

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON

YOUTH SERVICES 1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION JOINTLY
WITH COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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June 23, 2022
Start: 1:17 p.m.
Recess: 4:11 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: Shahana K. Hanif, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N. De La Rosa
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan
Francisco P. Moya
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Sandra Ung
Althea V. Stevens
Alexa Aviles
Chi A. Osse
Kristin Richardson Jordan
Kevin C. Riley
Nantasha M. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S

Felicienne Zida
Sierra Stoneman-Bell
Farojan Saeed
Rong Zhang, Associate Commissioner for Community
Development Programs at DYCD
Colette Samman, Deputy Commissioner for the
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Miosotis Munoz, Deputy Commissioner for the
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Kareema Hussein, Program Director at We Speak NYC
Johan Lopez
Jason Backo
Caroline Scown
Yekaterina Berkman
Lisa Diomande
Jillian Vigon
Anthony Tassi
Lena Cohen
Lauren Higgins
Jeff Lau
Angie Rendon Caicedo
Liza Schwartzwald
Ariel Savransky
Giovanna Perciballi
Noah Veloz
Julie Quinton

1 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Test, test, test. This
2 is a test of today's meeting on Immigration. Today's
3 date is June 23, 2022. This is being recorded by
4
5 (INAUDIBLE)

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Welcome to today's
7 hybrid New York City Council meeting of the
8 Committees on Immigration and Youth Services.

9 At this time, please silence all
10 electronic devices.

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

14 Thank you for your cooperation. Chairs,
15 we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: [GAVEL] Thank you.
17 Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Council Member Shahana
18 Hanif, Chair of the Immigration Committee. I'm joined
19 today by Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair of the
20 Youth Services Committee, for our joint oversight
21 hearing on adult literacy programming and resources.

22 I want to thank my Council Colleagues,
23 representatives from the administration, and the
24 public for being here and to members of the public
25 for participating remotely.

1
2 In New York City, about 1.6 million adult
3 residents lack English proficiency. The need is
4 greatest in Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn where a
5 large portion of the population is not English
6 proficient. Adult literacy programming is essential
7 for immigrant New York City. It equips them with the
8 necessary skills to navigate our healthcare system,
9 support their children's education, access good
10 paying jobs, and participate in our democratic
11 institutions. However, there's an enormous gap in
12 adult literacy services in our city. Less than 4
13 percent of New Yorkers have access to adult literacy
14 classes each year. Equally concerning, city-funded
15 programs generally receive less than 1,000 dollars
16 per student according to the New York City Coalition
17 for Adult Literacy, which falls short of the amount
18 needed to provide high-quality adult literacy
19 programming. Despite the lack of funding, these
20 programs continue to be a lifeline for immigrant New
21 Yorkers, especially at the height of the COVID-19
22 pandemic. These programs quickly adjusted during the
23 lockdown by moving in-person classes online. This
24 move created opportunities to make adult literacy
25 classes more accessible, and we should continue down

1
2 that path of providing online and in-person classes,
3 especially at a time when literacy skills are in high
4 demand.

5 I'm looking forward to having a
6 constructive conversation with the Mayor's Office of
7 Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Youth and
8 Community Development, program providers and
9 participants about ways to expand program access,
10 create a pipeline for immigrants to become
11 instructors, and pathways to post-secondary
12 education.

13 I want to thank the Committee staff for
14 their time and work on this issue including Jayasri
15 Ganapathy, Committee Counsel, Kieshorne Dennie,
16 Senior Policy Analyst, and Jean Florentine Kabore,
17 Finance Analyst. I'd also like to thank my staff,
18 Chief-of-Staff Nora Brickner, Legislative Director
19 Alex Liao, and everyone working in the background to
20 make this hybrid hearing run smoothly.

21 Now, I will turn it over to Chair Althea
22 Stevens to give opening remarks.

23 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: Good afternoon. I'm
24 Althea Stevens, Chair of New York City Council
25 Committee on Youth Services. I want to begin by

1
2 thanking my co-Chair, Council Member Shahana Hanif,
3 for spearheading today's hearing on an often-
4 overlooked area of DYCD's programming in adult
5 literacy. DYCD is known for its youth-centered
6 programs such as SYEP, Beacons, or Compass, but the
7 Department is mandated to alleviate poverty and
8 provide opportunities for all New Yorkers to reach
9 their full potential. Adult literacy programs are a
10 critical part of this mission. DYCD administers
11 dozens of contracts for adult programming and
12 services related to reading, writing, and general
13 education and English-language instruction. Through
14 those programs, adult learners can obtain basic
15 education instruction in reading, writing, and math
16 and work towards a high school equivalency diploma.
17 Students are able to acquire the skills they need to
18 continue their education or obtain a job.

