

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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June 21, 2022

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HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -
250 BROADWAY, 16TH FLOOR

B E F O R E: Althea V. Stevens, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Aviles
Chi A. Osse
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Kevin C. Riley
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Bill Torres

1 COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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2 SERGEANT KOTOWSKI: This is the mic test
3 for the Committee on Youth Services. It is June 21,
4 2022. We are in the 16th Floor Committee Room, and
5 this is Owen Kotowski.

6 Welcome to today's hybrid New York City
7 Council meeting of the Committee on Youth Services.
8 Please place electronic devices to vibrate or silent.

9 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
10 send it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

12 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we
13 are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Althea Stevens, Chair of New York City Council for
16 Committee on Youth Services.

17 Today, the Committee on Youth Services is
18 conducting an oversight hearing on runaway and
19 homeless youth. The Committee will seek an overview
20 of DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Youth Services and
21 explore the extent to which the services met the
22 particular needs of runaway youth as well as the gaps
23 to be addressed.

24 The Committee will examine also the
25 methodologies and the logistical challenges of

conducting accurate annual Youth Count to capture the numbers of unsheltered homeless youth in New York City, which then serves as the basis for funding and services planning. As we will discuss today, there's a clear discrepancy between numbers presented in the official count and the day-to-day experience of providers and youth.

Additionally, the Committee will hear from advocates, providers, and members of the public and youth with experience of housing instability and homelessness to better understand runaway and homeless youth needs.

I would like to take a moment to recognize we have been joined by Council Member Kristin Richardson Jordan, Council Member Chi Osse, and Council Member Kevin Riley.

Runaway and homeless youth experience disproportionately high rates of trauma and family-of-origin rejection, and persistent prolonged stress at critical development stages. As a result, this population suffers from elevated rates of psychological distress which impacts their mental and behavioral health and life outcomes. As many as 50 percent of all homeless and runaway youth report

mental health problems such as depression, severe anxiety, suicidal ideations, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Moreover, runaway and homeless youth exhibit high rates of substance abuse with 30 to 40 percent reporting alcohol abuse in their lifetime and 40 to 50 percent reporting drug problems. Not infrequently, runaway and homeless youth find themselves on the streets as a result of family-of-origin rejection due to youth sexual orientation or gender identify. Nationally, as many as 2 to 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQIA+. Youth of color, partnered and parenting youth, LGBTQIA+ youth, and those are in the intersection of those identities facing homelessness in disproportionately high rates. Rates of homelessness among LGBTQIA+ youth in New York City are particularly high, even in comparison to their disproportionate representation in national data. A survey of community-based services provider highlighted the needs for supportive housing, especially LGBTQI+ affirming resources as one of the primary gaps in New York City's runaway and homeless youth landscapes. In recent years, both state and local law have evolved to better address the unique

challenges faced by those demographics through efforts such as increasing funding and reporting, extending the amount of time youth may remain in DYCD shelters, implementing a streamline of DYCD-to-DHS shelter system process, and expanding services to include homeless youth adults up to 25 years old. However, advocates and providers consistently voice concerns over the implementation of those laws which they feel do not reach enough impacted youth and, even when reached, do not adequately address the needs in play.

As a result, every year the city conducts a citywide in-time count for homeless adults, youth, and families of New York City based on guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD. Homeless Outreach Population Estimate, or HOPE, is used to gauge the size of unsheltered homeless population in New York City, including homeless youth under the ages of 24. Youth Count serves as a supplement to the HOPE to capture unsheltered homeless youth who are not counted in HOPE. The resultant numbers are then used to determine how funding is to be allocated towards

runaway and homeless youth services, a social service sector that described by advocates as starved.

Given the critical role that the Youth Count results play in the decision regarding resources and services to be funded and provided to extremely valued and disproportionately traumatized population, unsheltered youth, it is imperative to ensure that such estimates are accurate as possible. This is even more critical in the environment of COVID-19, which produce even higher barriers to access resources and services by means of financial deficits and a pivot to remote-base in so many of the areas of daily life.

Discrepancies in the reported Youth Count numbers are in part due to HUD's restrictive definition of being unsheltered. However, advocates and providers also point to Youth Count as being under-resourced, understaffed as well as being inadequately planned. It is important for DYCD to take the following steps to support runaway and homeless youth population.

It is necessary for DYCD to evaluate the resources and staffing that is allocated to Youth Count to ensure that the count is adequately funded,

staffed with sufficient number of people for homeless-youth-specific, trauma-informed training.

DYCD should work to strengthen in partnership with the NYC Department of Education areas of Youth Count because evidence across the nation indicates that a common factor in successful, effective Youth Count is a strong collaboration with educational systems.

DYCD should find ways to incentivize the participation of providers and, most importantly, youth as both Youth Counters and surveys and respondents, another common factor in successful, effective Youth Count.

DYCD should work to ensure a greater and more meaningful participation of advocates, providers, and, more critically, youth with lived experience of homelessness in all stages of Youth Count planning, decision, and implementation and process.

DYCD should work to gain a greater access for Youth Count surveys to indoor spaces such as abandoned buildings, 24-hour retail establishments, hospital emergency rooms since the annual Youth Count and HOPE are conducted in January on one of the

coldest nights of the year when unsheltered homeless youth tend to seek refuge from cold winter weather in such locations.

DYCD should seriously consider conducting a supplemental New York City Youth Count in warmer weather and seasons using a broader than HUD definition of unsheltered homeless to reach as many as possible and capture a more accurate picture of this population's size.

DYCD should increase the number of youth utilizing the streamlined DYCD-to-DHS shelter system process as well as include drop-in centers to protect those vulnerable populations from additional and unnecessary stress.

DYCD should allow service providers to serve more than 21 to 24 years of age which is currently an underserved runaway and homeless youth population as well as advocates for more funding and resources for those services sectors.

DYCD should expand resources and services specifically tailored to focus on LGBTQI+ homeless youth.

Lastly, DYCD should advocate for increasing the number of housing vouchers available

to runaway and homeless youth as well as supportive housing slots.

In closing, we are here today to work collaboratively and to ensure that our most vulnerable youth have adequate access to critical resources and services during one of the darkest moments in their lives, especially given the current homeless crisis in New York City. By addressing the issue of runaway and homeless youth, we would be able to reduce the overall homeless problems in New York City as well.

I want to thank the staff behind the scenes in making sure this hearing runs smoothly. I would like to thank Youth Committee staff for their work, and that is Committee Counsel Emi Briggs, Policy Committee Analyst Anastasia Zimina, and Financial Unit Head Aliya Ali, and a big thanks to my staff back at the District office and a special thanks to my Chief-of-Staff/Legislative Director Kate Connolly.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you, Chair Stevens. My name is Emi Briggs. I am Committee Counsel to the Committee on Youth Services.

Before we begin testimony, I want to note that hearing participants may submit written testimony for the record up to 72 hours after the hearing.

Now, I will administer the oath to all members of the administration who will be offering testimony or will be available for questions.

To the members of the administration, would you please raise your right hand, and I will read the oath. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this Committee and to respond honestly to Council Members questions?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I will.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.

DIRECTOR THORNE: I will.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.

Associate Commissioner Rattray, you may begin your testimony.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you for the promotion, but actually I'm Assistant Commissioner Randy Scott. Not a problem. Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens and Members of the Youth Services Committee. I am Randy A. Scott, Assistant Commissioner for Vulnerable and Special Needs Youth at the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined by Tracey Thorne, Director of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs. On behalf of Commissioner Keith Howard, I thank you for this opportunity to share information about DYCD's programs for runaway and homeless youth.

DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Programs are designed to serve youth holistically, enabling them to obtain the services needed to place them on a path to independent living and stability. We are committed to helping young New Yorkers build new skills and flourish. DYCD funds an integrated portfolio of runaway and homeless youth services that are delivered by community-based providers through contracts. The 3 types of services include residential services, drop-in centers, and street outreach.

Residential services include crisis services programs and transitional independent living support programs. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services, OCFS, regulates all

residential programs provided by youth bureaus across New York state. DYCD is designated youth bureau for New York City.

In recent years, we have tripled the number of beds in residential programs for young people ages 16 to 20 for a total of 753 beds. We implemented 2 key program policies, increasing the time young people may stay in residential programs up to 120 days in crisis services programs and 24 months in transitional independent living programs.

Following these state and city legislative changes, we also created residential services for youth up to the age of 24, and we now have 4 programs with a total of 60 beds for homeless young adults.

Crisis services programs provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention services. Youth have their basic needs met while developing a service plan with short-term and long-term goals. In cases where family reunification is not possible, provider staff work with youth to identify appropriate transitional and long-term housing placements.

Transitional independent living, TIL, support programs are a longer term housing option

that provides support as youth establish an independent life through educational and career development services, health services, and mental healthcare, counseling, and basic life skills training. Drop-in centers in each borough serve youth ages 14 through 24. At our 8 centers, youth are provided with basic needs such as food and clothing and supportive services such as recreational activities, health and educational workshops, counseling, and referrals to additional services including shelter as needed. At least 1 center in each borough is open 24 hours a day every day of the week.

Street outreach focuses on locations in the city where runaway and homeless youth tend to congregate, offering on the spot information and referrals. The goal is to develop a rapport with the youth and connect them to services including shelter. Counselors in RHY programs work with youth to develop individualized service plans to outline short-term and long-term goals. They can receive a range of supportive services both directly and through referrals, which medical and mental healthcare services, intensive counseling, family mediation,

education, substance abuse prevention, violence intervention and prevention counseling, and housing assistance. When appropriate, staff members assist young people in reuniting with their families or with moving to transitional or longer-term programs. Through a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, young people can access high-quality mental health services in drop-in centers and in residents.

Earlier this month, we released the final report of the 2021 Youth Count. The Youth Count is New York City's point-in-time count of homeless and unstably housed youth and those accessing services at DYCD-funded programs citywide. For almost 10 years, the Youth Count has supplemented a federally mandated HOPE count conducted by the New York City Department of Homeless Services and offered additional demographic and housing information to help inform policy for runaway and homeless youth. The 2021 Youth Count reported responses from a total of 459 young people. The survey asked questions about where youth had spent the night on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. 237 youth reported being in a stable housing including their parents' or relative's home or their own place.

214 reported unstable housing such as a shelter or couch-surfing. 7 reported being unsheltered, and representatives offered them shelter at the time of the survey. One was from outside the city. The total number of unsheltered youth reported in the city's point-in-time count for 2021 was 132. As I stated, 7 were identified through the Youth Count, and the remaining 125 were identified through the HOPE count. More details are available in the report which is posted on the DYCD website.

DYCD along with partners across sectors including Youth Action Board Members, providers, advocates, and other city agencies have completed the planning process for a 15 million grant awarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, YHDP. The final plan was approved by HUD and will be released publicly this summer. This funding will support a wide range of new housing and service interventions to prevent and end youth homelessness. Implementation of the plan will start in late summer.

