help
9 identify and build those bridges and build those
10 linkages. The other thing I will sort of mention is
11 I think we are also committed really to partnering
12 with survivors. And I think they are really helpful
13 in those efforts and helping us identify the places
14 that may have helped them that we are not aware of.
15 Right? Many of our survivor leaders also have their
16 own organizations and networks. So, I think really
17 thinking about how we tap into all of those to help
18 get the word out there is going to be really
19 important.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I have more que
21 stions, but I will hand it over to my colleagues for
22 another... Is there anybody [NO MIC] [INAUDIBLE]?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hanif and Riley.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so, Council Member
25 Hanif?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair Cabán.

3 Thank you for being here. I know you mentioned
4 that you are unable to share which community based
5 organizations you are working with at this moment,
6 but would I appreciate getting to know which groups
7 will be part of this important program.

8 Are you able to share what the intake process
9 looks like from beginning to end? Is it with the
10 connection of a provider? Is it directly with the
11 agency? Could you just walk through what survivors
12 have to do to participate?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: Similar to, as we
14 have been saying, sorry if it sounds like the same
15 answer, as we are working with our providers and
16 reflecting on previous programming that we have
17 offered, working with the community based
18 organizations, we are wanting to think about ways to
19 streamline processes while being able to gather the
20 necessary information, but really being a low barrier
21 model for survivors to access. So, we are working
22 with our providers to see the best way for survivors
23 to connect to the program we may develop and the
24 services offered.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Are there any lessons
3 learned that you are hoping to include in the new
4 version of the program?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, I mean, I
6 think it ,you know, goes back to making this sort of,
7 uhm, you know, as not burdensome to the survivors or
8 the providers. Right? So, we don't anticipate it
9 will be a lengthy application process with some kind
10 of like, what is this need meeting? We are hoping to
11 kind of streamline some of those pieces. And I think
12 it also goes back to the categories of need. So,
13 since we know what the major categories were for last
14 time, can we sort of make those categories in advance
15 for our providers, so that we making that
16 justification over and over again. Right? If we say
17 it's technology, we know that technology is a
18 category we are covering, and therefore it meets the
19 needs. So, I think we are thinking about those
20 pieces a lot, and I think as I had mentioned also
21 some of the backend administrative stuff, which ,you
22 know, the receipts and having to buy things directly,
23 and to think about multiple disbursement methods,
24 like, those are the really, really... You know, I
25 think those are really critical in helping us get

2 this out there as quickly as possible and as
3 efficiently as possible.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And could you also share if
5 the submission is coming directly from survivors or
6 community providers?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: It would... Uh, a
8 combo of the two.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: A combination of the two?
10 Okay, great.

11 And,= I really appreciate knowing that what you
12 are working on right now is to ensure low barrier and
13 inclusivity. Could you talk a little bit more about
14 how immigrant communities will be able to utilize
15 this program? And I know you mentioned 377 survivors
16 in two months, uh, that allocation sounds incredible,
17 particular if there was a reach of 900 survivors.
18 Could you share a breakdown of the 377 survivors?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Both demographic, and
21 racial, a breakdown, and also borough wise...

22 [CROSS-TALK]

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, here is...
24 I mean, what we know, and we can always provide
25 further detail based on what we have. But of the

2 folks, the 377 folks that received microgrants during
3 COVID-19, 90% were Black, indigenous, and people of
4 color; 40% of those were Latino, Latin, or Latinx;
5 32% were Black, 13% were Asian; 10% were white, 3%
6 were middle eastern, and 1% were American Indian
7 Alaska Native or Native American. Uh, 95% of the
8 clients made less than \$40,000.00 annually. And 65%
9 of the clients were immigrants.

10 So, you know, I think that program did a good job
11 of kind of meeting the needs that we have identified
12 for folks with multiple marginalized identities,
13 which is what we hope to replicate.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And, then, uhm, are you
15 able to share where the reach was across boroughs?
16 Was there a particular borough that you saw more
17 survivors or less?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We can follow up
19 and see if we can get back to you on that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And, then, as a result of,
21 uh, the previous program and now being in
22 consultation with providers, will there be more of a
23 specified outreach plan for immigrant communities,
24 for survivors with disabilities, and other more

2 marginalized populations within the survivor
3 community

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Definitely. I
5 think this is something we plan to work with our
6 providers on as in, how are we conducting outreach to
7 make sure we are reaching as diverse a group of
8 survivors as possible?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And when the intake process
10 is ready, could you share that with the Council? We
11 would also love to see what languages, uh, this
12 application is available in.

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, we will
14 definitely follow up.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Thank you,
16 Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Council Member Riley?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair Cabán.

19 Good morning, this office operates the New York
20 City Family Justice Centers, which are multi-
21 disciplinary service centers co-located with the
22 District Attorneys. And each borough provides social
23 services, civil, legal, criminal justice assistance
24 for victims, survivors of domestic violence, and
25 gender-based violence, and their children.

2 Can you just walk through what the day to day
3 feel of these centers? I understand survivors of
4 domestic violence may be reluctant to speak up about
5 their experiences -- even with experts -- and are
6 they sited in specific areas?

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so, yes,
8 we have five Family Justice Centers, one in each
9 borough. What I will say is that each borough feels
10 slightly different. Each borough's Family Justice
11 Center has ,you know, ENDGBV administers the centers,
12 but doesn't provide the direct services. So, we
13 contract with community based organizations in each
14 borough to provide those services, and those
15 organizations vary by borough, right, and kind of
16 meet those boroughs' needs.

17 In terms of the day-to-day, I think ,you know,
18 the... One of the benefits of being co-located with
19 the District Attorney's office is that we can provide
20 walk-in services. Right? So, most DV/GBV
21 organizations have confidential locations due to
22 safety concerns for survivors that might be accessing
23 services there. Because we have security and ,you
24 know, there are pros and cons to everything, but one
25 of the pros of having the security is that we can

2 offer walk-in services which is really important.

3 So, anybody can walk in regardless of the language
4 they speak, regardless of their immigration status,

5 regardless of income, sexual orientation or gender
6 identity, walk in, and what will happen first, is

7 when you go to the front desk, you will be seen by a
8 screener. And that screener will do a very quick

9 sort of process to ask about what you're here for.

10 Right? And, uh, because they are walk-in part of the

11 goal of the screening is to make sure that you're in

12 the right place for the services that you need. And,

13 so, once somebody has been through that screening

14 process, they will be assigned a case manager who

15 will then help navigate the various services that

16 they can assess. And that usually all happens on the

17 same day. Sometimes that case management appointment

18 is the next day if they come in late in the evening.

19 But usually we try to make that happen that day.

20 And, then, that case manager helps the survivor and

21 their family kind of work with multiple providers to

22 access the services they need. So, they might be

23 working with one provider for legal services, uh,

24 they might be working with another provider for

25

2 children's counseling, another provider for economic
3 empowerment supports.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. What is the
5 operating cost of the shelter?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We can follow
7 up with the exact numbers of the operating costs of
8 the Family Justice Centers.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: If I may, I was
11 going to add...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Oh, sorry...

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: in addition to...

14 No, that's fine, thank you. In addition to the
15 contracted providers Saloni was referencing, we also,
16 uh, at the Family Justice Centers, partner with a lot
17 of in-kind organizations or have in-kind partnerships
18 with a lot of organizations, which allows us to work
19 with culturally linguistically specific providers,
20 who may not be contracted providers with us, to try
21 to enhance the experience for folks who choose to
22 come into the Family Justice Center, and may have a
23 diverse range of cultural language needs.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

25

2 One last question to piggyback off of Chair
3 Cabán, the office role is to improve coordination
4 assistance and services development mechanisms to
5 improve the City's response to domestic violence
6 situations and implement public education campaigns
7 to heighten awareness of domestic violence. Uh, the
8 National Commission of COVID-19 and Criminal Justice
9 produced reports that show that domestic violence
10 incidents in the United States increased more than 8%
11 following the imposition of lockdown orders during
12 the 2020 pandemic. Has there been any adjustment or
13 investments to the public education campaigns
14 conducted since the COVID-19 pandemic, which informed
15 experts nationwide about the complexities of gender-
16 based violence for individuals living with abusive
17 partners?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, yes, so, I
19 think ,you know, again, we have our... We have
20 ongoing efforts to provide education and training,
21 and everything that we do sort of considers the
22 situation in which ,you know, somebody might also be
23 living with their abusive partner. Right? So, we
24 have a training team that conducts training for
25 anybody that might be working with domestic or

2 gender-based violence survivors. We do sort of
3 ongoing outreach in communities, doing workshops with
4 people to understand they dynamics of intimate
5 partner violence. And, I think ,you know, more
6 broadly, than that, I think we do a lot of work that
7 is around prevention education that we fund through
8 our community based providers trying to reach folks
9 and just kind of prevent the domestic and gender-
10 based violence in the first place.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, thank you, Chair
12 Cabán.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, Council Member
14 Louis?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair. Some
16 quick questions, and one will piggyback off of what
17 the Chair mentioned earlier.

18 Flex funding, it is not tied to immigration
19 status, so I wanted to know how much of the current
20 grant can be allocated to our new New Yorkers as
21 opposed to survivors that may be on a waiting list or
22 waiting to get access to funds?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, again, as
24 we work with our providers on implementation, this is
25 something that we are thinking about a lot. We would

2 like to avoid a situation in which we have long
3 waitlists. And I think that definitely happened with
4 the microgrant program, we got a lot of applications
5 at once. And so I think this is something we are
6 really considering, is how do we make sure there's a
7 consistent flow, uh, without people having to wait
8 months for something that's supposed to be for an
9 emergency relief, right? So, I think that is
10 definitely a goal that we are working towards.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: All right, it would be good
12 to know how many folks are on the waiting list as
13 opposed to new New Yorkers, and how you guys are
14 going to manage that process. So, I guess we will
15 get back to you on that.

16 The \$1.2 million that serves 900 survivors with
17 flex funding, I want to know what additional economic
18 opportunities do the 900 survivors receive or have
19 access to in order to combat dependency?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, uhm ,you
21 know, part of this we will be working with our
22 providers in figuring out what the exact sort of
23 pieces there are. But, one thing that I think we can
24 offer in this space is, recently, at our five family
25 justice centers, we added a case manager that

2 specifically focuses on economic empowerment. Right?

3 So, even if we end up with a community based
4 organization that may not have that within their
5 portfolio, we can always offer that through our
6 family justice centers. And some of that will look
7 like individualized work to kind of assess where you
8 are, where you want to go, and then figure out a path
9 to get you there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: All right, I guess we will
11 follow up on that as well. A Family Justice Center
12 is not always helpful when it comes to that. I went
13 through the process myself as a survivor of domestic
14 violence, so it would be good for us to have further
15 conversations about what that could look like.

16 My other question is, uh, this is regarding the
17 housing. So, I wanted to know if you could break
18 down the housing case management providers offer for
19 the flex funding process. What does that look like?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we are still
21 sort of in conversation in figuring out the pieces of
22 that. Right? But, I think what we anticipate is
23 that it will look some kind of intensive support in
24 terms of meeting your housing needs. So, that is a
25 variety of things. It depends on your situation.

2 So, if you have a voucher, it could be like going
3 with you to find landlords. Right? Helping you to
4 find places that might take the voucher. If you
5 don't, if you have your own income, it could look
6 like us helping you kind of manage that income in a
7 way that supports your housing needs. If you are
8 eligible for other housing supports and services, it
9 may look like applying for those services and
10 supports. So, I think it will look... We anticipate
11 it will be sort of a variety of things, but all
12 related to the question of how maintain housing.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay, and my last question
14 is in regards to something that the chair mentioned
15 earlier regarding implementation. I want to know,
16 what is the reporting process for implementation of
17 funds to the organizations? Like, how is the agency
18 monitoring the reporting process just to ensure that
19 there is accessibility across the board?

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, uhm,
21 again, it is something that we have... We are
22 discussing and thinking about a lot. But, I think,
23 uh, you know, it is definitely on our radar. So, one
24 of the things is that we definitely want to collect
25 data from them on an ongoing basis and review that.