19 As important as this program is, I'm
20 interested in make sure that DYCD does more than just
21 meet New Yorkers' most basic needs. At this hearing,
22 I look forward to learning more about the quality of
23 adult literacy curriculum and how such programs have
24 adapted and provide the necessary skills in an
25 increased competitive market. We must do more than

1
2 just give adult learners the means to survive. They
3 deserve to thrive.

4 I want to thank the staff behind the
5 scenes making sure this hearing runs smoothly. I
6 would like to thank the Youth Committee staff for
7 working on this Committee issue, Committee Counsel
8 Emi Briggs, Committee Policy Analyst Anastassia
9 Zimina, and Financial Unit Head Aliya Ali, and a big
10 thanks goes out to my Chief-of-Staff/Legislative
11 Director Kate Connolly and the whole A-team back at
12 the district office. Thank you. I would also like to
13 acknowledge all the Council Members who are here
14 today. We have Council Member Shekar Krishnan,
15 Council Member Rita Joseph, Council Member Kristin
16 Richardson Jordan, and Council Member Sandra Ung, and
17 Council Member Pierina Sanchez who's here virtually.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. We
19 will begin with public testimony. You each have 2
20 minutes. I want to first call on Felicieenne Zida who
21 is on with us virtually.

22 FELICIEENNE ZIDA: Thank you very much. I'm
23 Felicieenne. I'm from (INAUDIBLE). It is in West
24 Africa. Since February, I have been part of the YWCA
25 program Brooklyn, and I've found the program

1
2 beneficial to me because it helped me to empower
3 myself, and I want to thank my amazing professor,
4 Miss Laura and Miss Lorraine (phonetic) for their
5 creativity and their dedication. In fact, the
6 diversity of the activities and the evaluation such
7 as the weekly advisory evaluation and some
8 (INAUDIBLE) on classes was very useful to me because
9 they allowed me to improve my English, speaking more
10 fluently, understanding better my reading and writing
11 better, and also to find other resources I need to
12 empower myself. I feel that I am more involved in my
13 new homeland. I also enjoyed and learned through our
14 field trips like visiting some museums, having some
15 courses in the park, and right now I'm going to reach
16 one of my important goals. I'm taking some courses at
17 Lehman College, and I would like to be (INAUDIBLE) I
18 understand the courses and I feel that I will reach
19 my goal.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

21 FELICIENNE ZIDA: It is not only for me.
22 Other women in our program are becoming more
23 confident in speaking English and in reaching their
24 goals. This is what I have to share with you, and I
25 am very determined to continue learning with a

1
2 teacher (INAUDIBLE) they're giving us a lot of
3 motivation to learn, (INAUDIBLE) to speak English and
4 to understand the American culture because when you
5 are learning a language, it is a way to understand
6 the culture, the way that people are taking and
7 therefore to be prepared to work, to earn a great
8 work, and to be independent so I'm very grateful for
9 all these people who are giving their time, the money
10 to help us to learn English and to empower ourselves,
11 our immigrants and our women. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much for
13 your testimony. We'll now move to Sierra Stoneman-
14 Bell.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

16 SIERRA STONEMAN-BELL: Thank you, Chair
17 Hanif and Chair Stevens, for your leadership and
18 support for adult education. I'm Sierra Stoneman-Bell
19 with the Literacy Assistance Center and the New York
20 City Coalition for Adult Literacy. Today, I will
21 focus on the 2.5-million-dollar adult literacy pilot
22 project created by the City Council last year and
23 renewed for Fiscal Year '23. Thank you for supporting
24 this groundbreaking initiative. This pilot has
25 supported 19 adult literacy programs to strengthen