Last week, Mayor Adams released Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness. This plan includes increased services

at the 8 RHY drop-in centers. New service at the drop-in centers will include peer navigation programs that will provide employment to youth and young adults with lived experience of homelessness and a new financial literacy program operated in partnership with the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. Both of these were elevated as priorities by the community during a YDP planning process.

We would like to thank the (INAUDIBLE) providers whose work welcomes thousands of young people into safe and healthy environments and who have met the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with strength and energy. We also thank the City Council for a longstanding commitment to funding RHY services. We look forward to continuing to work with you, advocates, providers, and youth in the time ahead to continue to improve services. We are pleased to answer any question you may have. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Scott. Chair Stevens, you may now begin your questions.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay, great. Is DYCD only tracking referrals made by other DYCD programs? Do you capture youth who call on their own in search of shelter beds? If so, how? If not, why? What about non-DYCD referrals such as DOE?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you for the question. We track referrals of contracted programs. It is expectation that the contracted program will track any referral that comes into their sites and report that on a daily and monthly basis. Once a youth contacts a crisis shelter or a drop-in center, they're supposed to help find that youth a bed, and if DYCD-funded programs are unable to find a bed, then they're basically supposed to contact DYCD to help so we have a process in place for any placements and referrals that need to happen with our respective contracting programs.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Do any non-DYCD referrals such as DOE, do those take place as well?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically, referrals do not come through our office. They do go directly to the providers, but, however, if one should come to us, then it's basically been elevated

to an emergency level, and we make sure that that young person is placed once we receive it. Whether it's from DOE, ACS, OCFS, or some other stakeholder, we make sure that that young person is placed.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Does DYCD track bed vacancies in the system based on gender or specialized population like LGBTQI+, kosher, mother/child? If not, why?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You do?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: And could you talk a little bit about what that looks like, like how do you track it?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You want to speak on the tracking system, Tracey?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. Hi. I can address that question. OCFS certifies our beds based on the different populations that we serve, and so our designations are gender nonconforming, female identifying, male identifying, and parent/child beds so those are the populations that we track the bed vacancies by, based on the type of bed slots that are available.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Those are the categories that you guys track and so culture and things like that isn't taken into place though?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically, what happens is when a young person comes in, they have to trust the setting that they're in so when they come into a site, they're not going to automatically tell a person that they have been commercially sexually exploited or things about them. What we first do in terms of any referral or expectation is that it's based on what they identify so do you identify as a male or do you identify as a female. Once you're in the facility and you go through the proper case management with the staff at the provider site, then that's when more of the information comes out where you share that you may have been commercially sexually exploited then the staff does the necessary case management around that or you may come out and identify and then the staff provides the necessary services around that. Once you put that into the system, there's questions that the providers ask at the sites to get more of that information so through that case management is how staff identifies with the young person in their care.

In the initial intake, it's about male, female until that case management intake session is done.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Interesting. Okay.

The next question I have is DYCD's definition of vacant beds, what is DYCD's definition of vacant beds? For instance, if a bed is vacant on Monday night but a youth is scheduled to move in on Tuesday morning, is this bed classified and counted as vacant? Please explain in detail.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Great question. A bed is vacant until a young person is intake into that bed so based on the scenario that you just mentioned, if, for example, you have a young person that is expected to come to the bed but I call you and say I have a person who is in need of a bed at this moment, the expectation is that that young person who needs the bed at that moment would get the bed and then when the young person who should come later on, because we don't know if that young person is going to come, that young person may not come or may decide to come the next so we have to make sure we place those young people who are in need of the bed at the moment first and then basically when the other young person comes then we look to find a

placement for that young person, whether it's at that same site hopefully, if they have a vacant bed, or, if not, then we look for another vacant bed within the system.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So if a young person, let's say, checks out on a Monday like I even said and someone is told that they can have that bed it's still considered vacant until the person is checked into the site.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct, because when we look at it from our end in terms of the database that we have, they can't put that young person in that particular bed until that young person comes on-site so we see it as vacant until a name is actually assigned to that vacant bed.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. When DYCD generates Shelter Access Report, does it cross-reference youth that are trying to get a bed against all of the vacant beds or only against the vacant beds for which the youth are eligible for? For instance, would a single cisgender male be cross-referenced against all the vacant beds in the system including those meant for LGBTQ youth and the mother/child ones or only against those that would be

available to him or a single cisgender male? Please explain in detail.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We cross-reference against all vacant beds. Referrals are made based on how the young person identifies. If it's an emergency placement needed, we looked to place the young person a guarantee that they're housed. If, for example, we see that a male should come and we looked at there's no male beds. We will work with a provider who has a single bed, a single room bed versus the multiple room bed, to place that young male until we can find a vacant male bed within the system for that young person, but the goal is never to turn that person away just because there's no gender-identifiable bed.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What does collaboration look like between DYCD and DHS? Please give details on frequency of meetings, collaboration around outreaches and resources.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We work with our sister agency more now than we've ever worked with them before. We are in a lot of meetings, especially around the housing now that we have the Emergency Housing Vouchers and the City-FHEPS so we

constantly have meetings with their team to make sure that we are adhering to the specifics of any services that are coming from them for our young people as well as in terms of how we're going to grow whatever we have around policy, especially around the streamline and things of that nature. I would say we meet monthly with our peers. Sometimes, with the housing vouchers, it's what, weekly now, right, because of the fact that we have a workgroup around the emergency housing vouchers and utilization of those vouchers by the deadline so we're constantly in meetings and on the phone as well as using email to communicate with our sister agency.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you have shared goals and metrics?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: From the workgroup, there are goals, but they're broken down by agency because, as you know, each agency has a different allotment of housing vouchers. For us, it's 600. We basically work with our sister agencies in terms of understanding prior to the voucher, especially around the City-FHEPS, we work with them in terms of the flow and how the shopping letters would be distributed and how our young people would

get them since we don't actually own the shopping letters in-house. They come from DHS.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You said shopping letters?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes, shopping letters for City-FHEPS. That's what the young person would get in order, similar to a housing voucher. Basically, we do create systems and flow in order to make the process easier for the young people as well as our providers because this is a first for us with respect to housing vouchers for our young people. This is something that our providers are learning and managing and getting used to doing on a more consistent basis so we definitely have conversations to make sure that that is a easy process, plus Tracey holds a weekly, daily, weekly or daily? Probably a daily meeting with the providers in order to iron out the kinks, talk about the process, and move forward.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know you said that DYCD gets 600 vouchers. Do you know how much DHS has?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Not offhand, but I know that they've definitely got the

lion's share of it, but I don't have the exact number.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you know what percentage the 600 is of the overall vouchers?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Initially when they were trying to distinguish the vouchers, we brought this issue to our providers, and, from that discussion, it came out that we wanted 10 percent of the vouchers, and, at the time, 10 percent issued for us was 600 and that's how we came up with the 600 number.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you're getting about 10 percent of the vouchers?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I think it's 10 percent, I would have to tell you where that 10 percent comes from because in the city I think it's 7,888 total vouchers, right, but it's distributed differently to many of the city agencies, but we identified that we needed 10 percent of it, and I think there was an agreement that we got between 8 and 10 so I'd have to confirm.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes. I would love for you to be able to get (INAUDIBLE) after the hearing. I think that that's important. The next

question I have, are the youth in the DYCD drop-in centers allowed to be referred for placement in DHS systems using the streamlined process that would enable them to bypass DHS intact and assessment facilities? If not, why not? Please explain in detail.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes, they are.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you explain in detail. What does that look like...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Basically, it's the same process as the residential where they fill out the form, and the form is then forwarded to DHS for process so that they can be intaked into one of the DHS youth shelters or mental health shelters based on if the young person has a serious mental health issue. One of the things that needed to be confirmed as well as assured with our providers is that if a young person did have a mental health issue that their application went with their biopsychosocial because DHS would rather place them in a mental health facility versus placing them in one of the youth shelters where they may not have the adequate care for their mental health issue.

Basically what happens is they fill out the application, the form, the form is then submitted to DHS then DHS works with Tracey in order to make sure that that young person is placed, and, once they're placed, then the case is closed.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That seems like a lot of steps. I'd just like to point that out. Especially when young people, that's how you lose people. It seems like a lot of steps and a lot of hands that young people have to go through.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Just to touch on that. With respect to the young person, most of the work is being done by the case manager so it's almost like filling out the housing information...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, no, no. I understand (INAUDIBLE) case manager in that process, but that still takes time, which in that process can lose young people because young people need things done quickly because of instant gratification and all those things and so that just, I understand how you can lose a young person in that process.

DIRECTOR THORNE: I can add a little bit about the timeframe and also the process. We have the application process so that they don't have to go to

the assessment shelter so it is time spent, but it's also time that they can stay in a DYCD residential program instead of going to the assessment shelter so it's worth it. It takes anywhere from a few days to 2 weeks to get a placement, and there's constant contact between DYCD, DHS, and the provider serving the young person during that time.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I understand that. It's just a lot of touch points for a young person and also with the transitioning out from one place to another is also very sensitive, right, and so that just seems like a lot. I'm just pointing out what I'm seeing.

How many youth utilize the streamlined process in 2020 and 2021 respectively?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: In 2020, 81. In 2021, 48.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Why do you think there was a decline?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The decline was due to the pandemic.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How long does it usually take for placement for youth to be permanent housing?

DIRECTOR THORNE: I'm so glad you're asking about permanent housing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, because I just don't understand why we're referring young people from one shelter to the next. That's probably my biggest concern.

DIRECTOR THORNE: I hear you on that. Randy mentioned that this is new for us. Last August, like we had no permanent housing in July. All of a sudden we have City-FHEPS and EHV and so the providers have been doing such a great job with this emergency voucher program, learning the Section 8 process, the application process, making sure everyone has their documents, and so the application part of the process has been taking anywhere from 3 weeks to a month and then there's always outliers that could be longer or shorter, and we work closely with NYCHA to make sure that any applications that are stalled are pushed forward and re-enter the stream of review so that we're able to get vouchers issued as quickly as possible. Once the vouchers are issued, the young people are taking about 2 to 3 months to find an apartment and then get linked to an apartment. After they are linked to an apartment,

then the landlord and NYCHA work together to do the contractual agreements, housing inspections, and that kind of thing, and that takes about another month.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are we at, 5 months?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. Right, so we have about 66 young people with the rental process complete, and we have another 64 who are in the pipeline, they're linked to an apartment and they're going through that.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's 66 that's currently in the pipeline?