2 I think we are also thinking about making sure that,
3 uh, you know, that providers are in conversation with
4 us when they are having difficult decisions, so we
5 can kind of help them navigate those decisions if
6 they are trying to choose between needs or choose for
7 a particularly high need. For instance, we don't
8 have a cap on the funding. And, then, the other
9 piece that we are sort of thinking about a lot is how
10 to make sure that the referrals are really coming
11 from everywhere. Right? That the money is sort of
12 getting everywhere. So, a lot of that is going to be
13 kind of making sure that we are on top of the data
14 that we are gathering on a fairly regular basis
15 especially as the program is initially implemented.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: So, it will be good to know
17 if that is a monthly, quarterly basis of ongoing
18 reporting. Our chair is a proud advocate of making
19 sure that we are getting access to these funds. It
20 would be good to know this looks... in aggregate what
21 it looks like. It is very important to know so that
22 we know how much we are advocating for.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: And we can
24 definitely get back to you once those details are
25 finalized. We are happy to share that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: All right, thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. Council Member
4 Farías?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair. And I
6 apologize, I had to step out for another meeting,
7 life with balancing all of the things in this city.
8 So, if any of these questions were already asked,
9 give me some grace.

10 So, initially we have budgeted for \$6 million,
11 and what we have seen through the last year of Fiscal
12 Year 2024, only \$1.2 million was actually put into
13 the budget for it, but we had an initial onset of a
14 \$6 million ask. Can you folks explain why... what
15 was budgeted out for \$6 million? What was the goal
16 of reaching how many people, et cetera?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think that
18 the ,you know, the \$6 million figure I think is not
19 our number.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: But, I think
22 ,you know, for us, we believe what we have is really
23 good for a solid foundation. And I think as we are
24 launching the program, we are going to continue
25 evaluating what the need is. Right? And I think

2 that is another piece of data that is really
3 important for us to keep collecting, is what the
4 ongoing need is.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure, and as I came in I
6 believe I heard Council Member Louis asking if there
7 are lists, like, waiting lists, do we have metrics of
8 how many people are in need, or how many people we
9 have to decline? Is that a number that we have?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Since the
11 program hasn't launched yet, we don't have that yet.
12 But, again... [CROSS-TALK]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I think as we
15 are thinking about it, that is a critical thing that
16 we want to consider. Right? And I think it is one
17 of the pieces that we learned from the COVID-19
18 program is that ,you know, we had a bunch of
19 applications really quickly, and, then, it took
20 awhile to get through them. So, we want to figure
21 out a way to minimize that, because we don't people
22 to have to wait for something that is emergency
23 assistance.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure, and, so, in the
3 COVID-19 program, we were able to serve at least 900
4 folks...

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: That's 377
6 folks. I think the 900 is what we anticipate we will
7 do with the \$1.2 million... [CROSS-TALK]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, it is what we
9 anticipate. We were able to serve those 377...

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: with the \$1.2 million?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: With the COVID-
13 19 funding it was just \$468,000.00... [CROSS-TALK]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Oh, so, that's where the
15 \$1.2 million and the 900 people...

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: (clicks) the math is
18 mathing, that makes sense.

19 [LAUGHTER IN CHAMBERS]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, uhm, and, so, just
21 a... In that program, and, again, apologies if this
22 was already answered, did we have... We had a lot of
23 applications, we were able to get to under a 100
24 people or nearly 400 people... Uh, how many
25 applications came in, and how many were denied, and

2 for any specific criteria that maybe is different
3 from the COVID-19 application versus what we are
4 looking at with this program?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we can
6 follow up about ,you know, whether... which
7 applications were denied and why they were denied.
8 At the top of my head, it wouldn't be an exact
9 number, but I want to say, uh, yeah, we had 693
10 applications coming [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, so we got through a
12 fairly good amount... [CROSS-TALK]

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: of folks.

15 And are we going to touch base? Are those people
16 going to be automatically rolled into when this
17 program begins? Are they going to be notified of the
18 program's anticipation? Since we knew they had a
19 prior need, are we going to follow up with those
20 folks and see?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We can follow up
22 and get back to you on that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, great, thank you so
24 much, Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. So, I actually...

3 And, again, understanding that there are lots of
4 details yet to be finalized, uhm, for the
5 implementation of the program -- and execution of the
6 microgrant program. So, I want to ask a couple of
7 questions about the COVID program.

8 Just on the most basic level, why was the program
9 launched?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, again, I
11 think, uhm, you know, a private foundation had worked
12 with ENDGBV and the Mayor's fund to launch the
13 program. And I think one of the things that ,you
14 know, came up around COVID-19 was really putting this
15 focus on everyone's economic needs, including the
16 unique needs of survivors of domestic and gender-
17 based violence. But, it really was that partnership
18 with a foundation and the Mayor's fund that kind of
19 drove that program and its launch and design.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And, I think, also just for
21 context, I think when a private funder comes to say,
22 hey, we want to fund a thing, they are not making
23 that decision in a vacuum. They have a whole team of
24 people who are, like, "Where should we put our funds
25 to do some good in the world? There is an extremely

2 important and massive need here, let's go try and
3 alleviate some of this harm in the community," like,
4 that's fair, right?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Mm-hmm, yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Uh, and how were the
7 applications received for that program? I know you
8 had it on the ENDGBV website, uh, and then, could you
9 just, in a little more detail, walk through any of
10 the other ways that folks could get their
11 applications in, and how they were processed?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure...

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And what metrics were used to
14 decide whether that applicant was cleared to receive
15 funds?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so, the
17 applications primarily went through service providers
18 who completed the applications with their clients,
19 and then submitted them to Sanctuary for Families,
20 which was the provider that was in charge of
21 disbursing the funds... And they were the contracted
22 providers to disperse the funds. Once an application
23 was received, the program director at Sanctuary
24 reviewed the applications for completeness and
25 accuracy, and they worked with service providers to

2 correct and/or complete applications via email. And,
3 then, after it was approved by the program director,
4 really just for completeness, it was sent to a
5 program coordinator who approved and disbursed funds.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: How long did that take from
7 start to finish?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We can get back
9 to you. I mean, I think... I think it probably took
10 a few weeks, but we can get back to you on the exact
11 timeline.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, and I would love to know
13 ,you know, what that exact timeline is and how you
14 all are thinking about continuing to streamline the
15 process to get the funds out of the door as quickly
16 as possible, understanding that, uhm, ,you know,
17 these are, quite literally, emergency funds.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: To that point, I
19 think, just as a reflection, as we mentioned, some
20 of the lessons learned, given that we were... One of
21 the things we are looking at for this iteration of a
22 flexible funding program is having multiple or
23 diverse disbursement methods...

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: to try to minimize
3 the timeline to get some of that. So, in the way
4 that it was set up, given a bunch of considerations,
5 a lot of it had to be payments directly to vendors,
6 initiated and dispersed via the provider, via
7 Sanctuary for Families. And now we are looking at
8 diverse disbursement methods that could be direct to
9 a client in order to try to reduce some of that
10 timeline for disbursement. Because, we recognize...

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah...

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: the emergent needs.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Uhm, now, this question is,
14 like, I want to give you your flowers in my opening,
15 because, again, I just think it was just an
16 incredible thing that you all managed to do in a very
17 short period of time. So, but, I would love for you
18 to just take some space, uh, if you could share any
19 information on the positive impacts on survivors who
20 received funds during that time in relation to both
21 their short and long term financial stability?
22 Like, tell me about the good that you all saw.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, uh, you
24 know, we did do an evaluation after the fact of the
25 program, and I think we are able to reach a portion

2 of the survivors. Of those we reached, clients and
3 service providers, about 40% of clients and about 40%
4 of service providers, reported that the program sort
5 of helped their clients remain housed and improved
6 their immediate financial stability. In addition to
7 that, I think some of the things that are interesting
8 is, like, 48% of the clients who responded reported
9 feeling safer since participating in the microgrant
10 program; 44% of their clients reported that their
11 children felt safer; and 46% of their clients
12 reported that their mental health had improved.
13 Right? And I think those are really important things
14 to look at, that that immediate financial security
15 and housing stability really has those longer term
16 impacts on your mental and emotional well-being for
17 you and your children. I think that is really what
18 we are hoping to replicate.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And, is... Can you offer any
20 more information related to how the program helped,
21 uh, a survivor maintain their housing?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, I mean, we
23 are happy to follow up, and we can probably... You
24 know, I think some of the more are direct rent

2 payments, but we can follow up and share some more
3 stories and anecdotes, too, if that's helpful.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: All right.

5 I want to talk to you a little bit about the
6 current budget for this program. Uh, you mentioned
7 it before, it's \$1.2 million for the fiscal year,
8 correct?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And you had said that it was
11 something around a little over 900 applicants that
12 you expect to be able to be served by that amount?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Is this amount expected to
15 wholly go towards grants, or will a portion of it be
16 used for staffing and implementation needs?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think a
18 portion will definitely be used to support providers'
19 administrative needs in administering the program.
20 And, also, it is also a caveat that that 900 number
21 really comes from an average of grant of \$1,243.00,
22 right? [CROSS-TALK]

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Right.

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, if we see
25 that change, that number is also subject to change.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: How much to you anticipate
3 having to go towards - or needing to go towards
4 staffing and implementation needs?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We are still in
6 negotiations with the providers on that, so we have
7 not yet finalized a number.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: We would love to see all of
9 that information once it is finalized.

10 Based on the projections from the COVID-19
11 program, \$1.2 million, is that going to fulfill the
12 needs of the program?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think ,you
14 know, with what have, we can build out a robust
15 program that meets a significant part of the need.
16 And I think we were really excited to be able to do
17 that. You know? I think a key piece of this to us,
18 by getting something on the ground is also to
19 continue evaluating the ongoing needs. So, I think
20 we hope to both with this funding.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: But, certainly you would like
22 more money?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: It's housing in
24 New York City. But, no, but I think... I think what
25 we have is really going to allow us to do a lot. So,

2 I think we are really excited to have the amount of
3 funding that we do have.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And for me, I am just
5 constantly thinking about ,you know, when we see a
6 readily identifiable problem, our solutions need to
7 be scaled to the size of that problem. And, where I
8 think that is falling short is that we know that the
9 need, the scale, is huge. And, unfortunately, \$1.2
10 million is going to leave a lot people behind. But,
11 that is sort of what I want to shift my next
12 questions to.

13 So, we know what this funding can do, but give or
14 take some variables. What information do we
15 currently have on the number of survivors of domestic
16 and gender-based violence currently in the City?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, most of our
18 information comes from data that is reported to NYPD,
19 right. So, we don't have prevalence data on
20 prevalence of... [CROSS-TALK]

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Right...

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: domestic and
23 gender-based violence in New York City.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, we're preferencing this by
25 saying the data we have is solely from what gets

2 reported to the police, and we know very, very
3 confidently that there is a huge percentage of people
4 who do not report... [CROSS-TALK]

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Right, I
6 think... I think that's... [CROSS-TALK]

7 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Like a shared... We all know
8 this.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, I
10 nationally it's about 50% of folks that don't ,you
11 know, that they estimate don't [INAUDIBLE]...

12 [CROSS-TALK]

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Okay, so... So, the numbers
14 you give me, we can easily double?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, so, I think
16 ,you know... And, again, I think for what we are
17 basing it on, again, is that we know that in 2022
18 there were 272,484 domestic incident reports. Right?
19 That doesn't tell us the number of unique survivors.
20 It tells us the number of reports made to NYPD.
21 About 119,000 of those were intimate partner related.
22 We also have some of our service date. So, we know
23 that at the FJCs there were 50,798 client visits in
24 2022 across all five Family Justice Centers - serving
25 about 15,972 unique clients. We also know that in

2 2022, the domestic violence emergency shelters served
3 about 8,008 individuals. Right? And we also know
4 that there is a portion of those survivors that
5 probably end up in DHS shelters as well. So, I think
6 we can... [CROSS-TALK]

7 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes...

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: look at all of
9 those pieces and kind of get a sense of who we are
10 currently reaching and who is reaching out for
11 services.

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, conservatively, we are
13 talking about survivors in the numbers of tens of
14 thousands - conservatively?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Mm-hmm

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And, again, I am just pointing
17 out the math disparity. Like, the work that you are
18 doing is so amazing, but it is only going potentially
19 reach 900 people when we know the need is, at the
20 bare minimum, in the tens of thousands range.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: And, I think,
22 again, I think one of the things that we are really
23 thinking about this program as, and what we are
24 excited about, is I think that ,you know, there is an
25 ongoing learning curve of, like, what is the need?