2 their services for adults studying English, basic
3 education, and high school equivalency. Literacy
4 programs have been inadequately funded for too long.
5 DYCD contracts pay at most 950 dollars per student
6 per year when the average real cost is at least 4
7 times that. This pilot allowed programs to invest new
8 funds, to expand services for over 4,000 students,
9 and achieve greater outcomes in educational
10 development, digital literacy, work readiness, social
11 services, immigrant and workers' rights, and civic
12 engagement. You'll hear more from programs today. I
13 will share just a few trends. Programs invested in
14 their staff, adding hours, pay, and new team members.
15 They extended academic support for students and saw
16 learning gains. They connected students with training
17 and jobs. Expanded social services enabled students
18 to continue their education while juggling multiple
19 challenges. Programs updated digital infrastructure
20 and built new capacity for digital literacy
21 instruction. For some, this was the first investment
22 in their classrooms in a decade, and the improvements
23 had immediate impact for students. Programs created
24 culturally responsive curricula, students gained
25 knowledge of immigrant and workers' rights and civic

1
2 knowledge related to voting, citizenship, public
3 schools, and tax filing. We look forward to working
4 with DYCD and the Council to apply what we've learned
5 to the new city funding and the next RFP.

6 One, fund enhancements for greater impact
7 ensure that the added 6.7 million dollars for adult
8 literacy in Fiscal Year '23 be used to support
9 program..

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

11 SIERRA STONEMAN-BELL: Enhancements like
12 those supported by the pilot.

13 Two, increase the funding rate to at
14 least 1,900 dollars per student in the next RFP.

15 Three, allow programs to offer in-person,
16 remote, and hybrid instruction.

17 Thank you so much. Happy to answer any
18 questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Now, we'll
20 move on to Farojan Saeed.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

22 FAROJAN SAEED: Hi. My name is Farojan
23 Saeed, but my friends call my Juthi (phonetic). I
24 live in the neighborhood of Kensington in Brooklyn.
25 You may not know much about my hospital. However,

1
2 it's a very beautiful community. I am proud to be a
3 member of this community, and I am proud of both
4 where I come from and where I live. One thing about
5 my community is that we stick close together. We are
6 part of a culture that has specific customs. When it
7 comes to bring adult literacy to our community, it
8 must be very careful and thoughtful. If you just
9 start an English class without first involving
10 community members, you may not likely to be very
11 successful. Because of the adult literacy pilot
12 project, members_ of the 5th Avenue community, through
13 Council Member Shahana Hanif's office reached out to
14 us in the community to involve us in the planning and
15 development of an adult literacy and digital skills
16 program. Catherine, Eric, Bryan, Angie have taken the
17 time and made the effort to understand the needs of
18 the community and involvement along with the other
19 community members including the Bangladeshi Ladies
20 Club and gathered important information toward
21 building our curriculum and (INAUDIBLE) program that
22 (INAUDIBLE) that involvement. They were able to do
23 this because of the resources provided through the
24 pilot project. If some times is going to work in the
25

1
2 community, it needs to be well throughout (INAUDIBLE)
3 the base on the real knowledge...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 FAROJAN SAEED: Of the community. Because
6 of your support, both FSC and the community members
7 of Kensington have a real chance at building
8 something that will be meaningful and will last.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. First, I'd
11 like to give a shoutout to Juthi who I didn't was
12 going to testify but is a true testimony to what I've
13 been pushing for many years and thanks to the
14 partnership with the 5th Avenue committee, one of my
15 biggest asks to them was not to outsource an
16 instructor for these dollars from outside our of
17 community, outside of where the course was going to
18 be offered, which is in Kensington, predominantly
19 Bangladeshi working class community, my district, and
20 so for them to have done the work to recruit Juthi
21 and to involved the Bangladeshi Ladies Club, this is
22 very exciting and I'm looking forward to getting into
23 questions that have to do with our approach to how we
24 build a pipeline for instructors like Juthi who speak
25 the language of the community and have a grip on

English as well to be able to provide adequate lessons and to support the curriculum building with the partner organization.

I do have a question. Before I go into one question that I have, I'd like to acknowledge my Colleagues, Kevin Riley, Nantasha Williams, and Carmen De La Rosa. Thank you for joining us.

To Felicienne Zida, could you share where you are participating in the adult literacy program? Where and through which partner organization if you're still on the call.

FELICIENNE ZIDA: I took the classes and I participated through the Brooklyn Women Program.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: It's called the Brooklyn Women's Program.

FELICIENNE ZIDA: Yes. The YWCA.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: YWCA. Okay, thank you.

FELICIENNE ZIDA: Yes. I don't have a lot of time here in the United States. I just came here 2 months before the pandemic so I have 3 years in the United States. Maybe that is why my English is a (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We really appreciate your testimony and the journey you've shared with us

1
2 in your words, and I'm really looking forward to
3 reaching out to YWCA to just learn more about their
4 work and the other women who have received these
5 courses. Thank you so much.