DIRECTOR THORNE: There are 66 are rent complete, in apartment. Then 64 are linked, which means that their voucher has been accepted but they are going through that process where they're getting contracts and documents together on the landlord's side.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: With those 66, what does the aftercare look like?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Another great kind of question. The aftercare is available to the young people, it could be anywhere from a phone call, how are you doing, it could be a home visit to make sure

that they're doing okay, it could be a web visit to check in. There's check-in at 15 days, 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days just generally to make sure people are okay. Sometimes young people go into their apartments and they don't want to hear from the provider, but the provider is going to follow up a little bit with them.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely. Should definitely follow up.

DIRECTOR THORNE: Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. That part's happening.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What are the barriers to rapidly getting permanent housing for youth?

DIRECTOR THORNE: The first one, the housing market is really tight right now, and it's really tight for 1-bedrooms and studios, and so that is our biggest challenge, just finding housing stock for the young folks and then also the Emergency Housing Voucher program allows us to go to different neighborhoods and pay higher rents than where we would normally be able to go and that means that there's some education and discussion with those landlords about Section 8, why it's a good idea, why

it's a benefit to have someone with government-backed guaranteed rent moving into your apartment so there's still some learning curves going on, but the taskforce that Randy was talking about, the housing taskforce, is a citywide taskforce that is looking at all the different ways to leverage housing resources, and so I think they have a campaign, I Vouch For Vouchers, to try and get landlords to be interested. I think there was one in the Bronx a couple weeks ago. Also, we are looking at the housing stock, different areas of housing stock, Housing Connect, different ways that we can allow young people to get access to these apartments so we're exploring these different ways as a city collaboratively.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know before I talked a little bit about 6 months being a long time. What do you think is needed to accelerate the permanent housing process?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Besides more apartments. I think that the pieces are in place. There's a lot of really excellent communication happening that I don't think was ever happening in the past. Actually, I wouldn't be able to say that since I wasn't part of it. We are able to reach out to NYCHA and get

information about inspections, landlord situations.

We have a lot of access and insight into that part of the process. We have a citywide salesforce tracker that everyone uses so that we all speak kind of the same language in terms of what phase the rental is in, where are they with the housing contract, all these different things and so the communication is there. I think that it's really just working hard, finding apartments, and kind of exploring new avenues like the higher priced neighborhoods where we can offer more rent to the young people.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How many shelter beds are there specifically designated for LGBTQI+ youth? If none, why not? Do you plan and have a timeline to increase those numbers?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: As you know, currently we have 813 residential beds, 753 for 16 to 20 year olds and 60 for 21 to 24 year olds, and all of these beds can be utilized by the LGBTQIA+ population.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So you don't have any designated specifically for that population?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We don't use the word designated. We use the word specialized

where certain providers have a specialty in working with the LGBTQI+ population such as the Ali Forney Center and so on so basically we don't designate a bed because we can say anyone can go into any bed at any particular time, but we say that a particular time, but we say that a particular provider has a specialty in working with that population. For example, with the commercially sexually exploited, we know that we have GEMS who has that specialty.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If an LGBTQIA+ youth declined a non-specific LGBTQIA+ bed in fear of harassment or poor treatment, what is in place to accommodate them with more appropriate placements? If nothing, do you have a plan or timeline to address this gap?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thanks. With respect to any concern that comes in or harassment, we definitely want to hear about those particular cases. We have not heard about it, but we do have the 311 as well as our DYCD Community Connect hotline that allows for any of those concerns to come in. If a particular youth should call and say that they have been harassed, we then make sure that that provider does a safety transfer of that particular

young person to a safe place so that they are out of harm's way and there's no issues that could arise while they're in housing, residential and/or at the drop-in centers. Basically, we make sure that the providers work on any of those issues, doing incident reports that they then send to us if they are of an emergency nature.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do you collect data on LGBTQIA+ youth? If not, do you have a plan or timeline to collect such data?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes, we do collect that data, and sexual orientation/gender identity data is collected at intake.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: That's the only data that you collect? Okay. If youth are in fact now being turned away due to sufficient bed capacity, why won't DYCD allow programs with contracts for 16 to 21 year olds to serve older, 21 to 24 year older youth, if there are vacant beds in such programs as requested by providers and advocates?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Great question. DYCD has taken the stance that we do not want to take one resource away from another group so we feel that youth ages 21 to 24 should have their

own resource, own set of beds versus taking away beds from a group that we have not identified as not needing the service. We tend to make sure, even though we can serve that population, plus they have different needs. A 24-year-old may have a different need from a 16-year-old, a 17-year-old, and sometimes you may not want to align those needs because they may impact the road to independence or service delivery so we want to make sure that any new need is analyzed, which we're currently doing, to make sure that if that's what is needed then we'll make sure we communicate that out.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Is DYCD advocating for more funding to bring 21 to 24-year-old beds online since there's only 60 beds?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We're currently doing an analysis and evaluation of contractor services, and, from that analysis, we tend to always stay in contact with our partners at OMB in terms of any new needs and new resources that are available, but, in lieu of those new services coming online, we definitely use the streamlined process that we have with our sister agency, DHS, and we also make sure that they're connected to our drop-in

centers so that they can receive the services there since the age limit for the drop-ins are 14 to 24.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts, if any, have been made to increase public awareness of youth homelessness as well as services and resources available to this population?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: That's a good question. We're actually working on a lot of things with respect to that now due to the fact that there's been so many new services added to programming. One of the things that we're currently doing is updating our DYCD RHY website to make sure that it's more user friendly and it actually shares with those who are interested in services what services are available, where they can go to get those services, and who they can contact as well as ask any questions of the particular services that are available so we're moving more to accessing and using our social media, whether it's Instagram, whether it's Facebook or Twitter, we're creating more promotional materials that we can display inside our facilities as well as looking at how we can get it out in the open, using the kiosks that they may have in the communities so that folks will have that. One

thing that we do yearly is presentations with community partners as well as with our sister agencies to make sure that they're aware of our service because a lot of them don't even know that DYCD has a residential program. A lot of people know about our Summer Youth Program, they know about our Cornerstones, but not many know that RHY exists so we definitely make sure that we do our presentations, share our information, and deputize those folks to make sure that they pass that information out there. Also, Youth Count is a time for a real big social media push that we do.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I have a lot of questions on Youth Count. Don't worry. They're coming.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I know.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Also, I know you mentioned some social media, and I, myself, am a little older, and all the ones that you said are the ones that I'm on which means that the young people are not so we should be thinking about what are the young people using if those are the people we're trying to get the information to because I think that is a huge disconnect.

I just have one more question and then I'm going to share some time with my Colleagues so they can ask questions and then I'll come back to my questions. As a matter of fact, I'll leave it there, and I'll send it over to Emi.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you, Chair. We'll now turn over to other Council Members for questioning before we turn it back to the Chair. I believe Council Member Riley, did you have any questions for the administration?

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair Stevens. Prior to me becoming a Member and working in government, I used to work for New York Foundling, and I was the Skills Coach there. I just want to talk about residential services that you have, and if you could just please elaborate on the TIL support program for me, how do youth engage in this program? I know a lot of the times when I was working with youth, they would give me 6 months with the youth, they would give me (INAUDIBLE) about the transition out of high school, they're not sure if they want to go into college, they want to go into the work field, but they need housing. That used to be an issue to

find housing for the youth so can you just elaborate on the program for me?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you for that question. I'm going to speak both on our crisis services and our transition independent living because they both align. They're the same except for the length of stay. With respect to our residential programming, a young person can go directly to a crisis services program and be intake, but they can't do that for a TIL, a transitional independent living. The reason being is that there needs to be some legwork done by the provider to identify that the young person is actually homeless for the runaway and homeless youth, 16 and 17, and for 18 year olds you need that referral to make sure that they can be reunified first before going into a long-term.

For our crisis services, they can stay for 60, up to 120 days, and for our TILs they can stay for 2 years.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Sorry to cut you off. I know you said they have to identify if that person is homeless. How would they identify if a person is homeless?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct.
3 For a runaway, they would need to prove that that
4 young person cannot go back home so they would have
5 to work with ACS to make sure that there's no open
6 case and that the parents are actually...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: So not if they go
8 AWOL in the house? Is that what that would be
9 considered?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: If they go
11 AWOL, they can stay at our crisis services. However,
12 the state requires that the provider does the legwork
13 for them to be referred to a longer stay program such
14 as a TIL.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Now a lot of the
16 case managers usually have a thousand cases so having
17 them do the legwork, sometimes the youth get lost in
18 the services and in the overflow of cases. Are there
19 any other measures that we could do to kind of
20 expedite this in making sure that they're not getting
21 lost?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Our
23 facilities are intimate facilities so the most,
24 they're 10 bed and 20 bed facilities, so they're not
25 as big as you may think with the...

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sister agencies so they don't get actually lost because of the fact that they're in-house so they come back to this place and the caseworkers see them and can work with them on a regular basis through that relationship building that they've done.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. I'm going to move over to drop-in centers real quick. There are 8 drop-in centers in New York City?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: There are 8, 5 that are 24 hours, 7 days a week.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. How many are in the Bronx?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The Bronx, 1.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Just one.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Mmhhh, and it's a 24-hour drop-in center.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Where is that located?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: That's located on 149th Street and 3rd Avenue, and it's operated by Cardinal McCloskey Services.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Can you give a
3 breakdown for the other boroughs, please?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Say it
5 again, please.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Can you give a
7 breakdown for the other boroughs?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sure. The
9 Bronx has 1, Cardinal McCloskey is a 24-hour drop-in
10 center. Staten Island has 1, it's a 24-hour drop-in
11 center run by Project Hospitality. Queens has 2
12 operated by Sheltering Arms, 1 is a daytime drop-in
13 center and 1 is a 24-hour drop-in center. Brooklyn
14 has 1, and it's operated by SCO Family of Services,
15 and it's a 24-hour drop-in center. Manhattan has 3,
16 they have 2 daytime drop-in centers, 1 run by The
17 Door, 1 run by Safe Horizons, and then they have a
18 24-hour drop-in center run by Ali Forney Center.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Can you describe the
21 difference between the day and the 24-hour drop-in
22 centers?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Sure. The
24 daytime closes at a certain time, where they can
25 identify, so it may close at 6, 7, or 8 p.m. where a

24-hour drop-in center does not close. They operate throughout the night.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: It's not different services they provide?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: It's not different services. It's just based on timing. One is throughout the night, and one closes at 6, 7, 8 o'clock.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So the young person would have to be in the facility by that time for that drop-in center?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The drop-in centers are not residential facilities. They're just locations where young people can come and receive services on 5 key indicators, but there's more, and the 5 indicators are housing, employment, education, mental health, and basic life skills which can immigration or legal services and so on, but, with respect to the drop-ins, for the 24 hours, there is no shutting of the door. If a young person comes up to a 24-hour, they're supposed to come in and receive care throughout the day and night. For the daytime, they close at a certain time so the young person would have to get into the facility before it closes

to receive services, and, if for some reason it closes and they still need assistance, then they can go to one of our 24-hour drop-in centers.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: My last question is just wanted to go on the street outreach. I know you talked about social media. I did see something interesting that you actually go where homeless or runaway youth congregate. How do you indicate where they usually congregate?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We actually leave that to the expertise of our contractor because they know better. They're on the ground on a daily basis (INAUDIBLE) experience so they know the areas where youth congregate.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you, Council Member Riley. I would also like to acknowledge Council Member Nantasha Williams who is available remotely.