2 What is the number? Like, who are we reaching,
3 right? What are some things that we may not be
4 anticipating that we might need to meet that we just
5 have not thought about yet. So, I think this gives
6 us an opportunity to really look at those pieces,
7 and, then, really think about how we expand scale to
8 the extent that we can, when we can, a program that
9 we kind of already know the ins and outs
10 implementation about. Right? So, I think that...

11 [CROSS-TALK]

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah...

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: that is really
14 important to us as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah, and, again, this is not
16 reflection on any of you all, but, uh, when we talk
17 about funding when we can, where we can, these are
18 choices that we make. It's a massive budget, yes,
19 it's pie, but we prioritize certain things over
20 others, and I would argue that the both public health
21 and public safety outcomes, the returns on that
22 investment are far, far higher than a lot of the
23 things that we currently put money into and call,
24 like, safety infrastructure. I think this is

2 probably one of the most important pieces of safety
3 infrastructure the City could fund.

4 Okay, so, again, on the understanding that the
5 numbers you have for me are going to be underreported
6 in that they are limited to data that is collected
7 via police reporting, with those caveats, do you have
8 information on the demographic breakdown by race,
9 age, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status,
10 disabilities, or any other characteristics?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, uhm, we
12 do. So, I think ,you know, we can look at... We
13 have some data for the calendar year of 2020 and
14 2021, uh, that we can kind of go through, we are
15 happy to get back to you and give you the charts as
16 well. But, ,you know, when we are looking at sort of
17 IPV (phonetic) felony assaults in New York City
18 reported to the NYPD in 2020 and 2021, there were
19 11,083 incidents, of those 10,844 had race reported.
20 So, 46% of the survivors are Black, 36.6% of the
21 survivors were Hispanic, 10.3% were identified as
22 white, 7% of the survivors are identified as Asian or
23 Pacific Islander, and 0.1% identified as American
24 Indian or Alaskan Native. And, then, similarly across
25 ,you know, in 2020 and 2021, of the 214,736 domestic

2 violence incident reports, we would see similar sort
3 of racial demographic breakdowns, about 49.9% of
4 those, the survivor was Black; 5.3% of those the
5 survivor was white; we had 5.3% of the survivors
6 being Asian or Pacific Islander; 0.4% American Indian
7 or Alaskan Native; and 9.8% other. We can sort of
8 give you that full breakdown. And, then, similarly,
9 I mean, we see something similar in sort of the
10 family related domestic violence incident reports
11 reported to the police, where of the 144,309 non IPV
12 related domestic violence reports, right, we are
13 talking about other forms of family violence. But,
14 where the race of the victim can be determined, 52.6%
15 of the victims were Black; 30% were white; 5.5% were
16 Asian Pacific Islander; 0.5% were American Indian or
17 Alaskan Natives; and 11.2% were other.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

19 Are the PEGs going to have any affect on the
20 current allocation for this program?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, what we can
22 say, this is a priority program for us. And, so, we
23 are doing everything that we can to make sure that it
24 remains secure. And, as of right now, I think we are

2 in a good place to make sure we launch this in this
3 fiscal year.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Well, I want to thank you for
5 taking the time to field my questions and my
6 colleagues' questions. Thank you for the work that
7 you are doing. And I just ,you know, at the bill
8 signing for this, The Mayor said that he was proud to
9 sign it, and that he was going to put the money that
10 was needed for this program... And, so we were all,
11 especially the Women's Caucus, incredibly, not just
12 disappointed, but quite frustrated and angry to see
13 that the program is only being funded \$1.2 million.
14 Yes, it is an incredible thing for the around 900
15 people who will be served, but, as I mentioned
16 before, there are thousands and thousands and
17 thousands for that need. And direct providers ,you
18 know, have said that \$6 million is the floor; \$6
19 million is what we need. There is a chance for the
20 Administration to make right here and put that
21 funding into this program. Anything that we can do
22 to help with that, that is a priority for us. So,
23 please, I would hope to continue to be in
24 conversation with you all about that. And, thank you
25 again for the work that you are doing.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Thank you so
3 much.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair, thank you to
6 the members of the Administration. As a reminder for
7 folks that are in the room, if you would like to
8 testify in person, we will just need you to fill out
9 a witness slip. And you can get that witness slip in
10 the back of the room with the Sergeant At Arms.

11 We will now hear testimony from the public. I
12 would like to remind everyone that I will call up
13 individuals in panels, and all testimony will be
14 limited to three minutes.

15 I would like to note that written testimony,
16 which will reviewed in full by committee staff, may
17 be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the
18 close of this hearing by emailing it to
19 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

20 For the first panel, we are going to have a bit
21 of a mixed panel. It is going to start with in person
22 testimony from Daniris Espinal and Stephanie
23 Woodbine, followed by virtual testimony from Jayeanne
24 Santos, Fatima Kallo, and Krystle Campbell.

2 If Daniris Espinal and Stephanie Woodbine would
3 like to come to the table, that would be great.

4 You may begin when ready.

5 DANIRIS ESPINAL: Good morning, thank you, Chair
6 Cabán and members of the Committee on Women and
7 Gender Equity. My name is Daniris Espinal, I am a
8 mother, a survivor, and a member of New Destiny
9 Survivor Voices Project.

10 So, the microgrant program can increase someone's
11 chances of survival, because it provides access to
12 critical resources in a time of urgency. Time here
13 is of the essence. As a survivor, I felt trapped
14 with my abuser living in the same household. The
15 cost of moving and storage fees were staggering. My
16 credit was ruined, due to leasing a car for my
17 abuser, along with the credit card debt that was
18 accumulated to pay for rent, food, and
19 transportation. As a survivor, I can attest that
20 these challenging times of not having the financial
21 means, make the person depend even more on their
22 abuser.

23 In my case, the landlord refused to renew my
24 lease for another year, because my abuser had not
25 paid the rent -- without me knowing. It is

2 terrifying to have children and not know where you
3 will be sleeping next. It is important for survivors
4 to feel autonomous and hopeful towards the future
5 when making financial decisions. We know best what
6 our needs are; this microgrant program can aid is in
7 rebuilding our identity while maintaining our
8 integrity -- which is important. Access to this
9 program can help with credit card payments, medical
10 expenses, and utility bills if applicable, just to
11 name a few. Given the statistics of how many
12 survivors are in need, the microgrant program should
13 have been funded at \$6 million. The \$1.2 million
14 realistically, with high rent, inflation, and
15 domestic violence cases on the rise is not enough.
16 Because of this, it must be protected from budget
17 cuts. There has been an 8.5% domestic violence
18 increase just in New York City alone -- 54% of
19 domestic homicide victims are women. It is clear
20 that the time is now, survivors deserve relief. For
21 us to know we can get flexible funding assistance
22 will significantly make a difference. The microgrant
23 program must be implemented soon, as every minute
24 counts to save someone's life. Thank you again,
25 Chair Cabán, for the opportunity to testify.

2 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: Good morning, Chair Cabán,
3 and members of The City Council Women and Gender
4 Equity Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to
5 address the Council regarding the Microgrant Program
6 for Survivors of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.

7 My name is Stephanie Woodbine, I am a survivor
8 and member of New Destiny Housing Survivor Voices
9 Project. I am also co-chair of the Advisory Council
10 at the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-
11 Based Violence.

12 First, the microgrant program, for it to be a
13 success, it is imperative that it is robustly funded
14 by the City. We are thankful for the money that has
15 been allocated to the program, and we are imploring
16 the City to not allow the impending cuts announced to
17 affect it. There is a huge demand for discretionary
18 funds for survivors that are low barrier and
19 accessible. Programs like The Victims of Crime Act
20 (VOCA), which provide some cash assistance, typically
21 take up to six months to process funds to survivors.
22 Many survivors need quick cash for emergency
23 situations, usually to ensure safety and ultimately
24 public safety, because it helps lessen the burden of
25 domestic violence on society.

2 When a survivor needs to leave home, having
3 access to no-strings-attached cash will lessen tax
4 payer money for the shelter system, for example,
5 because they will be able to pay for moving expenses
6 right then and there, and immediate rehousing and
7 rental assistance needs would be met. Domestic
8 violence is a leading cause of family homelessness,
9 second only to evictions. I personally was fortunate
10 enough to have been a recipient of a microgrant
11 through HELP R.O.A.D.S (Reaching Out to Advocate for
12 Domestic Abuse Survivors) during the program's test
13 pilot in June of 2020 at the height of the COVID-19
14 pandemic. At the time, I was behind on rent, at that
15 money went towards lessening the debt to my landlord.
16 COVID-19 worsened the financial instability of many
17 survivors, through lost productivity, for one.
18 Microgrants would make a difference in the
19 experiences of survivors struggling with financial
20 and housing instability. There is a story that isn't
21 told enough, one where the actions of abusers
22 continue to impact the economic mobility of survivors
23 and victims of domestic violence even after they
24 leave abusive situations. Many experienced coerced
25 debts during their relationships and/or post-

2 separation abuse in the form of coercive control and
3 vexatious litigation in family court. The latter,
4 often impacted my own journey as a survivor and my
5 ability to show up as a mother for over nine years,
6 as I often could not work or sustainably keep a job
7 and a home due to court appearance and mental trauma.
8 And I am just one of many. I am imploring this
9 program does not disappear for the City's budget due
10 to impending cuts. It will not only function as a
11 supported safety net to protect survivors from
12 further harm, but it would also pair them with [TIMER
13 CHIMES] culturally informed case managers who will
14 help them to heal and provide supportive services,
15 such as mental health support and financial
16 counselling. Thank you again, Chair Cabán and the
17 Committee, for the space and time, and for your
18 undivided attention to this matter.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I also want to
20 quickly acknowledge that we have been joined by
21 Council Member Gutiérrez.

22 And just thank you both for your testimony and
23 for sharing your personal experiences.

24 I wanted to ask just a couple of quick questions.
25 So, tell me how you learned about the microgrant

2 program. Was it through your connection to New
3 Destiny Housing?

4 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: Are you referring to the
5 current program?

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: No, no, no, the, uh, the,
7 uh... [CROSS-TALK]

8 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: The previous? The
9 pilot?[CROSS-TALK]

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: The pilot, mm-hmm.

11 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: I learned of the program
12 through HELP R.O.A.D.S USA. They are another
13 provider of services to domestic violence survivors.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

15 And you said that, uhm, particularly that you had
16 gotten a grant, and you were able to pay back some of
17 your rental arrears. Did that make things more
18 manageable with your landlord, and, then, longer
19 term?

20 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: Yes, it certainly did. He
21 lived on the second floor, and this was during COVID.
22 There wasn't a lot of... You know, it was lockdown.
23 A lot of people couldn't work, so it did lessen the
24 mental impact of having him upstairs. You know?

25 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm.

2 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: You know, someone that I
3 owed. So, yes. And ,you know, my children were
4 impacted by my mental state at the time. So, it
5 really did help to kind of get him off my back a
6 little bit so to speak.

7 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes. I am really glad that
8 you... That you had access to that. Thank you
9 again, both, for sharing your experiences. And I
10 know that you both mentioned coerced debt, and this
11 committee held a hearing specifically on coerced
12 debt. Because we know that, like, upwards of 99% of
13 survivors, that is part of what they are
14 experiencing. So, thank you again for talking about
15 any of those things.

16 And, then, I just wanted to give you a quick
17 opportunity, is there anything else that you would
18 like to add about the program or the need for the
19 program?

20 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: There is a current need for
21 the program right now. Personally, a microgrant
22 would assist me right now with maintaining my current
23 apartment. I was a recipient of an EHV voucher, so I
24 do pay 30% of my income towards my own rent. I broke
25 my foot last year, I teach, and I had surgery. So, I

2 wasn't able to return to work. Currently, well, I
3 did an interview just last week, and I was hired on
4 the spot, so I will be... [CROSS-TALK]

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Congrats

6 STEPHANIE WOODBINE: returning to work. So, the
7 question of being dependent on these grants, I mean,
8 in those situations, I personally would benefit,
9 because it would help me right now until I go back to
10 work. I am currently on PA; however, this moment,
11 HRA has discontinued the shelter allowance pending
12 recertification. So, my landlord hasn't been paid
13 that direct shelter payment for this month. That
14 microgrant would step in to that gap until I go back
15 to work - currently, right now in the moment. That
16 is also one reason ,you know, for the instability.
17 Like, you know, most people just need \$300 - \$500 to
18 afford the rent every month. So, you know, that's
19 just an example of how it would be useful right now.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you for sharing that.