6 I'd now like to turn it over to the admin
7 for their testimony.

8 UNKNOWN: Are you referring to the admin
9 from the YWCA Brooklyn?

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Not yet.

11 UNKNOWN: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thanks for being here.
13 We have to swear in the admin first before we go into
14 your testimonies.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: I will now
16 administer the oath. Can you all please raise your
17 right hands?

18 Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole
19 truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony
20 before this Committee and to answer all Council
21 Member questions honestly?

22 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We can start with
25 DYCD.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Good
3 afternoon, Chair Stevens and Hanif and Members of the
4 Youth Services and Immigration Committees. I'm
5 Associate Commissioner Rong Zhang for Community
6 Development Programs at the Department of Youth and
7 Community Development. On behalf of Commissioner
8 Keith Howard, thank you for the opportunity to
9 comment on DYCD's adult literacy services.

10 We are pleased to be joined by the
11 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Deputy
12 Commissioners Samman and Munoz. Along with us today
13 are Kareema Hussein, Program Director, and Project
14 Coordinator Alejandro Cercas of We Speak NYC.

15 The ability to read and write is
16 fundamental to a person's capacity to succeed in
17 life. English proficiency is associated with the
18 ability to find and keep employment that pays a
19 living wage and provides opportunities for upward
20 advancement, helps parents fully support and
21 participate in their children's education and to
22 actively engage in civic life. Recent census data for
23 New York City shows that there are 1.76 million or
24 22.4 percent of individuals age 5 years and over who
25 speak English less than very well and 544,714, or 9.1

1
2 percent of persons age 25 years and over, who have
3 less than a 9th grade education. This data points
4 towards a high need for ESL instruction and adult
5 basic education classes in neighborhoods with large
6 low-income immigrant populations the need is
7 particularly high. These findings are also supported
8 by DYCD's Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment
9 Survey, a survey that collected information from
10 residents who were asked among other questions to
11 identify the service gaps in their community. In New
12 York City overall, survey respondents ranked English
13 classes as the number 2 service gap from a listing of
14 28 items. In 10 communities, residents ranked English
15 classes as their number 1 service gap. Six
16 communities ranked adult education literacy
17 instruction as among their top 5 service gaps. We
18 thank the Council for its strong and longstanding
19 partnership on adult literacy programs. It has been
20 critical to funding programs across the city. In
21 Fiscal 2023, DYCD has 25.29 million dollars to
22 support adult literacy programs from a mix of federal
23 Community Service Block Grant, CSBG, and the
24 Community Development Block Grant, CDBG, funding and
25 the city tax levy funding. This work is complemented

1
2 by other literacy programs supported by the
3 Department of Education, the City University of New
4 York, and the Public Library Systems. DYCD's adult
5 literacy programs include a variety of courses to
6 meet the various needs of participants. For example,
7 these adult literacy programs offer adult basic
8 education, known as ABE, that teaches both native and
9 non-native English speakers reading, writing, and
10 math. We offer classes to prepare students for their
11 GED exam as well as ESL civics classes, English for
12 speakers of other languages that teach listening,
13 speaking, reading, and writing to individuals whose
14 primary language is not English. In Fiscal 2022, the
15 current Fiscal Year, our adult literacy programs are
16 projected to enroll 16,062 participants. Students not
17 only benefit academically by participating in our
18 literacy programs, but they also receive other much
19 needed assistance such as referral to employment
20 training, college assistance, and individual support.
21 We are grateful that the city has made additional
22 investments to support adult literacy services
23 through adult literacy expansion funds in the last
24 few years. The expansion funds have allowed literacy
25 programs to enhance the programming and increase

1 enrollment. Providers have cumulatively served
2 approximately 50,000 more New Yorkers through
3 expansion. In addition, we invested in expanded
4 professional development, in curriculum development,
5 purchasing test materials for providers, and
6 strengthening digital literacy including 2 online
7 software programs which provide anytime, anywhere
8 access to state-of-the-art interactive courses that
9 feature basic English, reading, writing, math,
10 civics, and career exploration. Again, here I wanted
11 to thank the Council for their support and for
12 advocacy for literacy services.
13