We will also have questions next from Council Member Osse, Council Member Richardson Jordan, and then followed by Council Member Williams. Council Member Osse.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you. Thank you, Chair and Assistant Commissioner.

The first question that I have is what is DYCD doing to ensure that youth are able to have financial stability and job training/professional development as they age out of the system? I think a question that wanted me to ask this was this emphasis on youth being pushed from shelter to shelter, and I think we want to see more of an emphasis on permanent housing but obviously something that would yield outcomes of permanent housing is financial stability, job training, things of that nature so I just wanted to ask what DYCD is doing in that department?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you very much for that question. As mentioned before, one of our key indicators is around employment so the goal is for that provider to work with the young person, create an individualized service plan around that particular issue if they identify that as their key issue where they help them in terms of any trainings that they may need, any connections that they may need, and a lot of our providers, some of them even have workforce programming embedded in their services because of the fact that they're large

organizations. One of the great things that we're doing now with the Homeless Demonstration Project is around financial literacy and creation of services embedded into our drop-in centers where we will be working with the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection to bring staff to our drop-ins who will focus solely on that particular initiative and moving folks along in that process. One of the great things that we have right now is that 1,184 young people who identified as being runaway and homeless youth have received jobs via our summer youth employment program.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you. Does DYCD have stats on how many youth are able to gain employment post signing out?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Our providers are responsible for putting information into our database system on the individualized service plan that they have created with the young person so if employment was identified as a key initiative then we would be able to pull that information out. It probably be more (INAUDIBLE) of how many young people may have part-time, full-time

jobs, but the more critical key information would be embedded in their case management file.

COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Another question I have is what supports are being given to youth who use drugs and other substances, especially when it comes to harm reduction efforts? Is it usually in a cursorial approach or is it more addiction services that they're referred to?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Another key thing, as I said before, indicator was around mental health. That is something that the providers also do in terms of working with the young person. If it's something that cannot be addressed on-site with the staff that are hired, then they make the necessary referrals. One of the things that our contract requires is that our providers have linkages with the various health clinics, hospitals, and so on in their neighborhoods so that if a person should come in with a substance abuse issue then they can make that necessary referral. Through the investment that we get from the Office of Community and Mental Health, those are some of the metrics that are focused on by our providers, especially around how many have been

2 hospitalized during a particular month and/or fiscal
3 year so those are services that are provided on-site.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Does DYCD ever
5 report these individuals that consume substances to
6 the NYPD?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You're
8 speaking specifically about RHY or DYCD in total?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: DYCD in total.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I would
11 have to get back to you because I believe that is,
12 because we do have a partnership with the NYPD in
13 regards to how we collaborate on various initiatives
14 and the services and the information that's shared so
15 I would need to get back to you on any specifics.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: I guess one last
17 followup question. What are some other instances, and
18 you may not know all of them off the top of your
19 head, in which homeless or runaway youth are reported
20 to the NYPD while being in a shelter system?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Being
22 reported to NYPD? That is not a requirement that they
23 need to report to the NYPD for any particular young
24 person unless it's something major, if the police
25 come on-site then the providers require a subpoena

2 before they can give out any information or allow the
3 person to come into the shelter so I don't think any
4 information is willingly given out unless it's a real
5 emergency situation where all protocols are in place.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Thank you.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: You're
8 welcome.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.
10 Council Member Richardson Jordan.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Hi.
12 Thank you for the testimony. I had a couple of
13 questions. The first is that I really wanted to ask
14 about the link between foster care and runaways, and
15 I don't know if that's something that's being
16 tracked, but is there any data on youth running away
17 from foster care? If so, what are some of those
18 numbers if you have them?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: No youth
20 should leave foster care to come to a shelter. That's
21 the number one goal. If a young person comes to our
22 facility and we ask that question, if they have a
23 foster care history, then it's upon the young person
24 to share that. Some may not share that information
25 because they may be of age. However, if they're

underage, 16 and 17, the provider will then contact, like I said, ACS to see if there's an open case on that particular person, and, if there's an open case, then ACS will guide the next steps in terms of whether returning that young person or closing the young person out to where they can stay within the contractor system that we have. I think it depends on the age as well as it depends on how forthcoming the young person is with sharing that history.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Do you have any stats on how often youth are returned where that does come up and youth are sent back?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: To be honest with you, the number of young people who are 16 to 17 within our system is about 6 percent of the population so 93 are 18 and older, and, of that 6 percent, it changes, it fluctuates, but of that 6 percent we haven't had many. I don't recall one that was returned to be honest with you.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I hear you. You're saying it's like older youth but then there's only the 60 beds for ages 21 to 24 so the bulk of youth is 18 to 21.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I don't know if this is something centralized, but I was wondering if you could tell me about the training that providers give to counselors, what type of training and skillset, what type of metrics are used to evaluate the staff that are working with runaway youth?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Okay. Thank you for that question. One of the key requirements for the state is that each staff person is required to do 40 hours of training on many different topics, so topics on youth homelessness, topics on mental health, topics on commercially sexually exploited youth so many different things, LGBTQ+ training so that is a requirement. One of the things that we do at DYCD is regular site visits, and we do administrative site visits. During those administrative site visits, we review and evaluate things such as training at the respective contracted sites to make sure that the staff are close to that 40 hours or meeting that 40 hours depending on the time that they started. Training is a key requirement. We also have various technical assistants that we work with internally such as

Vibrant Emotional Health, WPTI, we work with Ramapo for Children who provide technical assistance to our various sites when we identify that they're in need of that particular training so they send staff to our sites to actually provide TA, do trainings, and so on and so on so training is very key to our work, and we make sure that it's done.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: How often do you have the administrative site visits?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We do the administrative site visits quarterly.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. I did have another question just around pregnant and parenting youth. Do you have stats around that? Do you have a sense of how many of our youth are...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We actually have mother/child sites so we can pull information based on those respective sites and those beds identified in the system.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. Thank you. Do you have father/child sites as well?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: No, but that's one of the things that when we put out our

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55

2 RFPs we've encouraged but no provider has ever
3 submitted for a father/child program.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Are those all
5 your questions, Council Member?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Yes,
7 thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you.
9 Before we return to the Chair for her questions, I'd
10 just like to take a moment for any of the Council
11 Members who are here remotely to use the raise hand
12 function on Zoom if you have any questions for the
13 administration.

14 All right. Seeing no raised hands, we'll
15 now turn to the Chair for her questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What is the current
17 level of staffing and funding dedicated to the Youth
18 Count and what specific budget dedications to the
19 Youth Count are present?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The Runaway
21 and Homeless Youth team at DYCD is made up of 14
22 staff people that dedicate time to the Youth Count.
23 Of this is 2 part-time Youth Count coordinators that
24 have been identified as mainstays within this
25 particular work. We also collaborate with many

internal DYCD staff from IT, legal, (INAUDIBLE), and fiscal who lend their support to the Youth Count. There is no specific budget as the Youth Count has evolved over the years so the costs have changed and grown so there's no specific budget to it, but we do provide micro-purchases to our contracted drop-in centers in order to provide services to the young people.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I just want to make sure I'm hearing this correctly. There's 2 part-time people and no budget for the Youth Count?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I didn't say there was no budget. I said there's no dedicated, no dedicated budget. I can't say we have 155...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If it's not dedicated, then there's no budget.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We work with what is identified. We have stakeholder meetings where we have evolved from the first year that we did the Youth Count. We did it out of 7 locations. Now, we're doing the Youth Count of maybe close to 40, 50 locations.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which means that you should have a budget that is specifying that and you

should have full-time people working on this because 2 part-time people to count all the young people across the city, I understand now why it's so under-represented and under-counted.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I just wanted to correct something. Two people do not do it by themselves.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I know, but you said you had 2 part-time people dedicated to the Youth Count.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We have 2 part-time people who are Youth Count coordinators. They have that title, which are included in the 14 that I was...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: No, I understand. I know how it is. I understand. I worked in Youth Services forever. You do everything. You are the janitor, you are the director, you are the teacher, you're all the things so I understand, but what I'm saying is that means we should be advocating for more because that is not adequate.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Correct. That's one of the things that we do every year from the evolution that we've had from the first Youth

Count where we've communicated this need to our Colleagues at OMB and funding was made available to make sure that the Youth Count was done.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Since we're talking about staffing, do you think that you guys need additional staff for the Youth Count, because I do. I don't know if that's what you guys are thinking.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Actually, like I said, we've evolved over the years, and we've been able to manage and address all the needs of the particular Youth Count from stakeholder meetings and so on. Would I love additional staff? Who's going to turn down additional staff? Never would I turn down additional staff.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Exactly, so we need more staff.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I think that what we have now definitely meets the needs of the Youth Count as it is today.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Well, I'm advocating for more. I don't like the 2 part-time. I think there should at least be a minimum of 2 full-time and a budget.

Is there a reason why a supplement New York City Youth Count could not be conducted during a warmer season to access youth and using a barrier other than HUD's definition of homelessness in order to improve our understanding and size of the population and the scope of the need? For example, we have a supplement to the federal poverty line, New York specific poverty measures, and have reports of poverty in the city published using it which allows us to have a more accurate picture. Why can't we do the same with the counting of unsheltered homeless youth?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Thanks for that question. Randy mentioned the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, it's called Opportunity Starts at Home, and we also have feedback sessions for Youth Count. We just had one in May, and, during both of those sessions, all of the planning and discussion from the community and from young people, they raised that issue about having a warm weather Youth Count, and there seems to be a lot of energy and support around that right now and so it's definitely something that would be really good also to use to promote the services that the providers offer, make

sure everyone knows about the drop-ins, make sure everyone knows about the crisis centers. It's definitely something that's gaining support for sure.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, it's definitely gaining support which is why I'm advocating for more staff and money.

What youth homeless specific training is provided to Youth Count staff and is it trauma-informed training?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yes. As mentioned earlier in the question about training, we definitely make sure that staff and providers all have the necessary training to address these issues. We work with the Tas as I mentioned before, Vibrant Emotional Health, Ramapo for Children, CRE, WPTI to make sure that any specific trainings are happening. We also work with our Colleagues over at ACS on commercially sexually exploited and human trafficking training so that they are aware of those things and can participate in those specific trainings.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: But is there any training specifically around the Youth Count?