21 DANIRIS ESPINAL: I would just like to say that
22 I just had friend, during the pandemic, that was
23 killed...

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I'm sorry.

2 DANIRIS ESPINAL: so, it is really important, and
3 I am here to... Financial abuse is a real thing. I
4 had a white collar job, and never did I imagine that
5 getting married, doing the right thing, being a mom,
6 was going to be overwhelming, and this person just
7 took complete advantage. And not being able to know
8 how to pay your bills, and just to think that, if my
9 friend would have gotten some form of relief, she
10 would have been here today. So, this is an ongoing
11 issue. It is not just for me, but we are also here
12 representing women who are scared to testify, that
13 are scared to actually speak up or even get help
14 because of their abusers. So, this is something that
15 I... Yes, I highly implore that ,you know, it has to
16 be implemented now. It is a real thing, and the
17 mental trauma that it has, the anxiety, it is
18 overwhelming. So, thank you so much for listening to
19 us today.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

22 As noted, the next set of testimony will come
23 from three folks on Zoom. For the people on Zoom,
24 once your name is called a member of our staff will

2 unmute you, and you may begin on the Sergeant At Arms
3 sets the clock and cues you.

4 For our first testimony, could Jayeanne Santos
5 please unmute?

6 JAYEANNE SANTOS: Good morning, Chair Cabán, and
7 members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity.
8 Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to
9 testify on the behalf of a survivor of domestic
10 violence. My name is Janeanne Santos, and I am a
11 member of New Destiny Survivors Voice Project.

12 We need more stability programs to help us
13 through housing and getting financial support. We
14 need microgrant programs that will not phase out, and
15 that are properly funded. Microgrant programs must
16 get more money allocated. These types of programs
17 can help us a lot. Flexible funding means we don't
18 have to jump through hoops to get the help that we
19 need, and it would help us get out of a situation
20 faster. As a victim, time is not always on our side.
21 So, we call on our City leaders to implement the
22 microgrant program as soon as possible, and for the
23 small amount of funding it got not to be cut. Thank
24 you for the opportunity to testify.

25 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For the next
3 witness, could Kallo Fatima please unmute?

4 KALLO FATIMA: Good morning, thank you so much for
5 giving me this opportunity today to share my
6 testimony. My name is Kallo Fatima; I am a survivor
7 of domestic violence. I would like to share my
8 experience and testimony with you.

9 I ran away from my abuser with three children,
10 one being a baby of two-months, during the pandemic
11 to go to a domestic violence shelter. I felt
12 welcomed, the workers were so very nice. However,
13 one thing that irked me was [INAUDIBLE] I felt the
14 workers wanted to help us as much as they can, but it
15 seemed like they were so many restrictions that
16 prevented us from getting help that we needed.
17 Eventually I was able to secure permanent housing,
18 and I was very happy, but I had no furniture or money
19 to make my house look like a home. I received direct
20 cash assistance [INAUDIBLE] economic endowment
21 program. If it wasn't for the program, I would still
22 have no furniture. I tried to receive help
23 [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] place, but the wait
24 was too long, and there were no options for me to
25 pick out my own furniture many times. When receiving

2 help, the survivor does not have a choice of how they
3 receive that help. The survivors do not have a
4 choice of how they receive that help, this is why I
5 am glad to be here today to share my testimony.

6 Receiving direct money gives me the opportunity
7 to finally have a say in something in my life. It
8 helps me and gives me hope in this journey. It
9 provided me with a chance to finally feel comfortable
10 in a home after being in a shelter. When we don't
11 receive the help we need, we feel alone. This is why
12 it is important to listen to the survivors and the
13 workers on the frontline. Thank you so much for
14 giving me this opportunity to share my testimony.
15 God bless everyone, thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Our next
17 Zoom participant will be Krystle Campbell.

18 KRYSTLE CAMPBELL: Hi, good morning, Chair Cabán,
19 and Council, and everyone on the Committee on Women
20 and Gender Equity.

21 My name is Krystle Campbell, and I am a domestic
22 violence survivor. I am also an immigrant.

23 Many immigrants in my situation have experienced
24 an increase [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] of
25 violence and exploitation in the home. Abusive

2 partners often exploit us, because of lack of
3 immigration status, as a way to have power and
4 control over us. I suffer from PTSD due to my past.
5 There are certain triggers that affect my mental
6 illness and take me back to a sad and depressive
7 state. Those triggers can be in the form of the
8 color of a chair or a simple bed sheet. This program
9 and funding has helped me to eliminate some of those
10 triggers, which I am tremendously grateful for. I
11 was able to purchase household items to help me
12 create my own safe space that satisfies my taste and
13 it gave me a comfortable environment with no
14 triggers. My mental health has been more stable due
15 to my environment and so is my focus level. I am now
16 enrolled in college majoring in Human Services. My
17 kids and I can call this place a home, as we have the
18 option of control. After being in the shelter system
19 for so long, it is a tremendous chance to have
20 someone in the program who trusted us with monetary
21 vouchers in order to buy stuff that we need.

22 Financial abuse was also one of the major factors
23 of my abuse that I encountered. I didn't have
24 options of preferences with my partner, as everything
25 was being controlled by him. So, therefore; I am not

2 just speaking for myself, but all survivors with
3 similar situations. Hopefully my testimony is
4 considered helpful and helps to break barriers and a
5 sense of independence for other abused individuals.
6 I hope that this will decrease their reluctance to
7 seek help from places that offer services like these.
8 Thank you

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I just want to
10 acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
11 Member Gennaro.

12 Also, apologies, I can't hear very well, so I end
13 up having to move around for the virtual testimony.

14 I want to thank all of you for your testimony.
15 There were a couple of things that I really wanted to
16 highlight and repeat.

17 Just talking about leaving a situation and going
18 to the family shelter, for those who don't know, 70%
19 of people who go into our family shelters are
20 survivors of domestic violence leaving dangerous
21 domestic violence situations. And so being able to
22 interrupt that, not only is it the right thing to do
23 for survivors, but also would relieve a lot of the
24 burden that we are seeing on our shelter system as we
25 continue to see the need arise because of multiple

2 indicators that push people into housing precarity
3 and homelessness. And I just really, really
4 appreciated listening to folks talk about the funds
5 and how critical they were, especially no questions
6 asked, low-barrier, "we are not going to police and
7 control how you spend your money" aspect. And, Miss
8 Krystle, I hear you say that, you know, *hopefully*
9 this is helpful, *all* of your testimony is incredibly
10 helpful. To hear that this particular fund gave you
11 the ability to create a safe environment - of your
12 own choosing, of your manufacturing, for you and your
13 family, is just one of the most incredible things to
14 hear. And that alone, again, should be enough
15 incentive for this administration to really
16 prioritize robustly funding this program. And I want
17 to thank you all again for sharing your experiences.
18 Thanks for coming to testify.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. For the
20 next few panels, we will go back to in-person panels.
21 And for the next panel, I will call up Teal Inzunza,
22 Kristen Houlton Shaw, and Gabriela Sandoval Requena.
23 You may begin when ready.

24 TEAL INZUNZA: Good afternoon... Or good morning,
25 actually, Chair Cabán. My name is Teal Inzunza. I am

2 the Program Director of the Economic Empowerment
3 Program at the Urban Resource Institute (URI), and I
4 am also co-chair a citywide taskforce called the
5 Domestic Violence and Economic Justice Taskforce,
6 which is composed of advocates from around NYC. I am
7 thankful for the opportunity to testify before you
8 and share why the Support Survivors microgrants are
9 essential for survivor.

10 URI is grateful to the New York Council for
11 advocating to include the Support Survivors
12 microgrant program in this year's budget. While
13 advocates requested \$6 million to fully fund the
14 program, only \$1.2 million was allocated - as we have
15 heard today. At \$1.2 million, the program will only
16 be able to provide \$2,000 grants to 600 survivors. I
17 think we would be hard pressed to find an apartment
18 and first and last month's rent, and security for
19 less than \$2,000 - and even \$2,000 is not enough.

20 With an infusion of \$6 million, we would ensure
21 that at least 2,250 survivors received at least \$2,
22 000 in essential direct cash assistance.

23 Just for reference, there are over 4,100
24 households in domestic violence shelters on any given
25 night; even with \$6 million, only half of all

2 households in shelter would be able to access this
3 vital program. This does not even account for the
4 hundreds and thousands of survivors that are still
5 residing with their abusive partner or those that are
6 unable to access shelter.

7 As previous providers of the City's microgrant
8 program - and the State's pandemic emergency
9 assistance fund - and we also provided our own
10 microgrants as you heard from our survivors today,
11 \$1.2 million is simply not enough to meet the need.

12 It is important to understand that experiencing
13 domestic or gender-based violence is extremely costly
14 for survivors. In a survey conducted by Free From,
15 survivors overwhelmingly stated that direct cash
16 assistance was their most urgent need to find safety.
17 In this national survey, Free Form found that on
18 average, survivors needed \$730 to manage their urgent
19 safety needs. New York City is the most expensive
20 city in the United States, and we as advocates know
21 that the cost of safety is much higher here than in
22 other places around the country.

23 It is vital that a survivor's ability to access
24 this funding is not tied to whether a survivor is in
25 shelter, has dependents, is documented, or has an

2 open public assistance case. Nearly all of New York
3 City's direct cash assistance programs -- and the
4 State for that matter -- have had one or more of
5 these restrictions, which has left many of the City's
6 most vulnerable survivors unable to access support.

7 I have worked with survivors who have said that
8 the small amount of money, like \$2,000, would go to
9 support them in leaving an abusive partner or getting
10 out of shelter immediately, but instead have been
11 forced to spend another night with their abuser or
12 sleep on the subway or the street, often with
13 children.

14 While the cost to the City to fully [TIMER
15 CHIMES] fund this program is \$6 million, the cost to
16 survivors who do not have access to direct cash
17 assistance is often deadly as we have already heard.
18 Survivor's needs are often urgent and high stakes.
19 Funding the Support Survivor microgrant program and
20 ensuring that it is quickly and efficiently
21 implemented is crucial for survivor safety, thank
22 you.

23 KRISTEN HOULTON SHAW: Good morning, my name is
24 Kristen Houlton Shaw, I am here from the New York
25 City Alliance Against Sexual Assault to lend my voice

2 in support of this microgrant program, particularly
3 as it is accessible to survivors of sexual violence.

4 At the Alliance we work closely with survivor
5 serving agencies across the City to address barriers
6 to meeting survivor needs. I am here today both with
7 that perspective and as a volunteer advocate who
8 works in New York City emergency departments to
9 support survivors who have come in acute crisis.

10 I want to affirm the critical need for flexible
11 funding to support survivors of sexual violence, in
12 particular, I would like to highlight the need for
13 this support for survivors of sexual violence outside
14 of the context of intimate partner violence. This is
15 a population who is often unable to access resources
16 and relief that is available to survivors of domestic
17 and intimate partner violence. This makes them
18 especially in need of options like microgrants. I am
19 here today to confirm for you, many of these
20 survivors of sexual violence need this housing
21 support.

22 Advocates work with sexual violence survivors
23 across the City who now find themselves unsafe at
24 home. This is in addition to the people who suffer
25 sexual violence who are already homeless, which is a

2 sizeable number of New Yorkers, unfortunately. In
3 fact, in our conversations with rape crisis programs,
4 we have found that housing is the number one unmet
5 need of sexual violence survivors in this city.

6 When sexual violence is perpetrated by a
7 survivors neighbor or someone who works in their
8 neighborhood, a co-worker with access to their
9 personnel record, or when a survivor has suffered
10 sexual violence perpetrated in their home, their
11 assailant knows where they live. When a survivor
12 suffers sexual violence perpetrated by a landlord or
13 a building super, their assailant not only knows
14 where they live, they have access to come inside.
15 Survivors are terrified by this knowledge. As an
16 advocate, I safety plan with people in exactly this
17 situation trying to help them figure out where to go.
18 And, all too often, they have no choice but to stay
19 put simply because they cannot afford to leave.