14 We also partnered with MOIA to promote
15 the We Speak NYC video series produced by MOIA and
16 CUNY to help English-language learners improve their
17 language skills while learning about civic services
18 and their rights. MOIA staff presented We Speak NYC
19 to literacy providers. A joint professional training
20 session on best practices around integration of the
21 video into English language classes has been offered
22 to providers. This year, we also launched 2 pilots to
23 strengthen and enhance adult literacy services. The
24 first pilot added counselors to assist participants
25 in identifying and overcoming class attendance

1
2 barriers, accessing support resources, and make
3 referrals. Policy Study Associates, PSA, is
4 conducting an evaluation of the pilot which we
5 anticipate to release a reporting early fall. Early
6 feedback from our providers indicates that the
7 counselor position has been extremely helpful in
8 better serving participants in advancing their goals.
9 The second pilot founded by the Council is to
10 evaluate the impact of program enhancements through
11 investing in higher price per participant. The pilot
12 has allowed (INAUDIBLE) program to invest in a range
13 of areas such as staff capacity, technology, support
14 services, expanded learning options, and professional
15 development. As you know, the Literacy Assistance
16 Center is funded to provide support to the 19 funded
17 programs. They are also responsible for collecting
18 program data, and they will submit a final report on
19 the pilot. According to the LAC's preliminary report,
20 programmers are actually achieving results including
21 increased (INAUDIBLE) attendance and retention and
22 literacy level gains. We look forward to sharing the
23 results of the evaluation with the Council, which
24 will be helpful in helping shape the next Request for
25 Proposals for adult literacy services.

1
2 Once again, thank you for holding this
3 hearing today. We look forward to continuing to work
4 with the City Council on promoting adult literacy.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. Thank you so
7 much, Associate Commissioner Rong. I'd like to start
8 off with some questions about the funding. Since the
9 preliminary budget hearing, the Council's been trying
10 to figure out DYCD adult literacy funding. I hope
11 you're prepared to provide some clarification on
12 program budget. Could you share what the total
13 funding is in the following Fiscal Years, Fiscal Year
14 '21 actuals, '22 adopted, '23 prelim, '23 executive,
15 and '23 adopted?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: For FY-23,
17 as we know right now, we have 25,285,757 to be exact.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's the adopted?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: To support
20 adult literacy services. These include the CTL funds,
21 the federal funds, the CSBG, the CDBG, and the funds
22 from the Council for the Council adult literacy
23 initiatives including the 2.5 million dollars for the
24 pilot.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. Are you able to provide the numbers for the other years including '23 prelim and executive?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: That, we'll need to get back to you with our fiscal.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. We can follow up about that.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does the '23 adopted budget funding include the additional 6.7 million?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I think so.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are you able to get us a confirmation?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How much of the funding in the adopted budget has been baselined for adult literacy education in Fiscal Year '22, '23 excluding the Council discretionary funding of 8 million dollars?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Our baselined funding for (INAUDIBLE) is about 6 million dollar, and then in fiscal '22 the adult literacy expansion funds were baselined for 8 million. There

1
2 was a PEG of 1.7 million dollars from that, and I
3 understand that that will be restored for FY-23.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just to clarify, in
5 2020 it was 6 million baselined.

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We always
7 have had, yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Always baselined 6
9 million?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Then the PEG of 1.7,
12 in '23 will be restored.

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Will be
14 restored as I understand it, yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What are the different
16 sources of the FY-22 baselined funding and then how
17 much did each funding provide?

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We have CTL
19 is 2.5 million dollars baselined then...

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You said CTO?

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: City tax
22 levy money. Then the CDBG a little over 1.5 million
23 dollars.

24

25

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you just not use the acronyms? Just because I've got Colleagues, we've got some people listening, everybody..

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Okay. City tax levy money 2.5 million dollars, Community Services Block Grant is half a million, and the Community Development Block Grant, which is known as CDBG, a little over 1.5 million dollars, and then we have city tax levy to support the ESL Civics Program that's a little over a million dollars. If we add all this together, it's 6 million. In FY-22, the current fiscal year, the previous adult literacy expansion money was baselined for 8 million dollars.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. How many students has this baselined funding served in FY-22 separate from any non-baselined funding such as Council discretionary funding?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: The 6 million basically serves around 5,500 people, and then there was the expansion money from the baselined served an additional 4,500 people under that. The base plus the expansion, 5,500 plus about 4,500.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So nearly 10,000 people.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yes. That's
3 in addition to the Council initiative.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The expansion money
5 you're referring to is the Council discretionary or
6 is that?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: The
8 expansion, there are 2 parts. One is under the
9 administration we expanded our existing literacy
10 contracts and amended all those all contracts, we
11 were able to serve an additional about 4,500 to 5,000
12 people there, and then under the term expansion we
13 categorize the Council initiatives, the 4 million
14 dollars, under that. That's an additional I think
15 about 4,000 people I didn't include in that.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What's the anticipated
17 number of students in FY-23?