DIRECTOR THORNE: In January, we have our training for Youth Count surveying, and we go over

the survey. In part of that training, we talk about how to talk to young people, make sure that they're able to end the survey whenever they want to, they're being asked questions in an appropriate manner, and that they feel heard and without judgement. For the 2021, a member of the Youth Action Board gave a training specifically on how to work with young people and how to ask questions and make sure that the survey's being done in a trauma-informed way.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So there's typically like one or two trainings?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. There's the same training held 2 times. That was last year. The year before, we had one training.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay.

DIRECTOR THORNE: I also wanted to add that most of the people who are doing the survey work at the drop-in centers or other youth programs in the community so they already have access to a lot of the training that Randy was describing so they're youth service people so they do have a fundamental knowledge of the needs for the young people that they're serving.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, no, absolutely, but one of the things they're saying they feel overstretched and they feel like young people should be more a part of that process, and so the young people need to be trained and that becomes a lot for the providers who are also providing services and probably the other 10 million things that they're doing as well.

What is the planning implementation timeline presently in place for Youth Count?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Generally, the timeframe, we do a kickoff in October, and we keep rolling through until the end of April where we have our feedback session. This year started last year, we had our feedback session in June I believe, and, from that point forward, we took a lot of the recommendations that were offered and integrated them into the new survey and into the planning. For example, increased social medial and increased street outreach were 2 of the things that we really wanted to incorporate from the feedback the previous year so during our kickoff, which was November 29th, we created committees and goals to make sure that there's a social media goal timeline and a street

outreach commitment from the stakeholders. That happened all during December. We started with our social media marketing push. People were starting to do, every other week, they would do some blast-outs. We would give some language from our comms team and some logos and promotional items, and then, as it got closer, they would do weekly social media. Then on January 21st and 24th, there was the training that I mentioned before for the people who were doing surveys and Youth Count. Youth Count was the last week of January then we're doing our data collection and review and creating the reports. In May, we had our feedback session where people were able to take an online survey and also respond to questions and give feedback during the feedback session meeting. This year, a lot of the things, we still are going to promote the social media, we're still going to work hard on the street outreach, especially outreach done by young people, and we have a few other asks that we're going to work on as well between now and the next kickoff meeting in October. It's kind of a full-year, continuous cycle.

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Do providers get
3 paid for the time spent doing the youth count, and is
4 this part of their current contracts?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Youth Count
6 is not part of their current contract, but it's
7 something that we will be looking into for future
8 RFPs and contracts that we do. What we give out is a
9 micro-purchase to the drop-in centers so that they
10 can hire staff, they can provide incentives, they can
11 pay for food on the days of the Youth Count, and
12 those micro-purchases are for daytime, 2,500, and for
13 the 24-hours, 3,500.

14 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yeah, I think we
15 should definitely make this part of the contract,
16 especially folks should not be required to do work
17 for free because it takes work to implement that.

18 What efforts have been being made to
19 meaningfully and consistently engage young people
20 with lived experience of homelessness in planning and
21 designing and implementation of the process of Youth
22 Count? How many youth have been engaged in this
23 process?

24 DIRECTOR THORNE: I started doing Youth
25 Count in 2019 was the first one that I was working

with, and we worked really closely with the Youth Action Board. The Youth Action Board participated in the planning meetings and gave feedback, gave experience, a lot of good information and were part of the, this is the most important question and I have like...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's okay. Take your time.

DIRECTOR THORNE: This is the most near and dear to my heart. The Youth Action Board was a really big part of shaping the way that the Youth Count was structured, especially for, I'm getting there.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: If you want to take a minute, you can. It's okay.

DIRECTOR THORNE: For outreach. Do you want to share the success with the outreach... For example, one of the young people who ran the Youth Action Board was committed to being part of the outreach and went overnight in the van and counted many, many people in the street-work outreach van, and that was upheld as one of our best practices. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to replicate it because of COVID, but that's one example of the value

of the Youth Action Board has influenced Youth Count. The Youth Action Board is always invited to every meeting I described before, they attend. You mentioned all the social media that you're familiar with. They mentioned TikTok, and I was like I don't know how to do TikTok.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I don't either.

DIRECTOR THORNE: But it definitely highlights the fact that we need young people at the fore, and so the Youth Action Board participated in our feedback session, and we're working closely with the YAB during the Opportunity Starts at Home, the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. I'm hoping that we will be able to continue our relationship. It started out very strong, and I'm hoping that through these collaborations we'll be able to continue our relationship because there's a lot of value to be added from their knowledge and expertise.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are the young people on the Youth Action Board, do they get paid or a stipend or anything?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Their payment arrangement is through the Coalition for Homeless Youth, and then there's also opportunities in the

micro-purchases that Randy mentioned to pay youth with lived experience to do outreach or to participate in the Youth Count so that they are paid for their efforts.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: They get about like 25 for that, right?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: 2,500 for the daytime and 3,500 for the 24-hour.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts, if any, have been made to incentivize for greater youth participation, both Youth Count survey and respondents?

DIRECTOR THORNE: We have the micro-purchases. We have discussions about what type of food cards are the best ones to use, but really what we have, sometimes providers have chosen to create special sweatshirts or sweatpants for Youth Count. In the past, DYCD has created hats that say I Count and that kind of thing, but basically that's what we've been offering.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: This just came into my head. How do you guys leverage your other programs to help to support some of this? DYCD has Cornerstones, After-school (INAUDIBLE) how are you

leveraging those programs to actually help and support this work as well?

DIRECTOR THORNE: We've made some inroads. We have the older youth employment programs like Earn and Learn and Trade and Earn and Cornerstone. They have networks of providers who we ask to participate in Youth Count and then we also have a Youth Council at DYCD. In 2021, they participated, and they also gave us feedback.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: It's the truth.

DIRECTOR THORNE: Yeah. They're also part of the youth voice that we tap into and they also are surveyed so they come, they get surveyed, and then they offer us feedback on the survey process and ways to improve it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I bring this up because one of the things I've said in multiple hearings is just how I feel like we're not using the resources that we have and even collecting data that we should be, even when I think about SYEP, we should be asking this question, are you a homeless youth, do you need other services, and giving out this information and using what we have but it just seems like everything is so disconnected and even in the

hearing, Commissioner, you talked about how some folks don't even know that DYCD has shelter programs and so I think that it's a disservice and we really should think about and brainstorm afterwards on how are we making sure that everyone is aware of all of the programs that are going on and how are we making sure that we're using and leveraging all the resources that we have because I think it's also a missed opportunity when I think about some of the programs. People are always looking for community service activities and things like that that could probably participate in the Youth Count but we're not even thinking about that because you wouldn't even know. I worked in youth development for 20 years, and I heard about this but we were never involved because it wasn't our sector or my agency didn't have shelters so I would definitely make sure after this we spend some time to brainstorm to think about how do we close some of these gaps.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I just want to add to that because there have been some strides. I'm not going to say that there hasn't been. For example, with the SYEP, when we first started, there was only 500 slots or less for vulnerable youth or

youth who identified as being in a shelter and now I think it's close to 5,000 or something like that...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Which isn't enough.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Understood. We hear you on that. (INAUDIBLE) talk about the increase that has occurred.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can. I'm going to always refute you because there needs to be more.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Okay. I'm not going to argue with you on that, but I'm just talking about how we have evolved in regards to working with our Colleagues and making sure that we are being seen and with the presentations, going to places that we know they may not know about us and making sure that we get in the door and tell them about our service. We are making some strides. There's a lot more work that needs to be done, but, while I'm here, that's definitely things that I will be doing.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts have been made to access more areas where unsheltered homeless youth tend to congregate as refuge from the cold and winter weather, because I know especially during Youth Count, it's January, right, and so even

when I met with some of the providers there were a lot of stories like our kids are very savvy and so they use hospitals or 24-hour stores or places to keep warm, couch-surfing, and all those things, that's how they start to engage in sexual trafficking because they're looking for shelter. How are we looking at all of those places during this count?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Do you mean in terms of Youth Count or you mean in general?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: You can do both.

DIRECTOR THORNE: For Youth Count, we definitely have probably 60 locations from the Youth Action Board on where people can be found during the colder months, and we also have a street outreach team that's contracted through Street Works, Safe Horizon, and they have the vans that go to the places where young people are congregating outside and offer products like safe sex products, safe substance use products, and food, and clothing, and information about where to get services and try and create that rapport with the young people so that they'll come and access our services. It's just such a big deal so we keep mentioning the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, street outreach was one of the

programs that was elevated by the young people as being one of the top priorities and so that's one of the programs that was requested from HUD to fund separately to ensure that the work continues and that we increase the efforts there.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What efforts have been made to strengthen the Youth Count methodology?

DIRECTOR THORNE: The Youth Count methodology, and Randy mentioned this before in his testimony, we measure unsheltered young people by the HUD definition which you've already cited which is very narrow, and then we have the unstable youth and that is most of the people that are in our program to people who are in the shelters at DHS, and we have the stable designation. The methodology, young people are selecting where they stayed the night of the Hope Count, the point-in-time count, and also where they stayed in the past month and how many locations did they stay in. They give us a number. They also give us some examples of places that they stayed in so we use all that information to figure out the frequency of homelessness and where people stay. It turns out that even the unsheltered and unstable young people frequently switch, unsheltered young people can stay

in unstable places and vice versa over the course of a month, and that information that I'm talking about is in the Youth Count report that we sent to you. That is, to me, like a really good way of determining how young people are moving through the system and it's very fluid. Part of the methodology is also to make sure that we're asking the right questions, we're reaching the right people so that's why we've increased our stakeholder group to include almost 40 people in our stakeholder group and we get information from probation, from Department of Education, from DHS, other non-DYCD programs like HMI also offer support for Youth Count, a tremendous amount of support for Youth Count so when we're asking followup questions and asking the stakeholders to talk to us about how to improve the Youth Count, most people agree that the questions that we ask and the length of time for the survey is adequate. Most of the things that people are interested in are the summer hours and more money and things like that. We haven't heard as a community, as like a Youth Count community, we haven't heard about the key methodology factors that have to be improved besides more outreach, more partnerships, more places where we can

reach more people. COVID really, like I said, put a big damper on a lot of our efforts to get outreach done so I would say trying to reach as many people as possible is our number 1 methodology improvement.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What mental health services are provided specifically to HRY population, and are mental health services included in the contract? If so, please provide details on this service. If not, please explain why?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you. Yes, mental health services are embedded in our runaway and homeless youth contracts, both at our residential programs and at our drop-in centers. We have received an investment from the Office of Community Mental Health where we were able to create newly formed mental wellness hubs out of drop-in centers where providers were able to hire credentialed staff, psychiatrists, LMSWs, (INAUDIBLE), and so on to deal with those serious mental illness that the young people face so we definitely have an investment embedded in our drop-in centers and our residential programs, and this is some that the providers brought to our attention and we worked with, at the time it was Thrive NYCD, and

they gave us our first investment and now under the Office of Community Mental Health, the change, we've got an additional investment for mental health services so yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: We were just joined by Council Member Alexa Aviles. Thank you for joining us.