20 In a city with housing prices amongst the highest
21 in the nation, housing instability creates a crisis
22 for survivors, and this compounds the trauma that
23 that they are already experiencing. No one deserves
24 to have sexual violence happen to them, but when it
25 does, they deserve our every support to find safety

2 and to find healing. This microgrant funding stream
3 is so critically important to putting survivors on
4 the pathway to finding both. Thank you.

5 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: Good morning, Chair
6 Cabán and members of the Committee, thank you for
7 your leadership, and for the opportunity to testify
8 on behalf of New Destiny. I would like to also thank
9 the members of New Destiny Survivor Voices Project
10 and, all of the survivors who are testifying today,
11 for sharing their experiences and value perspective.

12 My name is Gabriela Sandoval Requena, my pronouns
13 are she/her/aya, and I am the Director of Policy and
14 Communications at New Destiny.

15 Our mission is to end the double trauma of abuse
16 and homelessness for domestic violence survivors. We
17 do this by developing supportive housing for
18 survivors in shelter, assisting those who are fleeing
19 abuse to obtain subsidies and find apartments, and by
20 advocating for more housing resources.

21 While domestic violence is considered one of the
22 most underreported crimes, in 2022 the NYPD filed one
23 domestic violence incident report for every two
24 minutes on average. Domestic violence is the main
25 driver of homelessness in New York City, evictions

2 rank second. In 2022, more than 10,000 New Yorkers
3 entered HRA Domestic Violence System. Due to the
4 lack of housing available to survivors, more than
5 half of them exited an domestic violence shelter for
6 another shelter instead of moving to their own
7 apartment. More must be done to effectively support
8 survivors' housing stability.

9 We commend Chair Cabán and the Council for their
10 leadership in holding this oversight hearing on the
11 microgrant program. Up to 99% of survivors
12 experience financial abuse, and more than half endure
13 coerced debt. For some survivors, an immediate but
14 otherwise manageable financial or health crisis can
15 quickly snowball into a catastrophe causing
16 homelessness. The microgrant program initiative has
17 the potential to be a lifesaving source for
18 survivors, especially for non-citizen New Yorkers.
19 It can help bridge the gap for assisting federally
20 funded initiatives and prevent homelessness for a
21 fraction of the cost of shelter and rehousing
22 efforts. We have seen this firsthand at New Destiny,
23 with a federal contract that allows us to pay for
24 immediate needs such as medical costs and child care.

2 The payments are minimal, and it keeps survivors
3 safety housed.

4 In June, New Destiny alongside Safe Horizons
5 Sanctuary for Families, Urban Resource Institute, and
6 Volunteers of America for Greater New York submitted
7 a memo urging our City leaders to allocate \$6 million
8 for the microgrant program. However, we only got
9 \$1.2 million. We call on City leaders now to protect
10 the funding from any budget cuts, to increase annual
11 allocations to \$6 million annually, and implement the
12 program as soon as possible.

13 On behalf of New Destiny, I would like to thank
14 the Council for the opportunity to testify; we are
15 going to submit more extensive written testimony, and
16 we are looking forward to continuing working with
17 you, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. And I just want to
19 say for all of the advocates, there is a budget
20 modification coming up, and so ,you know, set those
21 sites high and demand that money now, not next fiscal
22 year. And we will be right there with you demanding
23 it as well.

24 I want to ask just a quick question around, maybe
25 two questions around sort of like what your

2 respective organizations' relationship was and is to
3 ENDGBV as it pertains to the microgrant program. You
4 know, whether it was during the COVID experimental,
5 uhm, period or now. You know, we were having
6 conversations with them, and they were, like,
7 (whispers) "Oh, we can't talk about it right now," so
8 if you are in those conversations and want to talk a
9 little bit about that, that would be great, too.

10 TEAL INZUNZA: So, my program at Urban Resource
11 Institute was one of the programs that had clients
12 apply for microgrants during COVID. And to my
13 knowledge, we are not in communication with ENDGBV
14 about this current program. But, we, and myself,
15 provided a lot of feedback to ENDGBV about how that
16 program was run. It was incredibly burdensome on the
17 organizations who provided the microgrants. And we
18 are saying "microgrants" we were really asked to
19 purchase goods for the survivors directly and then
20 give those goods to the survivors. So, I am hesitant
21 to call them microgrants, but I do, uhm, it was
22 obviously very appreciated by the clients.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: That is... And before I hear
24 from you all, that is incredibly helpful to know.
25 And I'd like to follow up on them not having

2 conversations with URI, because that is incredibly...
3 And we often find that the provision of services ends
4 up, like, the bulk of the labor ends up on
5 organizations like yourselves. Yeah, I mean, I would
6 hope that, and we are going to continue to be in
7 conversation with the Administration about this, but
8 that ,you know, being able to provide survivors
9 directly with debit cards and things like that would
10 alleviate that. But, it... I want to follow up on
11 that. Can you talk to me a little bit more about
12 what, like, what some of the pain points were and
13 what you would suggest going forward in this, like,
14 permanent, codified iteration of the program?

15 TEAL INZUNZA: Yes, I think because the
16 microgrants were given out, and, then, applications
17 were open, there weren't a lot of guidelines around
18 what the microgrants could be used for. We wanted to
19 use some of the microgrants to pay off debt, as some
20 folks mentioned here; although, we did find out when
21 we applied that that was not going to be eligible,
22 that credit card debt or other types of debt as part
23 of this... uh, the timeline was incredibly short. I
24 think we only had around two months to purchase all
25 of the items. The funds were given after we

2 purchased the items, and then we submitted receipts
3 for the items, which puts the burden on the
4 organizations to front the cost of the program, and
5 then be reimbursed. And not all of those items were
6 reimbursed, because of various changes in prices and
7 things that happened and... [CROSS-TALK]

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Can you... Wait, could you...
9 I have so many questions.

10 Can you talk about the discrepancy between when
11 you bought items, and, then, like, what you would
12 reimbursed for those items? What happened there.

13 TEAL INZUNZA: Yes, so the application for this
14 program was incredibly lengthy. Survivors had to go
15 through the application and list every single item
16 they wanted to purchase and the price associated with
17 it. Then it was approved. Then we had to purchase
18 the items, which, of course, maybe two months later
19 had a different cost associated. And, also, the
20 infrastructure for most of our organizations is not
21 to buy different items of clothing from different
22 vendors ,you know, like coats in different sizes, and
23 some things are out of stock...

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah.

2 TEAL INZUNZA: It became very complicated. And,
3 so, then, when we had to... We had to first submit
4 the receipts for all of the items, and, then, we had
5 to submit attestations for the clients' signed that
6 they picked up items. Which, of course, during the
7 height of COVID, took a long time.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yeah

9 TEAL INZUNZA: And, so, we had a very short period
10 of time that had to provide those as well. So,
11 sometimes those timings did not line up, and that
12 wasn't able to be reimbursed. And, so, those items
13 just fell on the providers to cover.

14 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Just give people cash.

15 TEAL INZUNZA: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: We have seen so much evidence
17 out there. It's, like, forget all of this other
18 stuff, give people cash.

19 TEAL INZUNZA: Yes, I will say that we also were
20 able to provide direct cash assistance this year at
21 my program from a private funder. And we were able
22 to give direct cash to clients, no questions asked.
23 And they were able to spend it on their names,
24 including debt costs, which we gave over \$12,000 to
25 survivors... [CROSS-TALK]

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Wow

3 TEAL INZUNZA: to cover debt, and that was one of
4 the highest needs of our community.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Great. And, uh, if there is
6 anything else that you think of, please just come to
7 us and let us know. That way, we can continue to
8 have those conversations with the administration. Do
9 you have something?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much.
11 It's really, obviously unlocked a lot more questions
12 for the chair and the committee. But, it is really
13 important that we understand how this program is
14 impacting you all in our communities.

15 Could you expand a little bit more on the
16 application process? So, it seems arduous? Right?
17 Like having to list out item by item all of the
18 things you need without the certainty that you are
19 even going to get that. Can you say a little bit
20 more, what other questions were asked, what other
21 things did folks need to provide?

22 TEAL INZUNZA: So, generally the information is
23 around ,you know, client information... [CROSS-TALK]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: How long is the
25 application?

2 TEAL INZUNZA: It was very lengthy. I think,
3 because they had so many sections for you to
4 complete, depending on how many items you wanted to
5 purchase it could be up to like 10 pages long online.
6 So, it was incredibly complicated and difficult.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Could you... And, I'm
8 sorry to interrupt...

9 TEAL INZUNZA: Yeah, it's okay.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: could you leave and
11 come back to it, or it was, like, a one shot, you got
12 to complete this thing right here right now...

13 [CROSS-TALK]

14 TEAL INZUNZA: From my recollection, it was one
15 shot. You had to do it in one... [CROSS-TALK]

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: [INAUDIBLE] Tech Chair...

17 [CROSS-TALK]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: I know, I'm the Tech
19 Chair, that's why... Okay, thank you. Please go on,
20 yeah...

21 TEAL INZUNZA: Yeah, no, it just, it was... It
22 was a very complicated... There have been others
23 through the pandemic emergency assistance fund, which
24 we are operated through the State, their application
25 was two pages, but they were linked to having either

2 eligibility for public assistance, which means you
3 had to documented and you needed to have a dependent.
4 And or your child needed to be documented, and there
5 were a lot of survivors that were left out of that
6 funding because of those restrictions. So, we do
7 advocate that this is truly flexible funding open to
8 everyone. And I know Chair Cabán has been an
9 advocate for this, that the money needs to go
10 directly to the survivors, they know how best to
11 spend it, and that is essential.

12 KRISTEN HOULTON SHAW: At the Alliance, because we
13 don't work directly with survivors ourselves, we
14 don't... We haven't administered this funding, but
15 we work with the rape crisis programs that will. I
16 mean, what I can say is that there is the issue of
17 whether or not the funding would be available to
18 sexual violence survivors, which it is, and, then,
19 there's the secondary issue of do the advocates who
20 work with their survivors know that. Do survivors of
21 sexual violence themselves also know they might be
22 able to tap into this funding? And the importance of
23 making sure that that messaging gets out there, uh,
24 there is sort of a popular misunderstanding that the
25 services that are found in the Family Justice Centers

2 are really for more domestic violence survivors, and
3 so it is extremely important that this microgrant
4 program, in order to be inclusive of sexual violence
5 survivors, like, that needs to be the messaging.

6 I will also say, I mean, I... I have a
7 background, I used to administer emergency funding in
8 another context, and what I will tell you is the word
9 flexible needs to be unscored and italicized in
10 bolded. Like, it's not flexible if we aren't
11 trusting survivors to meet their needs with cash.
12 Like, we are meeting them at the worst time in their
13 lives, and they know best what they are going to need
14 to find safety and healing. And we need to trust
15 them to be able to do that. And, so, tying it up,
16 and, like, okay, we're not giving cash, we're giving
17 goods, is going to be a problem.

18 And the last thing I want to say about this
19 microgrant program is, for sexual assault survivors,
20 the number one gating issue would be if they needed a
21 police report. This is why most survivors of sexual
22 assault cannot make the crime victims' compensation
23 application. So, I know that is off the table here,
24 that is so important, I just want to say on the
25 record how critically, critically important it is,

2 and that that is also part of the messaging that is
3 going out to the community, is that this is funding
4 that does not require that.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes. I just want to say thank
6 you and affirm that. I know that, and that is a
7 really good point. Because, I know that ,you know,
8 obviously, the... In the Local Law, the language is
9 such that, uhm, sexual violence is included under the
10 definition of gender-based violence. But, that
11 doesn't do us any good unless that messaging reached
12 the ears of people. So, that is something that we
13 will also make sure that we asking about, and asking,
14 uhm, ENDGBV to stay focused on for sure.