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Say again.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What's the anticipated
20 number of participants for FY-23?

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: FY-23, we
22 haven't done the numbers yet. We're still finalizing
23 the dollars and then also there are other pending
24 initiatives like whether to continue the pilot and
25

1
2 everything so we're waiting for the results. Once we
3 have the numbers, we'll share.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How soon might you
5 have these numbers?

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: As I just
7 said, the evaluation of the pilot will over the end
8 of this month and then there will be a report,
9 probably early fall we'll have reports. I think we'll
10 probably be able to share numbers in late July,
11 August, somewhere there.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will the additional
14 funding of 6.7 million be used to increase the number
15 of seats?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: That's the
17 new money so we're looking at that, and we'll work
18 with (INAUDIBLE) and OMB, and, once we have a plan,
19 we'll share.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. Some future
21 thinking, how much funding does DYCD anticipate for
22 adult literacy education in FY-24 and the subsequent
23 out-years?

24 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Right now,
25 for '23 I know there is 25 million and change, right?

1

2

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah.

3

4

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: It's my
hope that that will continue and we can get more to
support services.

5

6

7

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: When you say more, how
much is that?

8

9

10

11

12

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: As you
stated in your statement and in our testimony, the
needs for adult literacy for English language
services is huge in the city. You can ask for the sky
to serve the programs...

13

14

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So what's the sky
number?

15

16

17

18

19

20

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: At one
point, without looking at the numbers, I really can't
be very specific, but at one point I remember a few
years ago prior to the pandemic we were looking at
asking money for adult literacy services, I remember
we were talking about 50 million dollars.

21

22

23

24

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. That's good to
know. How much of the baselined funding is directly
allocated to providers, and how much is it for the
agency services?

25

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Almost all
3 the money goes to the contracts.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: All the money goes to
5 contracts...

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Almost all
7 the money goes to contracts. I don't have the exact...

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Breakdown...

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah, those
10 funds, what goes to providers through contracts.
11 There are probably DYCD administration, but I have no
12 numbers for that.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We can circle back
14 about this. If there is a reduction in funding from
15 FY-23 to '24 or in the subsequent out-years, what
16 contingency plan does DYCD and the admin have to
17 ensure that adult literacy programs do not need to
18 cut staffing, services, and supports for students?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: First of
20 all, we hope that there is not going to be a
21 reduction to the very important essential services
22 adult education, adult literacy. The good thing is
23 that we have various funding sources to support the
24 initiative, you have city tax levy, you have federal
25

2 dollars so that's a good thing. I don't anticipate a
3 reduction from all funding sources at the same time.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So you're optimistic
5 and, therefore, there are no contingency plans in
6 place at this time?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Whenever
8 there is, when we see there is a reduction coming, we
9 always come up with plans to make sure there are
10 continuing services. We had experiences from before,
11 and we will work with the Council to make sure that
12 services will continue.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. What are
14 the adult literacy programs that target the immigrant
15 population? Could you share more about them?

16 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: What
17 programs target?

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, specifically.

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: To be
20 specific, all the English language programs, the ESL
21 programs target new immigrants, and ESL Civics
22 program targets immigrants. These programs make up
23 close to probably 70 to 75 percent of our whole
24 portfolio. In fact, all adult literacy programs
25 including the AE-HSE program to service immigrants

1 too because immigrants in ESL programs move up, they
2 graduate. The pathway naturally is to the AE-HSE
3 programs for further reading and writing and prepare
4 for GED, high school diploma, and all that so you
5 will see immigrant population in the traditionally AE
6 and GED programs meant for native speakers.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. Thank you. We
9 can talk about more of those programs in a bit.

10 I'd like to acknowledge that Council
11 Member Moya has joined us. Is there anybody else who
12 came? No.

13 I'd like to pass it along to Council
14 Member Stevens.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good afternoon.
16 Thank you for your testimony and thank you for being
17 here.