I know before we said that the 21 to 24 year olds, we know that they have 60 beds. How many beds do we have for mothers and children?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: I couldn't tell you exact numbers at this time, but I definitely can get that back to you, but we have, I think, definitely more than 20 beds but I can't give you an exact number.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Are they part of the 60 for 21 to 24...

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: For the 21 to 24, there are no mother/child beds in the 21 to 24. The breakdown is 20 female, 15 LGBTQ+ beds, and 35 male beds.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What homeless youth engagement approach would you recommend given this population's heartiness to stay hidden as a survival

strategy? I'm sorry. I jumped back to the Youth Count. What recommendations do you have for providers around that?

DIRECTOR THORNE: Could you say that one more time?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: What homeless youth engagement approach would you recommend given that this population tends to stay hidden as a survival strategy?

DIRECTOR THORNE: There's 2 really important things about Youth Count. The first one is that we want people to know about our services. We want people to come to the drop-in centers, come and look at them, get a food card, get a sweatshirt, get some candy, take a survey, look around, realize that if I need help, yeah, I probably could come here, this seems like a safe place, it seems like a fun place, I could get my laundry done, I could get a hot meal, I could rest in a cot so by opening up the doors to the drop-in centers and allowing young people to come in and see, especially young people who haven't been there before, to come in and see what's available as a first step is one of the ways to reach the folks who are couch-surfing because I

think, they're couch-surfing but one night they just may end up without a spot at that night and so instead of riding on the train, come into the drop-in, you were there before, it's friendly, it's a good place where you can have some rest. That's, I guess, one of the most important parts of Youth Count in terms of advertising the services and making sure that people are aware, no longer our best kept secret, make sure everyone is aware of the services.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Just so I can add to that. We don't want to focus solely on Youth Count. We don't want to do it on a specific period when we're trying to get folks to understand or realize the services. We want to do it all year around. This is our bread and butter in terms of making sure that not only young people but agencies, CBOs, advocates, everybody in the community knows about the services so one of the great things is that we never had 24-hours before and we got that and we started to promote that. We're working internally to get our messaging out there so folks know of this particular service and can make sure that people are connected. We're adding more enrichment to these drop-in centers. Before, we never had mental health

services in there. Now we do. They're identified as mental wellness hubs. We're going to have the financial literacy. We have housing embedded with the emergency housing vouchers and the City-FHEPS so these are things that we're hoping when we do our big outreach and our big pitch to the community of services that are embedded we can make sure that they know that it's almost like a one-stop shop where people can come and receive these particular services, and, if they don't have them on-site, they can get a referral for that particular service. For us, it's a lot about, I don't want to say rebranding but getting the word out there to folks that we have this. From having palm cards that can now be electronic palm cards versus something that they can fold and carry in their wallets or they can have it on their smart phones so that they can access the services as well as make sure that if they go to our DYCD Discover, all the information is there, it's easily accessible, and they know how to get our services, but these are things that we're doing to evolve the communication and the contact with the communities.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I love those cards, and I have a huge suggestion that at every Cornerstone, every after-school program, every SYEP site provider should have those cards and be making them available to young people because I have never seen that card in my life.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The reason why you probably haven't seen that...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Because it's new?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: It's not new, but what happens is, this was pre-pandemic when we had these and then when the pandemic shut us all down we had to grow with the virtual world...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I was in youth services for 20 years, and I've never seen that card before. Never.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Really?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I've worked in multiple programs, in DYCD programs funded, all those things, I have never ever seen that card so I think that they should be in every program and it does not make sense that providers are not cross-using this information. I know providers who literally scramble when it's time for a kid to be placed or they're

having difficulties or whatever because they just don't have this information. That would be one of my suggestions and hopes that I see when I'm on my world tour this summer.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: If you can also share with us any providers that do not have it, I'll guarantee that they get it.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Or we could just send an email out and ask who doesn't have it and send it to them, tell them to pick it up.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: We tend to send ours out so I'll definitely connect. Not a problem.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: How much money is allocated to the mental health hubs, and what mental health services are offered at the residential programs?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER SCOTT: The mental health services that are covered are basically, like I said before, we have staff who are more seasoned in the mental health field. They do youth engagement. They focus on individual sessions. They provide individual sessions. They do group sessions. They also do case consultations, and they do outreach in

the community with respect to making sure that folks know about the hubs being in the drop-in centers. The budget right now for the hubs I don't have currently with me, but I can get that information to you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. I do want to create space just in case Council...

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you, Chair Stevens. I believe we are now done with questions and administration testimony so we'll be moving on to public testimony. We'd appreciate the administration staying around to listen if they can.

Members of the public, you will be called up in panels. Each panelist will be given 3 minutes to speak. Please begin your testimony once the Sergeant announces that your time is starting.

Our first panel of public testimony in order of speaking will be Marie Angela Macchu (phonetic), Lyndon Chris Hernandez, and Lauren Galloway. We will now call on Marie Angela Macchu to begin.

MARIE ANGELA MACCHU: Hello. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Marie Angela Macchu. I'm a Fellow Advocate for the (INAUDIBLE) Coalition of Homeless

Youth and a Youth Action Board Member of New York. I am testifying in favor of meeting the needs of older youth. As a youth member who has gone through the challenges of homelessness and finding shelter, I am here to represent my LGBTQIA+ youth and young adult peers. Today, I want to bring the attention of the total beds runaway and homeless youth programs provide. At 813 in total, 753 go to youth ages 16 to 20 while 60 beds go to young adults 21 to 24. I would like to highlight that assuming the care stops at 24 is putting young adults at risk of finding a permanent solution for housing. As someone aging out of youth resources myself, I am urging you all that we expand the amount of beds that go out for young adults currently looking for a temporary plan because no one should be insecure about housing. A safe plan for youth and young adults is being part of the decision-making process on the board for a better future and a clear understanding of the different needs youth and young adults need to end homelessness including immigrant individuals who are the most disadvantaged with resources and permanent housing solutions. Thank you all for your time today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony. We will now call on Lyndon Chris Hernandez.

LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: Thank you, Council Member Stevens, for having me here. I appreciate your time. I want to center my testimony around meeting the needs of older youth, street homeless and the Youth Count barriers for older youth, access to mental health services that support entry into PSH housing, obtaining an EHV voucher and not enough time to get housed into an apartment before losing the voucher, landlords lacking trust of 21 to 24 year olds, seen as a liability to rent to younger households, lack of access to NYCHA housing, Housing Connect units require tenants to make the double the rent in order to qualify for affordable housing making it non-affordable, putting at risk due to lack of beds in drop-in centers, forcing 21 to 24 year olds to be referred to out DHS shelter, putting youth at risk for their safety. What can be done? Allow easier access to mental health services for youth in RHY systems, more training and awareness to landlords on vouchers and RHY systems, and more training and awareness on vouchers and RHY youth to

prevent youth being turned away from housing, fine landlords 1,000 dollars for turning away runaway and homeless youth from housing if (INAUDIBLE), allow extensions for use of emergency housing vouchers and other forms of housing placements to allow time for proper housing search, proper support for aftercare services for youth up to 1 year that promotes independence, skill-building, career goal-setting to prepare a young person with transition into permanent placements before leaving a youth to be fully independent on their own. Street homelessness and the Youth Count. To properly support youth facing chronically street homelessness, we need to bring public awareness to resources designated for RHY youth across the 5 boroughs, support youth on the street by hiring outreach workers to engage and refer youth to safety off the streets, look at the street homelessness and how it's being addressed in other states and communities such as Texas and California, overlooking their strategy on how they are addressing homelessness in their communities. Improving the Youth Count. To improve the Youth Count and collect accurate data, we need to prepare for the Youth Count earlier than previous years have done, hire youth

with lived expertise to help effectively develop the Youth Count and listen to their suggestions, bring more awareness by using multimedia and campaign strategies similar to the Unity Project and Hope Count... Can I finish my statement?

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely.

LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: Hire youth with lived experience to help support with the Youth Count during development, implementation, and incentivize youth to provide feedback for how the Youth Count was conducted before and after the count, provide youth with proper information on how the count can benefit the RHY community and bring more resources to RHY youth directly impacted by homelessness or at risk of homelessness, ensure we are providing an accurate count by surveying our youth in drop-in centers, those who are residing in DHS facilities, or other systems where youth may be temporarily housed, youth that are doubled up, couch-surfing, chronically street homeless, pregnant and parenting youth who may reside in both DHS and DYCD facilities, and their children who are also in DOE settings. To ensure a much more productive count to get a 100 percent accurate census of how many youth are actually

homeless in New York City, we need to be counting where young people are throughout the RHY system, not just those residing at DYCD sites. My name is Lyndon Hernandez, and I'm the New York City Youth Action Board co-Chair for the Coalition for Homeless Youth. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you. Thank you both for being here with us today and sharing your stories and testimony. I appreciate it.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: We will now call on Lauren Galloway to begin her testimony.

LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Lauren Galloway, she, her, and hers. I'm the Advocacy Coordinator for the Coalition for Homeless Youth. CHY has advocated for the needs of runaway and homeless youth for over 40 years in New York state, and the Coalition currently comprised of 65 providers for RHY across the state including 29 right here in New York City. I want to thank Chair Stevens and the Members of the Youth Service Committee for holding today's RHY oversight hearing. I'll be submitting longer written testimony, but I will be limiting my verbal testimony to 3 main issues regarding RHY and providers. The needs of homeless

young adults, the issues with Local Law 81, and the providers' evaluation process. CHY also echoes all the additional issues and recommendations outlined in the testimony of our member agencies as well as youth advocates who have shown up in full force to use their voices to push for change.

On the needs of homeless young adults, in 2018, CHY worked with the City Council to pass Local Law 88, which forced DYCD to increase the upper age limit of eligibility for older youth to access DYCD-funded RHY programs from 20 to 24 years old, aligning New York City with the changes in the state law that were passed the previous year. Since that time, DYCD has maintained the older youth beds must be funded and operated separately from the beds of 16 to 21 year olds, something that doesn't align with nor enforce by either state or city law. These voluntarily restrictions have continued to harm older youth. We know that overwhelmingly youth do not feel safe to enter the adult system shelter. However, since there continues to only be 60 DYCD beds across the ages for 21 to 24 year olds, too many older youth are forced to go to DHS shelters, utilize the 24-hour drop-in centers as a makeshift shelter, or stay on

the streets. None of these being acceptable scenarios. We address this with these recommendations. One, DYCD must include in the reporting for 21 year olds in the Local Law 86. Two, DYCD must include 21 to 24 year olds that are turned away from RHY beds in the Local Law 79 report. Three, DYCD should increase street outreach to youth who are often older living on the streets. There's currently only 1 street outreach program for the entire city specifically for youth that operate at a shoestring budget. With the increase of inhumane sweeps and criminalization of people that are experiencing homelessness, DYCD has the responsibility to step up to protect youth living on the streets by increasing outreach to them, working with the partners at DSS to stop the criminalization of street youth and those experiencing housing instability. Fourth, and most importantly, trust that the providers are the experts at providing their own programs and allow them the discretion to serve the older youth in the programs currently limited to 16 to 20 year olds. DYCD continues to state publicly that there are many vacant beds across their 16 to 20-year-old programs... Is it okay to...