15 GABRIELA SANDOVAL REQUENA: And I will just add,
16 uh, I want to second what Teal and Kristen just
17 shared about the importance of autonomy and the
18 importance of speed. I think that we have heard that
19 all throughout the testimony so far. And as far as I
20 know, we have not been in contact with the
21 Administration in regard to how this program will be
22 implemented. We look forward to having those
23 conversations -- and obviously looping in survivors,
24 because I think that they know better than anyone how

2 this could be implemented. And thank you all for the
3 opportunity to testify today.

4 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much. And thank
5 you for the work that you are doing. Thank you

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. For the
7 next panel, I would like to call down Ella Downs,
8 Jimmy Meagher, and Evie Litwok.

9 You may begin when ready.

10 ELLA GRACE DOWNS: Good morning, Council Member
11 Cabán and the members and staff of the Committee on
12 Women and Gender Equity. My name is Ella Grace Downs,
13 and I am the Policy and Government Affairs Manager at
14 Girls for Gender Equity.

15 GGE is an intergenerational organization based in
16 Brooklyn, committed to the all-around development of
17 girls and young women. GGE challenges structural
18 forces, including racism, sexism, gender-based
19 violence, transphobia, homophobia, and economic
20 inequity, which constrict the freedom, full
21 expression, and rights of Black girls and young
22 people of color. GGE has been a leader in the
23 conversation around gender-based violence, including
24 sexual harassment and sexual abuse for close to two
25 decades. We are offering testimony today because we

2 have seen firsthand just how critical these types of
3 grants for survivors are.

4 At GGE, we center healing and practice
5 restorative justice through our program *Sisters in*
6 *Strength*. Reporting or seeking justice for violence,
7 abuse, or assault can be an uphill battle for
8 survivors, and can be especially challenging for
9 Black youth. Whether they are not believed, are
10 triggered by the process, or unable to identify their
11 perpetrator for fear of retaliation, they often face
12 age, race, and gender discrimination in what is
13 already a very difficult process.

14 At GGE, we choose to prioritize their wellness,
15 mental health and make sure survivors have the tools
16 they need to move forward, which includes providing
17 cash assistance.

18 Earlier this year, with a fund from the
19 Abolishing Patriarchal Violence table from the
20 national Movement for Black Lives organization, we
21 were able to distribute microgrants of around \$2000
22 to 40 young survivors. These funds helped them leave
23 abusive situations and environments, support their
24 children and dependents, financially support them as
25 they detached themselves from unsafe situations, and

2 provided them with tangible resources to reroot their
3 lives in safety.

4 These funds offered all of this and more. In the
5 process of receiving this money, many of them felt
6 like they were finally heard, finally seen, and
7 finally believed. One note we received after
8 disbursing the funds said: "I feel relieved of my
9 burdens." Another said, "I feel like I can finally
10 start to heal, I can actually afford to seek more in-
11 depth mental health care, and nourish myself on that
12 journey." If this was the impact of one-time grants,
13 imagine how much more freeing larger funds could be.

14 In order to end the epidemic and legacy of
15 patriarchal violence within Black communities, we
16 must start by believing and supporting survivors. I
17 urge the Council to expand the reach and expand the
18 depth of these grants. Thank you.

19 JIMMY MEAGHER: Good morning and thank you, Chair
20 Cabán, for the opportunity to testify. My name is
21 Jimmy Meagher, and I am Policy Director at Safe
22 Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim
23 services organization. Safe Horizon offers a client-
24 centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New
25

2 Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or
3 abuse.

4 My colleague, blair, will be testifying about the
5 survivor microgrant program, but I will be focusing
6 my testimony on Resolution 165, sponsored by Council
7 Member Louis. This resolution calls for the New York
8 State Legislature to pass A. 2583/S.15 and for
9 Governor Hochul to sign it into law. This
10 legislation, sponsored by Assembly Member Andrew
11 Hevesi and State Senator Andrew Gounardes, would
12 greatly expand domestic violence shelter providers'
13 ability to accommodate single adult survivors seeking
14 shelter.

15 Across the State, but particularly in New York
16 City, the emergency domestic violence shelter system
17 was configured for families. Most rooms are designed
18 to hold a family of two, three, or more. Single
19 adults seeking safety in a domestic violence shelter,
20 then, face significant obstacles in obtaining this
21 life-saving resource.

22 Currently, the New York State Office for Children
23 and Family Services (OCFS) reimburses non-profit
24 domestic violence emergency shelter providers with a
25 per-person, per-night rate. This reimbursement rate

2 is intended to cover all costs associated with
3 operating the shelter, including rent, utilities,
4 staffing, insurance, and other programmatic costs.
5 Any reduction in this reimbursement severely impacts
6 a provider's ability to cover the operating costs of
7 the shelter. OCFS tells providers that they should
8 downsize to accommodate singles, but providers cannot
9 afford to do this in every case because of the way
10 shelters are reimbursed. Domestic violence shelter
11 providers face a major financial disincentive to
12 downsize rooms intended for families to house single
13 adults who are victims of domestic violence, human
14 trafficking, and sexual assault. The current
15 reimbursement structure makes it much more difficult
16 for an individual survivor to access emergency
17 shelter and the trauma-informed services available
18 there.

19 This is why we strongly support this legislation
20 at the State level, which would require New York
21 State to preserve the full reimbursement rate for
22 providers who downsize a room configured for a family
23 of two to accommodate a single adult individual. By
24 removing the financial barrier for domestic violence
25 shelter providers to house single adults, this bill

2 will give greater access to domestic violence shelter
3 to single adult victims of domestic violence, sexual
4 abuse, and trafficking.

5 We operate the City's 24-hour domestic violence
6 hotline, so I will go into a little bit of the data,
7 but it's a little in the weeds.

8 In 2020, about half of our hotline callers
9 seeking shelter placement were single adults with no
10 children, but we were only able to link 31% of these
11 callers to shelter. By comparison, 27% of our hotline
12 callers were from families of two, and we were able
13 to link 74% of these callers to shelter. And this is
14 referring to *linked* to shelter for that provider to
15 actually do their own intake and assessment. So,
16 that doesn't mean that they are actually being placed
17 into shelter.

18 I won't go into the data, but overall, the
19 problem is getting worse. So, the number of single
20 adults calling for shelter placement are still about
21 half of our callers. And for this past year, it is
22 down to about 20% that we are actually link to a
23 provider for intake and assessment.

24 So, we are just asking for the [TIMER CHIMES]
25 flexibility to be... for providers to be able to

2 downsize without the financial disincentives of doing
3 so. And we also, just really quickly, we know that
4 this disproportion will impact LGBTQ+ survivors, male
5 survivors, and also older adults who might be seeking
6 shelter who have adult children, so they are not
7 going into shelter with those children. I am happy
8 to answer any questions that you may have.

9 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, and I also just
10 want to quickly mention that I had the opportunity to
11 go to the exhibit... [CROSS-TALK]

12 JIMMY MEAGHER: Yes...

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: with the photography, which is
14 really incredible. But if you could take 30 seconds
15 to say what that is? Because I really think it puts
16 a finer point on what folks are experiencing.

17 JIMMY MEAGHER: Yes. I am actually really upset
18 that I didn't go and get to see it. I was out of
19 town... [CROSS-TALK]

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: It's beautiful...

21 JIMMY MEAGHER: And then I was sick on the last
22 day that it was available. But, we worked with a
23 photographer who photographed the items that some of
24 the residents coming in to our DV shelter programs,
25 and other programs, had with them when they entered

2 into our programs. I think one of the art pieces...
3 And we were able to feature this in an art exhibit
4 nearby. I think one of the most powerful pieces was
5 a survivor had brought her documents with her, but
6 the documents had been shredded by her abuser, so she
7 brought them in a plastic bag. So, I mean, that is
8 one of the photographs that we had just
9 highlighting... Survivors... When you go into
10 shelter, you have to grab and go. When you get a
11 shelter placement, it's not like you get to wait a
12 few days until you're ready. It's really, like, are
13 you ready to go right now? So, you are grabbing the
14 things that you are able to bring - the most vital,
15 most critical things. I know one child brought his
16 toy trucks, those are the things that he had. So, I
17 mean, it just highlights I think the pain and the
18 struggle, and all of the challenges facing survivors
19 who are just looking for help. We were really
20 grateful for you to come in and visit our exhibit.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: It was really powerful, so,
22 thank you.

23 EVIE LITWOK: My name is Evie Litwok; I am the
24 Executive Director of Witness to Mass Incarceration.

2 I want to thank Chair Cabán and the members of the
3 Committee for allowing me to speak.

4 I am actually not going to address the bill, but
5 I am going to advocate for what I believe is a very
6 invisible population of incarcerated and formally
7 incarcerated survivors of sexual violence. And I am
8 going to discuss the degree to which this is a
9 problem. I also want to say that I had to live in
10 shelter... I was homeless for 16 months after I
11 returned from prison, living in shelters, and I can
12 tell that is the worst experience of my life. And we
13 need to find another alternative, because it is too
14 dehumanizing.

15 I am a formerly incarcerated Jewish lesbian and
16 the child of two survivors of the Holocaust. I say
17 this because these intersections impacted me when I
18 was at two different federal prisons and was in
19 solitary confinement.

20 Following my release, as I mentioned, I was
21 homeless. However, this did not stop me from
22 testifying to the FBI and others about the sexual
23 harassment, assault, and abuse I experienced and saw
24 firsthand during my incarceration.

2 Within an hour of being in prison and during my
3 first intake interview, the officer was flirting with
4 me. I looked at him and said "Why are you flirting
5 with me when we're in prison? He said, "I like you".
6 I said, I'm old... what do you want with me? He said,
7 "I like old". I said, "I'm a lesbian". He said. "Well
8 that is even better". And that was in my first hour
9 of being in prison, and that is what goes on.

10 Most of the women I was incarcerated with were
11 mothers -- and young mothers. I was older, I was
12 everybody's either mother or grandma. And I was
13 standing near an officer who approached a young
14 mother and said, "Do you want to see your children
15 this weekend?" and she said, "Of course," and He
16 said, "Then I want a blow job." And she had to do
17 this, because if she didn't do this, she was going to
18 go immediately to solitary, or worse, be transferred
19 to a prison in another state that would prohibit her
20 from seeing her family due to financial reasons among
21 others.

22 WITNESS works on eliminating sexual violence in
23 confinement because there is no #metoo movement
24 behind bars, and we are very invisible. I am here
25 today to speak for the women and LGBTQIA+2S people

2 who are incarcerated and without a voice. Most of
3 the women targeted are already survivors of domestic
4 violence - something which each officer in the
5 facility knows from the Pre-Sentencing Report.

6 Incarcerated women are 30 times more likely to be
7 raped than free women. In 2003, the Prison Rape
8 Elimination Act (PREA) was passed by Congress with
9 the intent to prevent [TIMER CHIMES], detect, and
10 respond to sexual... I'll talk fast... assault in
11 confinement. However, this is the 20th anniversary
12 of the passage of PREA, and sexual assault and
13 violence are rampant.

14 I have been invited to Washington, D. C. next
15 week to attend a PREA celebration. I don't know why
16 they would invite me - with my attitude. I sit and
17 listen in on the Bureau of Prisons listening sessions
18 where they talk about PREA. It's like an infomercial
19 for PREA. They have five formally incarcerated
20 people and 25 staff members. They do their
21 infomercial, and tell us that they have done a
22 survey and that sexual violence is no longer a
23 problem in prison. I politely interrupted the speaker
24 and said that, "That is not possible. Not unless
25 you're measuring prisons on the moon."

2 Sexual violence in the New York City jail system
3 is an enormous problem. People inside cannot report.
4 This leads to trauma from the rape, trauma from the
5 threat of no reporting, and trauma when we come home.
6 In New York City formally incarcerated women and
7 LGBTQIA+2S people are disproportionately traumatized
8 from all of this, and they are being asked to rebuild
9 their lives -- with all of this trauma - and
10 cloudiness when you come home and no access to
11 reasonable resources.

12 I am going to skip a part, because it is in my
13 written testimony, New York City has 8 million+
14 people, and 2 million are justice impacted. The
15 trauma we come home with not only impacts us and
16 everything we do, but our family, friends, and
17 community. You don't get over being raped in prison.
18 and the combinations of incarceration and rape leads
19 to trauma which is almost never dealt with.