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Good
19 afternoon.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: The Council
21 strongly believes that any additional baselined
22 enhancement funding should be used to provide
23 additional slots, services, support, and resources to
24 the same number of students served in FY-22 and to at
25 least double the per-student rate in the next RFP to

2 ensure that the high levels of student support and
3 services in the years to come. What is the
4 administration's/DYCD's plan to maximize the
5 increased baseline funding that will be included in
6 the next DYCD adult literacy RFP?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We've been
8 working on the concept paper and then RFP, engaging
9 stakeholders including providers, program
10 participants, experts in the field so we've been
11 doing a lot of prep work. The current baselined
12 funding including the 8 million that we are looking
13 at is going into the RFP. Yes, we are very serious
14 about looking at increased per-participant cost, but
15 I don't have the numbers right now because we have to
16 look at the options, the availability of the funding,
17 how we can increase the quality of the program, you
18 have to balance with the number of people to be
19 served, and we're going to look at all this, and,
20 once the concept paper is ready, we'll share with
21 you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm very happy to
23 hear that there will be a concept paper. Do you know
24 when that will be available?

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I think it
3 will be available very soon.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No date?

5 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I don't
6 have a date. Probably I would say late July, August...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Late July? Great.

8 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Something
9 like that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Sometime in the
11 summer. All right. Summer reading for the beach.

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I can check
13 with our contracting office.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, that'll be
15 great. What is the proposed funding amount for the
16 RFP?

17 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Right now,
18 we have the 6 million, the 8 million. I think it's
19 around 14, 15 million, somewhere there, and now this
20 new money, the 6.7, this one I'm not sure yet. We
21 have to find out. I think this is one year
22 (INAUDIBLE) money, but we will have to take a look at
23 that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay, great. Will
25 DYCD commit to using all additional

1
2 baselined/enhancements funds in FY-23 to provide
3 DYCD-contracted adult literacy programs with
4 increased funding for additional services, support,
5 and resources for the same number of students served
6 in FY-22 consistent with the model and approach of
7 the City Council's adult literacy pilot program?

8 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Let me just
9 understand this. Are you saying that to support the
10 programs like the programs under the pilot program?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. How that
12 just enhances the programs that are already
13 happening?

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Supporting
15 the programs, maintain the enrollment numbers is
16 extremely important to us. You have huge needs out
17 there. You need to maintain the numbers. In the
18 meantime, we all understand that the wraparound
19 support services are extremely important in terms of
20 helping students stay in the program and attend
21 programs regularly and do not make premature
22 decisions to drop out of the program so that's very
23 important, and we are doing our best. That's why
24 we're engaging stakeholders, we're engaging providers
25 and participants to look at all aspects of the

1
2 program, how we can ensure quality instructional
3 services but also make sure that we have enough
4 support for our programs. One example is having a
5 counselor within the literacy program, and we never
6 really had a dedicated counselor in our programs and
7 we are trying to do that and we are going to make
8 sure to propose for a counselor in the contract.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I agree, and I
10 think having a counselor is amazing, but I think we
11 also need to start thinking about the program in a
12 holistic way and so one way we can do that is not
13 always stating quantity over quality and making sure
14 that we are preserving quality, and, when we just say
15 that we need to have a lot of numbers because there's
16 a great need, services and things start to get
17 watered down so I think especially DYCD, their job
18 should be to focus on quality and then quantity, have
19 us focus on that because then we need to find the
20 money so I think that we need to really be...

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I'm in
22 total agreement.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That's just where
24 I stand on programming in general.

25 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Will DYCD commit
3 to doubling the per-student rate to a minimum of
4 1,900 per student in the forthcoming adult literacy
5 RFP?

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Our current
7 rate, as you know, is around 950 dollars, right. As I
8 said earlier, we are seriously taking a look at that.
9 You probably know, DYCD actually supported the
10 (INAUDIBLE) research in generating that report which
11 basically outlined areas that you need to enhance the
12 support in order to have quality programs, which
13 means higher per-participant cost. We are certainly
14 supportive of quality programs. That will be good for
15 student retention or good for students being able to
16 stay long enough to achieve their learning goals, but
17 there is also the realistic side. We have to look at
18 what we have. As I said earlier, we will certainly
19 look at quality of instruction, we'll certainly look
20 at support programs with a counselor, and other
21 support services in terms of helping programs to
22 refer students out there for necessary services and
23 all that. At this point, the funding has not been
24 really finalized yet. We're still looking at that,
25 and we're still looking at how we're going to fashion

1 the RFP. Once the concept paper is out, we will
2 pretty much have an idea as to the program model and
3 the per-participant cost and at that time you'll know
4 so at this point I don't have specific numbers yet.