2 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Go ahead.

3 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you. Again,
4 there's vacancy across their 16 to 20-year-old
5 program so why are they forcing older youth into
6 unsafe situations that they do not have to be in.

7 I just want to touch briefly on the
8 provider evaluations. Despite DYCD's testimony at the
9 Fiscal Year '23 preliminary budget hearing, to the
10 contrary except for the annual evaluations, there
11 continues to be no process for which DYCD-funded RHY
12 programs can appeal or request amendments to their
13 program evaluations. This, of course, continues to be
14 of great concern to providers who believe should
15 always be a concern for DYCD and the administration,
16 which means that the outcomes reported for RHY
17 continue to be inaccurate. These programs are issued
18 reports with inaccuracies or missing information.
19 There should be a streamlined process to have these
20 reports corrected, which there is not. We ask that
21 DYCD enables a dispute function in their contract
22 management systems which allows for providers to
23 dispute all the evaluations on monitoring reports
24 that they are issued. The current process of
25 addressing these issues on a case-by-case basis with

their individual program managers is not working, and the results have proven inconsistent and time-consuming.

I'm going to provide a little bit more on the issue of Local Law 81 in my written testimony, but thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I am available if you have any questions. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you so much for your testimony.

Council Member, if you have any questions? If not, we can turn on to the next panel.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I do have a question for Lauren. In your testimony, you talked a little bit about that the older youth beds and the 16 to 20 year olds beds, and you feel like the providers would be able to use their own discretion. Could you talk a little bit about what that discretion would look like and what that program capacity would be?

LAUREN GALLOWAY: I don't want to speak for our provider members, but I think the discretion would be able to know that they have the resources there, they have the staff there, they have the training there to be able to (INAUDIBLE) that we need

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2 to provide for those past the age of 20, and it's not
3 working to just limit it. I believe that only we can
4 have the guidance by DYCD to be able to stop that,
5 but I can definitely provide more in my written
6 testimony and get further feedback to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Yes, that would be
8 great. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Council Member
10 Aviles, if you have any questions for that panel?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Thank you so much.
12 Just a point of clarification. You mentioned there
13 are 16 beds available citywide?

14 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Not 16. If you're
15 speaking for the 21 to 24-year-old beds, it's 60.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: 60?

17 LAUREN GALLOWAY: The total is 813, 753 go
18 to 16 to 20 year olds, but 60 go to 21 to 24 year
19 olds.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: So right now as
21 the system works, the placement for 20 for 24, that's
22 the older...

23 LAUREN GALLOWAY: 21 to 24.

24

25

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: 21 to 24? DYCD contends that those have to be done separately and in separate spaces.

LAUREN GALLOWAY: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Got it. Okay. Thank you for your testimony.

LAUREN GALLOWAY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Just for the young people who are here who testified today. Do you both have experience in the Youth Count, and, if so, could you talk a little bit about that experience?

LYNDON CHRIS HERNANDEZ: I've personally participated in the Youth Count in the past. I've had conversations with Tracey about improving the Youth Count, and, for improvements, there just has to be a lot of changes for it, and a lot of those changes need to come from the voices of young people with lived expertise who are actually experiencing what is going on so that they can better assist with getting an accurate count. We are not counting youth in other places besides DYCD sites. If we are going to be utilizing youth in this process, to make sure that we're incentivizing them, that there's a budget in place, that they're prioritizing their needs and

ensuring that they're properly supported while they are being trained and asked to fulfill these duties because it's one thing to ask for a young person to do something, but it's another to ask them when they also have their own needs and their own requirements, their own stuff that they have to deal with so there has to be some form of incentivization for them to participate. If not, it's not going to be beneficial to them.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Absolutely, and it's respecting your time and your energy and your efforts so I 100 percent agree.

MARIE ANGELA MACCHU: I don't have personal experience with the Youth Count, but I do agree that we do need more to have that accurate number.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: You mentioned also in your testimony that there is only 1 outreach team for older youth. That seems absurd. Can you talk to me a little bit more about what this looks like and what is it that we need?

LAUREN GALLOWAY: When we think about outreach, it has to be implemented before things

start to get to the point of we're already in these places where we feel like we're not able to get out of them, we're not being provided for so I think it starts with the prevention. One of the things that the Coalition for Homeless Youth is working with is the Youth Demonstration Project, and that's one of the things that they've outlined in there so I really think that a way that we can start do outreach is through prevention, and I think being able to implement a lot of the things that the YHDP has put in their plan that has gotten (INAUDIBLE) but a lot of the specific things haven't been approved yet is a place to start because it has to start with prevention. I'm not sure if that fully answers your question, but I can provide more as well in followup.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you to this panel. We will be moving on to our next panel of public witnesses, and that will include Samantha Rod from the Youth Action Board, Shaquasha King from the Youth Action Board, Ivan Dudnik, and Jordan Bowen. These panelists are all available remotely so I will now call on Samantha Rod to begin their testimony.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

SAMANTHA ROD: Thank you again. My name is Sammy. I struggled for days to figure out what (INAUDIBLE) I wanted to take today. Will I introduce myself as a present New York City Youth Action Board, a Youth Advocate, a Youth Mentor, or former Youth Specialist for previously 3 different non-profits? Will I introduce myself as someone who is now designing what community-facing work looks like for my current non-profit? Today, I realized that the most important (INAUDIBLE) I could ever take is sharing my story as a homeless youth and just as Sammy.

Today, you will hear from many youth and advocates and already have or people with lived experience about the need and importance for more beds, more funding, and more sustainability in RHY services, especially in the older youth from 21 to 25, which is all true and in desperate need. However, I want to talk about accountability. We need more than another year of us advocating. This isn't new that RHY services is underfunded and stretched thin for the over 10,000 homeless youth in New York City. What we need is accountability. The word exploitation defines as stated the action of treating someone

unfairly to benefit from the worker's story. Let me explain why the words exploitation and accountability go hand in hand in the culture of RHY services. RHY services are filled with exploitation both mentally and systematically. We train youth from the funding to be just enough, and what do I mean? Just enough to pay rent, just enough to stay in the system because a dollar more will mean yes, I can pay rent this month but my food stamps get cut off next month, my rent goes up, and now 30 percent changes to 50 percent because now I'm not qualified for government assistance, I'm not qualified for Medicaid and this scares me because I work full-time. We tell our clients to be just enough to keep our homes and to sign up for our programs. Here's a little chump change and here's a just-enough job to keep you dependent on assistance. It is a fact that New York City minimum wage cannot cover rent alone, but working full-time for minimum wage will get you cut off from almost every assistance program including the help with North Metro Cards just to get to work and back home. Every day for years we are told to sign in, sign our names, sign in if we want food, sign in if we want a bed, sign. Every day for years

for funding we are creating more temporary beds and programs than we are creating homes and futures. We need to take accountability that today we acknowledge that the system exploits homeless youth to continue funding year after year while homeless youth struggle to become independent adults. We have youth spending years in youth homeless shelters or drop-in centers without getting any supportive housing or permanent housing. We have youth who get accepted into supportive housing and cannot sustain it. We need to not only talk about the lack of beds but also start talking about the lack of accountability and the codependency of the structure that we build together. We need to not only be accountable to make programs and goals...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

SAMANTHA ROD: But to ensure that the goals we put into place as specialists, program managers, directors, or government officials that we are not creating more barriers, that our programs and our rules are creating sustainability rather than meeting quota marks for the fiscal year. Yes, we need beds. Yes, we need funding. But what we need is for everyone today to make a pledge to be accountable for

their actions. Visit a homeless youth shelter, visit a drop-in, randomly visit a youth service and get real information on whether your program is positively a safe space. Learn from the youth who go through our services whether or not it is helping them. We have to be accountable. How many homeless youth will have to advocate each year, testify, and protest before we say okay, we need to acknowledge that something is missing. We need to acknowledge that without accountability we are not breaking generational curses but creating new chains of dependency. This is what I wanted to say today, we cannot make change without first admitting that there are faults. We need homes and not beds. We need careers and not jobs. We need sustainability and not codependency. There's a gap and will always be as long as the system continues to limit our future while exploiting our signature and stories. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony, Samantha. We will now call on Shaquasha King.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

SHAQUASHA KING: Hello everyone. Thank you for having me. My name is Shaquasha King, and I am a member of New York City's Youth Action Board, and I am a youth with lived experience. Today, I am going to advocate and raise awareness about last year's 2021 Youth Count survey and data collection. Youth Count reported there are only 7 youth unsheltered in New York City. This is not only obviously inaccurate, but also they didn't conduct the survey in a timely manner so everything isn't carefully planned including the time of year when the survey is taking place. Inaccurate data is detrimental and leads to less resources and funding for runaway and homeless youth population. During the time when COVID was peaking, there were many youth unhoused and in unstable conditions, but, for some reason, we only had 7 youth counted. You might want to consider having more data collectors instead of having it run by 1 staff with no additional funding and to efficiently and effectively cover all 5 boroughs of New York City, both in-person and virtually. You might want to think about raising the incentive so youth will be more willing to participate in the survey. Five dollar McDonald's gift cards and two-way

subway cards in exchange for invasive and possibly triggering questions is not enough and, in my opinion, is tokenism, adultism, and very insulting. Thank you for having me.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony. We will now call on Ivan Dudnik.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

IVAN DUDNIK: Hello. My preferred name is Dudnik. I use they/them pronouns. I'm testifying about my experience with DYCD system as an older youth and also an LGBTQ, non-binary immigrant person. The quality of services is decreasing and resources become more scarce as youth are getting older. There are even more limited beds and housing where one can turn 21. (INAUDIBLE) system is not transparent and full of favoritism. Staff members are always protected and clients live in constant fear of being thrown out. Once older youth are kicked out, they have to restart the process of living in drop-in centers where they have to bring their belongings every night and take them with them every day for several months until they get placed in emergency housing again. Some drop-in centers are useless for youth and open for very limited services. They are

often located in a different borough from the most residential programs, forcing youth to commute to pick up their mail or make unnecessary trips for mandatory check-ins that can be done virtually because staff members don't respect their time and they're not tech savvy. That exposes youth to risks of being a victim to a crime and getting COVID. It's an unnecessary waste of time suggesting homeless youth's time is not relevant and not valued and they have nothing else to do. There is no regard for youth in their living space. They are deprived of privacy with their bathrooms, bedrooms, or working area. The doors are not allowed to be locked. In some cases, they shall be wide open so staff members can see them. Lights shall be on in some sleeping areas. Young people live under constant surveillance like in a correctional facility. Staff have privileges don't have like staying in a room by oneself. Staff are not competent in handling the youth and trauma-informed response. Staff don't respect the silence at night and don't enforce it. Staff are benefiting from homelessness crisis. I say they have jobs because we don't have jobs. There is a lot of...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