20 We are not on anybody's radar. Even this
21 morning, in all of the conversations, I did not hear
22 the words incarcerated women or formally incarcerated
23 women. And they, I would you are dealing with 70% of
24 the women inside prison have been sexually assaulted.

2 In order to truly prevent, detect, and respond to
3 this, my suggestion is that we put money into dealing
4 with the trauma. They don't even know where... They
5 wouldn't know where to find an application, nor could
6 they complete an application. They are not... They
7 are too traumatized to even deal with what you are
8 offering. So, we need some support for trauma, and
9 to be honest, we need to create a way to determine
10 the severity of the sexual violence that goes in the
11 New York City jail system. And I thank you for your
12 time.

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. Thank you all for
14 your testimony. Miss Evie, you have given me a lot
15 to think about. I want to now talk to ENDGBV about
16 ,you know, the possibility of getting applications in
17 people's hands that are getting ready to get
18 discharged from Rikers, for example, so that they
19 aren't going straight from Rikers into the shelter
20 system. So, something to think about for sure. It
21 is something that is important to me. Before I
22 became a council member, I was public defender for
23 nearly a decade and ,you know, I know... I have
24 represented so many criminalized survivors, but ,you
25 know, I think even, uh, understood the number of

2 incarcerated women, you know, gender nonconforming,
3 nonbinary folks that are survivors of domestic
4 violence and intimate partner violence, and gender-
5 based violence, but even beyond that, uh, just the
6 number of folks that are there also to... with other
7 coercive aspects. You know, there are lots of folks
8 that area survivors that find themselves incarcerated
9 in connection with their abusive partner's offenses.
10 And that is like a decent portion of the incarcerated
11 population as well, and that is not lost on me. So,
12 those are things that I definitely want to continue
13 to dig into. Thank you for your work and advocacy
14 around PREA. We did a hearing on... With the
15 TGNCNBI Task Force, and they're not implanting it...
16 Well, in fact it is being weaponized against trans
17 and gender nonconforming incarcerated folks. So, I
18 hope you do go to the White House and set them
19 straight ,you know, talk about the truth. Please do.
20 Please do.

21 EVIE LITWOK: I just want to say that ,you know,
22 that when we talk about dispersing money to
23 organizations, a lot of the big organizations that
24 are there supposedly for us, are really very
25 transactional in nature, not transformative. You get

2 a meal, you get a resume, or this and that, and,
3 then, it's good-bye. There is a network of formally
4 incarcerated women and LGBTQIA+2S people in New York
5 City. We know each other. And we are not part of
6 the community that gets funded, in big dollars, but
7 and we are on the ground, and we know where everybody
8 is. So, I think it is very important to know... to
9 have a listing and to know just how many of us are
10 working every day on the ground.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Well, I would love to stay in
12 touch with you, if you could make sure that you leave
13 your contact information. And I will certainly give
14 you my office's, because I would love to continue
15 chatting. Thank you, thank you all.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all for your
17 testimony. The next panel will be the last in-person
18 panel, and then we will switch back over to Zoom.

19 For next panel, call we call up Joann Kim, blair
20 dorosh-walther, and Mari Moss? You may begin when
21 ready.

22 JOANN KIM: Hi, good afternoon, my name is Joann
23 Kim, Assistant Director of Community Engagement at
24 The Korean American Family Service Center. I would
25 like to express my sincere gratitude for the

2 opportunity to testify today and for your steadfast
3 support of the Korean American Family Service Center
4 (KAFSC).

5 Since its inception in 1989, KAFSC has been
6 unwavering in its commitment to preventing and ending
7 domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse
8 all while providing culturally competent and
9 linguistically appropriate services.

10 As a direct service organization dedicated to
11 serving our vulnerable immigrant community, we
12 understand the critical importance of our work. KAFSC
13 has continuously been at the forefront of providing
14 assistance to those affected by domestic and gender
15 based violence, anti-Asian hate crimes, and
16 addressing the mental health needs of our AAPI
17 community members.

18 However, we must acknowledge that the current
19 landscape presents significant challenges,
20 particularly when it comes to accessing resources for
21 our immigrant communities. The ENDGBV micro grants
22 program, which offers broad use, low barrier funding
23 for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence
24 through Sanctuary for Families has regrettably failed

2 to adequately reach the immigrant community that
3 needs it most.

4 In 2022 alone, KAFSC received 4,958 hotline
5 calls, with a staggering 92% of them related to
6 domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and
7 trafficking. These callers were predominantly Asian
8 American (95%), 98% were women, 100% were immigrants
9 and faced limited English proficiency.

10 Each year, over 3,000 individuals benefit from
11 one or more of our services with the majority hailing
12 from Queens.

13 The demand for our services across organizations
14 has steadily increased. Our immigrant survivors have
15 lost a financial means, some temporarily, while
16 others face permanent hardship, resulting in a loss
17 of livelihood and the ability to support themselves
18 and their children while escaping from the cycle of
19 violence. All this, while grappling with a multi-
20 faceted, trauma of gender-based violence and domestic
21 violence.

22 We earnestly request an annual budget allocation
23 for microgrants. This funding is crucial to ensuring
24 that survivors of domestic and gender-based violence
25 within the immigrant community have access to [TIMER

2 CHIMES] emergency support. The funding will enable
3 them to improve their mental health, enhance their
4 sense of safety, and maintain stable housing, and
5 regain financial stability. Notably, 377 clients have
6 already benefited from the microgrant program,
7 demonstrating the urgent need for this funding.

8 KAFSC would like to thank you for this
9 opportunity, and thank you for your support.

10 BLAIR DOROSHWALTHER: Good morning, thank you for
11 the opportunity to provide testimony before the
12 Committee on Women and Gender Equity. My name is
13 blair doroshwalther, and I am the Manager of Economic
14 Empowerment at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest
15 non-profit victim services organization. I am also
16 the co-chair of the Consumer Law Working Group
17 focusing on economic abuse, and co-chair of the DV
18 Residential Housing Coalition subcommittee.

19 Safe Horizon is grateful to Chair Cabán and her
20 colleagues for establishing the survivor microgrant
21 in 2022 and for ensuring that funding for the program
22 is allocated in the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

23 As others have mentioned, \$1.2 million is not
24 enough. We know that survivor microgrant programs
25 work. The Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-

2 Based Violence successfully launched an emergency
3 financial relief microgrant program in 2020 at the
4 height of the pandemic and assisted 377 survivors.
5 The was overwhelmingly positive, in fact, 40% of
6 service providers reported that microgrants helped
7 survivors they worked with maintain stable housing
8 and improve their financial stability. And,
9 unsurprisingly, over half of the impacted survivors
10 and their children reported feeling safer.

11 Microgrants are important and address an historic
12 need for domestic violence and gender-based violence.
13 Domestic violence and gender-based violence is the
14 leading cause of homelessness in New York City.
15 Economic abuse, which disproportionately impacts
16 survivors from marginalized communities with
17 historically limited resources and access to wealth,
18 affects 99% of all domestic violence survivors and is
19 one of the leading reasons a survivor stays in an
20 abusive relationship. Roughly eight in ten survivors
21 identified lacking sufficient funds as the reason
22 they stay with an abusive partner. Economic abuse is
23 also a leading reason it is so difficult for a
24 survivor to gain financial independence and
25 stability. Financial and housing insecurities last

2 long after a survivor flees their home and can even
3 last a lifetime.

4 I'd like to share the story of a survivor I
5 recently worked with: We reviewed her credit report,
6 which reflected that she had one credit card, two
7 utility bills, and a student loan. According to her
8 credit history, she paid each bill on time, in full
9 every month. It wasn't until the final episode of
10 violence after which she fled the abusive party that
11 she became unable to make monthly payments. By the
12 time she entered one of our shelters, her credit
13 score had plummeted. Now, she is searching for
14 housing but has been turned down due to a poor credit
15 score. She was also working full-time until the
16 person causing her harm began to stalk her at work.
17 She was summarily let go. She is now looking for
18 work, but she has been unsuccessful so far. he had to
19 drop out of school as she was no longer able to
20 consistently go to class or complete assignments.
21 This survivor, like so many others, could greatly
22 benefit from a \$2,000 microgrant. She could pay off
23 her utility debt [TIMER CHIMES] which are in
24 collections, which would improve her credit score;
25 she could stop using her already overused credit card

2 for survival spending; she could nearly pay off her
3 credit card debt. Or, with \$2,000, she would be able
4 to afford basic necessities. \$2,000 would have an
5 immediate impact on her life. Without some form of
6 cash funding or immediate employment, she is in
7 danger of falling so far behind on her bills that it
8 will take many years to recover. This will hinder her
9 ability to secure safe housing. If her basic needs
10 were met, she might also be able to start her college
11 courses again, ensuring that her student loan debt
12 isn't in vain.

13 And I'll just quickly go on. Safe Horizon
14 strongly supports adding an additional \$4.8 million
15 in funding for the survivor microgrant program to
16 expand the program's reach and allow more survivors
17 to feel safe, obtain or maintain permanent housing,
18 and begin their journey toward economic stability and
19 recovery.

20 Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer
21 any additional questions.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

23 MARI MOSS: Thank you, Chair Cabán, and all of
24 the council members that were here today, Council
25 Member Louis, Council Member Farías, Council Member

2 Hanif, Council Member Riley, and Council Member
3 Gutiérrez.

4 As noted in the previous remarks of people who
5 were here speaking, domestic violence is not a joke.
6 It's not a joke in our city, it's not a joke across
7 the nation, it's not a joke around the world.

8 Family Justice Centers and DAs' offices need to
9 be communicating more, especially to the courts for
10 rapid results. Whenever we see these things
11 happening, they have to be stopped. It is my
12 testimony for the Hearing on Women and Gender Equity
13 Committee on Microgrants for Survivors of Domestic
14 and Gender-Based Violence is that we need to do more
15 financing.

16 This Domestic Violence Awareness Month, it is not
17 hard to see the harrowing needs of victims of abuse
18 locally and around the world. During the pandemic,
19 lives were lost to abuse, because there were so many
20 people who were challenged with the obstacles of
21 being quarantined in abusive situations. We have
22 local instances in our communities where abuse is a
23 normalized way of life for so people who have endured
24 it, because they feel they have nowhere to turn -
25 mainly because they did not have the financial means

2 and support they need to overcome the obstacles they
3 face. In recent weeks, the world was grieved the
4 grotesque abuse in killing of people especially women
5 and children and the hands of terrorists, terrorists
6 like Homas. The challenges and the attack on people
7 who are abused, traumatized, harmed, or killed has to
8 be eradicated. According to the National Coalition
9 Against Domestic Violence, up to 99% of domestic
10 violence victims experience economic abuse.

11 According to many of the accounts, economic abuse is
12 the leading reason why victims stay in abusive
13 relationships. In desperate measures, some survivors
14 of domestic violence abuse are expected to leave with
15 nothing more than the clothes on the back so that
16 they can save their own lives from the attacks they
17 endure, often facing homelessness and further
18 devastations in their lives. The Center for Domestic
19 Peace reported that the cost of intimate partner
20 violence exceeds \$8.3 billion per year in the United
21 States. Survivors of intimate partner violence lose
22 a total of 8 million days of paid work each year due
23 to the circumstances of abuse. The trauma can take a
24 toll on the mental and emotional anguish a person
25 faces and the obstacles they endure. It could take

2 years of recovery between trying to maintain the
3 mindset to overcome the obstacles of battling
4 homelessness, finding job security, court
5 appearances. And if children are involved, the
6 challenges are compounded with greater needs for
7 safety and support. [TIMER CHIMES] Oftentimes these
8 situations are setbacks for the victim/survivor to
9 overcome, which can lead to greater measures of
10 coercive control and financial devastation that
11 creates cycles of poverty that can span generations.

12 The microgrants for survivors of domestic and
13 gender-based violence can be a financial lifeline of
14 support to help a survivor, regain, reclaim, and
15 restart their life in an effective way. Besides
16 housing stability, this can include starting a
17 business or as seed money to help them get ready for
18 a new job or career. Whatever the pathway, there is a
19 need to help people immediately with financial
20 support who dealing with abuse, so that they can
21 become financially independent from the person or
22 persons inflicting the abuse and hindering their
23 personal, professional, and financial growth. I am
24 especially supportive of women mothers. I have
25 become very well known with the organization called

2 Movement of Mothers who are in enduring coercive and
3 financial abuse, because having children in
4 situations of trauma such as this is a learning
5 lesson for them as well. It teaches children habits,
6 and sets their standards of what is accessible or not
7 when it comes to the financial and coercive controls
8 that affect their lives as well. Having a mother get
9 financially free helps her children overcome the
10 obstacles as well, as it provides an opportunity to
11 rebuild and develop generational wealth to replace
12 the trauma they have endured. In order for this
13 legislation to be successful, and after hearing
14 everybody's proposals, and how much it could cost, we
15 have to reverse the effects and obstacles that it
16 costs to be reactive and provide the financial
17 support where it belongs on the prevention aspects.
18 In one of the most prosperous cities in the world, I
19 would like to see philanthropic partners who care and
20 can elevate this endeavor to over a \$100 million in
21 the next City Council Financial Budget with matching
22 dollars on the state level, and a billion dollars,
23 holler at AOC, in support on the federal level
24 supplied to organizations that effectively, with
25 proven results, support victim survivors.

2 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, I am just going to
3 ask that you start wrapping up your testimony.

4 MARI MOSS: As it stands the victims compensation
5 that is administered through the Office of Victim
6 Services is exasperated by bureaucracy. There is a
7 need supply immediate funding to the needs of
8 individuals that will help them overcome these
9 financial challenges and gain financial independence.
10 It can save lives and provide proactive relief that
11 can lead to housing and foundational growth to help
12 ensure that these challenges are overcome. New York
13 City and State can provide the support this needs and
14 make it successful locally to help survivors rebuild
15 their lives. It will enable this effort to achieve
16 greater success on the national level and we can
17 create the inspiration for the proactive changes that
18 are needed around the world. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. Thank you all for
20 your testimony.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will
22 now go back... We will now return to the Zoom
23 testimony. As a reminder, if you testifying
24 remotely, once your name is called a member of our
25

2 staff will unmute you, and you may begin once the
3 Sergeant At Arms sets the clock and cues you.

4 We will begin with Stephanie Mansfield, followed
5 by Dinatalia Farina, Katie Zhang, and Lauren
6 Schuster.

7 Stephanie Mansfield?

8 STEPHANIE MANSFIELD: Do you hear me?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

10 STEPHANIE MANSFIELD: Okay. Hi. My name is
11 Stephanie Mansfield, I am a survivor of domestic
12 violence. I am a mother of three. I am a survivor
13 or sexual assault. And I do see it as two different
14 [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] because my abuser was
15 my children's father compared to my sexual assault
16 was somebody that I knew. And I say that, uh,
17 because throughout the trial, I have been hearing so
18 many interesting, diverse opinions when it comes to
19 why domestic violence survivors as well as sexual
20 assault survivors need these microgrants. The place
21 that I was formally living in, my abuser knew where I
22 lived. The perpetrator of my sexual assault knew
23 where I lived. And, yet, regardless, despite the
24 fact that I had an EVD voucher, the fact that I had
25 three children, I needed so much documentation just

2 to get services, not necessarily that I am entitled
3 to, but services to help with my children. I have
4 one neurodivergent child, I am classified as
5 disabled, and just to transition from my old
6 apartment -- which was triggering, as well as
7 mentally straining -- to this apartment, there are
8 so many factors that block access to any funding that
9 would come my way or for more children. If I did not
10 have church community members that helped facilitate
11 the move, I would still be in my old apartment now,
12 currently. I haven't been reimbursed for any of the
13 OVF [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] victim services.
14 They reimburse for moving, especially if it's a
15 safety move. I realize that it is a process, and
16 microgrants would close that gap. I wouldn't have to
17 rely so heavily on friends, family. And I think
18 about those survivors who do not have that
19 opportunity.

20 The last little bit I want to touch base on, is
21 financial abuse and how financial abuse can impact
22 how survivors survive. I have to coparent with this
23 person. I have to go in and out court with this
24 person. And the moment that I was no longer
25 financially able to... Like, with this person, I

2 have a higher credit that... I am unable to meet the
3 basic needs without assistance. I am unable to get
4 [TIMER CHIMES] the services that my children deserve
5 [INAUDIBLE]... [CROSS-TALK]

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, your time has
7 expired...

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: You can finish up your
9 statement, go ahead.

10 STEPHANIE MANSFIELD: I just... It is hard to
11 raise children in New York City and not have services
12 to help support me as I transition out of the abuse.

13 So, thank you for your time and thank you for
14 this opportunity to speak.

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much for
16 testimony.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, next can we have
18 Dinatalia Farina?

19 DINATALIA FARINA: Hi, yes, good afternoon, my
20 name is Dinatalia Farina, and I am a counselor
21 advocate for the violence intervention program in one
22 of our transitional housing, Casa Sandra. We have
23 supported survivors and their children in New York
24 City for nearly 40 years. We are a Latina led
25 community based organization working in low-income

2 immigrant neighborhoods throughout the City. VIP's
3 program serves more than 1,500 survivors every year
4 and we reach over 18,000 community members through
5 survivor led outreach. We are the only organization
6 in New York City with a mission to provide culturally
7 specific support to Latinx survivors of domestic and
8 sexual violence. At Casa Sandra, we are currently
9 working with 37 households, six of which are single
10 adults, the remaining 31 households are mothers with
11 dependent children. The most common household makeup
12 we serve is a single mother with two or more
13 children, and most VIP clients are not yet eligible
14 to work in this country, and many are excluded from
15 the safety net that helps to keep people in New York
16 City housed and fed. Because they are often
17 ineligible for benefits, VIP works with our survivor
18 community and partner organizations to create our own
19 makeshift safety net to help them find stable housing
20 and meet their basic needs. Flexible funding has
21 become a very important part of stability for
22 immigrant survivors. Flexible funding is not just
23 about a one-time payment that gets lost in an ocean
24 of needs, we were providing the assistance as part of
25 the safety net that I spoke about. Along with this

2 funding, survivors also get financial coaching and
3 financial education workshops, including resume
4 building and intensive case management. We partner
5 with a local bank to assist survivors in opening
6 checking and savings accounts to further promote
7 financial independence. When we provide flexible
8 funding, it is part of a nuanced service plan to help
9 meet the complex needs of immigrant survivors. The
10 lower the barriers to this funding, the better able
11 we are to use it as one of the critical strategies to
12 establishing long term stability. One of our
13 undocumented survivors who faces a language barrier
14 was also able to obtain permanent housing from the
15 help of the EHV Section 8 Voucher. She was able to
16 save money for her portion of the prorated rented,
17 again because of the conversations encompassing
18 financial literacy. VIP provided her household with
19 transportation and emergency food vouchers that
20 helped her feed her family during this time. She
21 also earned money as an outreach worker at VIP, which
22 allowed for her to produce an income. This is an
23 example of it all comes together for successful
24 outcomes, because that client is now living in her
25 own apartment with her children.

2 Finally, with the help of flexible funding, and
3 in collaboration with other programs, we help put
4 immigrant survivors on the path to stability and
5 permanent housing. We hope these funds and
6 partnerships continue and grow, so that immigrant-
7 serving organizations like VIP can help survivors and
8 their families to stabilize and heal after violence.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you so much. And, uh,
11 just a thank you to the work that your organization
12 does. My current Constituent Services Director came
13 to us from VIP, and is just ,you know, credit to the
14 workplace that you all have and the work that you do
15 every day, so thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Katie Zhang you
17 may unmute.

18 KATIE ZHANG: Hi, good afternoon, My name is Katie
19 Zhang, I am Housing Specialist at Women Kind. I am
20 also part of the Domestic Violence Economic Justice
21 Housing Stability Subcommittee, which is a coalition
22 of other housing service providers in New York.

23 At Women Kind we operate two emergency DV
24 shelters as well as non-residential sites in high
25 Asian populations, uh, neighborhoods in Brooklyn,

2 Queens, and Manhattan. I am here to advocate for an
3 increased budget for the microgrants for a couple of
4 reasons:

5 First on a selfish note, it makes my work a lot
6 easier to have flexible funding. A lot of our case
7 management work is just managing expectations about
8 eligibility requirements and timelines that we have
9 no control over. We also have many clients that do
10 not qualify for housing assistance like FHEPS or
11 CityFHEPS. Just this week, and it is only Wednesday,
12 my coworkers and I had to explain to four different
13 survivors that they do not qualify for FHEPS or
14 CityFHEPS, because either they are not in shelter or
15 they make too much money at their \$30 or \$40,000 a
16 year, and that they should just apply for the housing
17 lottery. And applying and winning the housing
18 lottery is not a great solution to the housing crisis
19 and the housing instability people are facing.

20 Secondly, it makes our relationship between
21 providers or advocates and survivors a lot stronger
22 with flexible funding. When we can give reliable
23 information and have more guidance about what people
24 can expect to receive, it helps to build trust and...
25 Or when we can actually provide material resources

2 that don't have as many restrictions, and we don't
3 have to ask so many invasive questions about how
4 people use their money, that builds trust, and that
5 trust helps us reach people who don't necessarily
6 have that with government services, especially people
7 that we serve whose primary language is not English.

8 And, also, on the last note, as we have heard, it
9 makes survival a little bit easier for survivors. So
10 many changes happen with work and health and
11 children's schools, uh, most government funding is
12 not equipped to handle all of these changes due to
13 delays and administrative burdens. Flexible funding
14 would help fill that gap and give survivors some
15 control over their own money and lives.

16 As we have heard, the impact on mental health is
17 also just so important and necessary in this work.
18 So, again, thank you for your consideration, thank
19 you to you, Chair Cabán and the Committee for your
20 energy and attention to this.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Uh, thank you. I just really
22 think it is important to highlight something that you
23 said around the microgrant program, the funding,
24 really filling a gap left by the current existing
25 sort of social safety net programs that we have here

2 in the City, uh, being able to have folks who don't
3 quite... are, like, just outside of the eligibility
4 for those things, being able to access this funding
5 is super, super critical. So, thank you for
6 highlighting that.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, will Lauren
8 Schuster unmute, please?

9 LAUREN SCHUSTER: Good afternoon, my name is
10 Lauren Schuster, [BACKGROUND NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] Vice
11 President of [INAUDIBLE]...

12 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Oh, hang on, we can't quite
13 hear you. Are you still there?

14 LAUREN SCHUSTER: [NO RESPONSE]

15 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Are they still in the Zoom
16 room?

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Schuster, are you with
18 us?

19 LAUREN SCHUSTER: [NO RESPONSE]

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There might be a connection
21 issue.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: All right, is it just from
23 their end? Because we can see them on there?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren do you have audio?

25 LAUREN SCHUSTER: [NO RESPONSE]

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Is she still on?

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren, if you would like to
4 try again, maybe?

5 LAUREN SCHUSTER: [NO RESPONSE]

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren, it seems we are having
7 connection issues. But, just a reminder that we can
8 accept, uh, submitted written testimony
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. up to 72 hours after the
10 close of today's hearing, and we will, of course, be
11 reviewing anything that is submitted. So, apologies
12 for that.

13 If there is anyone present in the room or on Zoom
14 that has not had the opportunity to testify, please
15 raise your hand?

16 Seeing no one else, I would like to note that
17 written testimony, again, which will be reviewed in
18 full by committee staff, may be submitted to the
19 record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing
20 by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

21 Chair, we have concluded public testimony for
22 this hearing.

23 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I just want thank
24 everyone who came and testified. I know that I
25 learned a ton, and I will just walk away from...

2 with a reaffirmation, really, of just how critical
3 and lifesaving this program and funding for this
4 program is. It is critical to the health and safety
5 of New Yorkers , particularly survivors of domestic
6 and gender-based violence, also including sexual
7 violence. And, so, we will continue to work you all
8 in making sure that it gets the funding that it
9 deserves, but also highlighting some of the pain
10 points, and the things that we can do make sure that
11 the implementation and execution of the program, uh,
12 gets the kinds of results that we need and deserve,
13 and it not overly burdensome, and that we are getting
14 these funds out as quickly as we can.

15 Thank you, again, for being here with us, and
16 this concludes our hearing.

17 [gavel sound] [gaveling out]

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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 November 13, 2023