IVAN DUDNIK: Hiring of incompetent staff members who don't identify neither with LGBTQ community nor with homeless community, and they are constantly leaving for better positions. Case managers not competent in helping immigrants experiencing homelessness. Case managers direct immigrant clients through a lengthy process of obtaining public benefits just to realize they are ineligible for a lot of housing and food security programs provided by the government due to their status. There is lack of accommodation for non-English speakers in shelters and lack of flexibility in programming inclusive of immigrants. People who get paid off the books like sex workers and undocumented immigrants are cut off housing vouchers even though they have stable income to support their lives. Educational programs and groups are dysfunctional, specifically summer youth programs by DYCD because there are specific sites implementing it, violating the rules of the program. Those programs don't prepare youth for aging out and independent living. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony, Dudnik. We will now turn to Jordan Bowen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

JORDAN BOWEN: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Jordan Bowen, he/him/his. I'm a Youth Advocate for the Coalition of Homeless Youth. I just want to say thank you to Council Member Stevens and the administration for having me here today. Overall, my experience residing at (INAUDIBLE) Community Service was unorganized. I thought that the program needed support, it needed to hire people who had experience in order to move clients out of the sheltering system and to have good communication skills because oftentimes when I was in the shelter they would talk to us any type of way. With this experience, this overwhelmed me personally because not only that I was in my situation during the pandemic but I felt like I was going to be stuck in the sheltering system for more than I needed to. Even though I have less than 3 minutes, I just want to be sure and breathe. I will explain more of what I will be talking about in my written testimony. What I had asked for the City Council and the administration to

2 add more funding towards runaway and homeless youth.

3 Thank you so much and have a great day. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Chair, unless
5 you have any questions for this panel, we'll move on
6 to our next group.

7 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Jordan, I just
8 wanted to say thank you for sharing your testimony
9 and all the panelists for this panel. It was all very
10 powerful. I just had a question because I know you
11 said you had a negative experience at one of the
12 shelters. Obviously, you don't have to share it here,
13 but I would definitely want to...

14 JORDAN BOWEN: It's okay. I will share.

15 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Okay. Go ahead.

16 JORDAN BOWEN: I wanted to also talk about
17 the lack of food and also how basically overall how I
18 was treated. Basically, what my experience of my
19 housing process, I had to also seek from other
20 organizations to help me because the program manager
21 is usually the person who would oversee the
22 (INAUDIBLE) process but he didn't even know how to
23 basically move forward with the process so it was
24 like basically me and the care coordinator who
25 basically was trying to figure out what to do with

that. Even now, before I left the program, there wasn't even a case manager to even help us so I was just like in my situation, in a way where I don't see things moving. Like how you said earlier, you can lose young people with this process. They, unfortunately, lost me because it's just why are things taking so long and I only just thought like why you don't know these things if you are in these jobs and this is your job to do this and you don't really know how to do your job so that was just me, my own personal...

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Thank you for sharing that, and that's very helpful information to know that that's some of the challenges that are happening. Thank you.

JORDAN BOWEN: You're welcome.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you to those panelists. Our next and I believe final panel will include the following individuals. John Sentigar from Covenant House, Bill Torres from the Ali Forney Center, and Steve Cruz. John Sentigar, you may now begin your testimony.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

JOHN SENTIGAR: Thank you so much. My name is John Sentigar, and I'm the Director of Development and Communications at Covenant House New York where we serve runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to 24. I'd like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services, especially Chair Stevens, for the opportunity to testify today.

CHNY is the nation's largest non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway, and trafficked youth. During this past year, we served over 1,600 people in our programs and on a nightly basis we provide shelter to more than 200 young people, including LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and mothers with their children as well as survivors of human trafficking. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes, and other educational and job training programs as well as specialized services for survivors of human trafficking.

First and foremost, I'd like to again thank the Youth Services Committee, especially Chair Stevens, who I know you've been an advocate for young people. I've been in meetings with you these past

couple of weeks and for advocating for more city funding across New York. We're extremely grateful that in recent years there's been an increase in the number of beds for homeless youth under the age of 21, but we still need more. The vast need for wraparound services for this population is still dire. With the unfortunate closing of the Peter Cicchino Youth Project, there is only 1 direct legal services lawyer specializing in legal services for homeless youth across the entire city. The need for legal services continues to grow, especially as there has been an increase in the number of young people migrating from Central and South America who are in need of immigration services and legal services.

Additionally, at CHNY, we've noticed an increase in the number of attempts to lure homeless youth into situations involving commercial sexual exploitation. Research demonstrates as many as 1 in 5 of the young people we serve had experiences that fit the New York City definition of human trafficking. The service needs for these young people are extensive, and funding is needed for programs that serve survivors across the city so they can embark on new futures filled with safety, freedom, and hope.

Finally, mental health needs grew for most everyone, of course, during the global pandemic, but for homeless young people it added an additional layer of trauma in an already traumatized population. As we know, LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the homeless youth population, and there is extra need for mental healthcare for LGBTQ young people experiencing homelessness.

I also want to echo the need expressed earlier by Chair Stevens in this meeting for additional 21 to 24-year-old beds. Currently, many youth experiencing homelessness are being left out of DYCD services and are forced into the DHS system. Covenant House currently provides 20 of the 60 aforementioned 21 to 24 beds for female-identified youth, and we find that we're at capacity so we, again, echo the call of Chair Stevens to provide more beds for this age group (INAUDIBLE) intakes and assist more people to get on a pathway towards permanent housing.

Finally, one of the greatest needs for young people experiencing homelessness, as I mentioned before, is mental healthcare. These experiences can lead to PTSD, anxiety, depression,

and many other health issues. At Covenant House, we're fortunate to have 12 social workers on staff and to have contracted with a part-time psychiatrist who is dedicated to serving our young adults. However, no program serving survivors in New York City can afford a full-time psychiatrist, and the waitlist for psychiatric appointments for homeless youth across the city can be long, thereby leading to unnecessary delays in care so we also request the city dedicate funding for mental health and mental healthcare for young people.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony. We will now call on Bill Torres.

BILL TORRES: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Stevens and Members of the Youth Services Committee, for this opportunity to testify. My name is Bill Torres. I use he/him pronouns. I'm the Director of Drop-in Support Services and the Founder of the Ali Forney Center, better known as AFC.

Today, I am sharing testimony on behalf of AFC. I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking Mayor Adams for announcing a nearly 6.7-

million-dollar investment in new and expanded services for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers including LGBTQ+ homeless youth. The Ali Forney Center was founded in 2002 in memory of Ali Forney, a homeless gender-non-conforming youth who was forced to live on the streets at the age of 13 and struggled to survive to the age of 22 when they were tragically murdered. AFC is the nation's first around-the-clock drop-in center for homeless LGBTQ youth and the largest provider of housing and wraparound services for homeless LGBTQ youth in New York City. Committed to saving the lives of queer young people, our mission is to provide them with housing and a continuum of support services to help them thrive, prepare them for independent living and enable them to become successful, productive adults. Our facilities encompass 16 emergency and transitional housing sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens and a multipurpose intake drop-in center located in Harlem. As we've all heard, studies have found that LGBTQ youth comprise up to 40 percent of the homeless youth population in New York City. AFC provides services to 2,000 homeless LGBTQ youth in New York City each year, and 9 out of those 10 that we serve are youth of color. With barely 753 beds

available for approximately 4,000 homeless young people in New York City, 40 percent of whom identify as LGBTQ, homeless youth are gravely underserved. Few sites are LGBTQ competent, and even fewer offer more than a bed. Tragically, homeless queer youth are especially vulnerable. Homeless queer youth are more likely to experience higher levels of sexual and physical assault, domestic violence, stalking, and trauma than their counterparts in the homeless youth population. LGBTQ youth are more likely to be bullied, assaulted, or crime victims. More than 80 percent use or have used sex work to survive. As a result, these young people struggle with a vast array of psychological and mental health issues including low self-esteem, depression, suicidal ideation, and past attempts of suicide. According to a study by the Trevor Project, queer youth are 8 times more likely to experience mental health issues, and, last year alone, nearly 50 percent of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

BILL TORRES: If I may finish. AFC's drop-in center is working to meet this critical need, offering homeless queer youth a safe, warm

environment, support, free meals, showers, clothing, and hygiene supplies. To address the dire situation among our city's homeless LGBTQ youth, we must ensure that funds are allocated to prioritize resources that support this population. We urge our partners in the city government to preserve and expand the resources for queer youth. Specifically, we are asking for funding to be allocated to increase the number of available beds for LGBTQ+ youth, especially for youth ages 21 to 24, and we are asking for funding to support on-site mental health services and also funding to fight against food insecurity amongst our queer youth.

Thank you very much for your time. I'm happy to make myself available for any questions you may have. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL BRIGGS: Thank you for your testimony. I think we actually have concluded our public testimony. Our last panelist will not be testifying publicly. Chair, if you have any questions for this panel, feel free, or Council Member Aviles.

Okay, at this time, this concludes our public testimony. Because this is a hybrid hearing, if you're on Zoom and your name has not been called

and you still wish to testify, please raise your hand using the Zoom raise hand function.

All right. Seeing no hands raised, Chair Stevens, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing. I will now turn it back to you for any closing remarks.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I would like to first start out by saying thank you to everyone who testified today. It's extremely important that we continue to amplify those voices and those stories and experiences. Those are really important so thank you all who took the time to come here to testify and those who are testifying virtually.

I just want to say that I've been in youth development for the last 20 years, and, like I said, homeless youth population, homeless runaway youth is not something that I necessarily had the expertise in but in these last couple of weeks I've met with providers, I spoke with young people and really got a better understanding of the disproportionate resources that's being given to them. When we talk about homelessness throughout the city, we never talk about the young people who are being homeless and how their voices aren't being

heard so I want to make sure that I'm continuing to work with our young people and our providers to make sure that their voices and concerns are being uplifted and heard. I want to also just highlight that we should not be thinking about shuffling young people from shelter to shelter, thinking about how are we making sure that when they're transitioning out of these shelters as young people, they're transitioning into permanent affordable housing so we need to figure out where the breakdown is in the system, that we have a lot of people who are still unable to be housed and understanding that if we fixed it and we did a better job with our younger population and our younger youth and we transition them it would not be such a crisis at the city level. I look forward to continuing to work with DYCD and providers and young people across the city to make this a better-known issue and make sure that they're getting the resources that they need.

With that, our meeting is adjourned.

[GAVEL]

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 August 1, 2022