5
6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Can you talk
7 about the timeline for when the RFP is going to come
8 out? Is it going to come out this year, and give us a
9 little more detail about that?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yes, we're
11 looking at a set of new programs starting July 1,
12 2023, which means we have to get the concept paper
13 out, get the RFP out this fall, and we're going to
14 try our best. We will work with our procurement
15 office to have an exact timeline, but definitely
16 we're working very hard to ensure that there is no
17 gap of services or (INAUDIBLE)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So we don't have
19 a timeline? I know the concept paper, you're saying,
20 will be out hopefully before the start of fall and
21 we're thinking that the RFP...

22 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Following
23 that, yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. Can you
25 talk about a little bit what does the engagement look

1
2 like of providers with the concept paper because I
3 often hear that we're engaging folks, and, when I
4 talk to providers, I get a very different story
5 because I talk to providers so please talk to me
6 about what that engagement looks like.

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: DYCD has a
8 Department of Program Planning and Integration and
9 they write RFPs. I know that we always have focus
10 groups of providers and students to talk about the
11 current program model, what they think works, what
12 they think needs improvement. They talk about
13 schedules, staffing, content, support services so
14 there's a lot of things. According to protocol, we're
15 not usually involved in this process just to allow
16 providers to talk freely about the programs so I'm
17 not part of that process..

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: How are providers
19 chosen?

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Usually
21 they come to us to get a list of our providers, and
22 they will notify providers. Exactly how, I think they
23 actually send it out to all providers, and it is up
24 to them to sign up for this. This time, I think DYCD
25 went out of its way, did a lot more engagement work.

2 We actually hired a vendor to help reach out to all
3 the providers to do surveys, focus groups,
4 conversations with a lot of participants and
5 providers, and providers that are not currently under
6 DYCD contracts, and experts in the city, in the
7 state, in the country so they have engaged with a lot
8 of people and I remember giving them names that I
9 know of for them to reach out to people. It's very
10 extensive. I think they might even have a report on
11 that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Please forward me
13 the report because when I've spoken to providers I
14 get a very different picture of what that looks like.
15 I've often heard it's the same few providers that are
16 sought and who are a part of these focus groups and
17 so that worries me in that bit so I would love if,
18 after the hearing, you'd be able to send over what
19 that looks like and that protocol and how providers
20 are reached and how their concerns or issues are
21 being heard during these focus groups and even
22 participants, it'll be really helpful for me because
23 I'm hearing some discrepancies. We do have, I know
24 both myself and Council Member Shahana, have a few
25 more questions, but we do want to make some space for

1
2 our other Colleagues so at this time we'll let
3 Counsel take over and we'll come back to you guys
4 with the rest of our questions. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: I'll pass it
6 along to Council Member Kristin Richardson Jordan.
7 You've got 5 minutes and then Council Member Riley.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Thank
9 you for the testimony. I wanted to ask because I have
10 on in district specifically around CUNY and what are
11 the different programs that are coming through CUNY
12 and if you know the budget line of how much is in
13 contract there?

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: CUNY, in
15 terms of budget, I really don't know. We're in
16 contact with CUNY's adult literacy programs and we
17 collaborate on a lot of things so I know they offer
18 services in English language, reading, writing, basic
19 education, and high school prep. They also have, I'm
20 pretty sure you know the CUNY Start, the Math Start
21 programs to prepare students who just enrolled in
22 college to prepare them for a successful career in
23 college.

24

25

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Do you have any sense of the numbers of folks involved in those programs?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Sure. I don't have it right now, but I certainly can provide that.

COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: Okay. All right. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you. Council Member Riley.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair. I just want to piggyback off Chair Stevens. I know you were talking about the providers, but what community input will be given during the RFP process, what outreach will you be doing, and what community groups, will it be Community Board groups, will be public libraries, will it be the DOE, what community groups will you be utilizing during the RFP process?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: You mean to let people know about the upcoming RFP?

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Correct. To be sure we're choosing the right providers to address each community's needs.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: DYCD always reaches out to all providers that have contracts with DYCD to be informed of any RFP that's upcoming. Right now, as you all know, the Passport System, all service providers use the Passport for contracting process, they all use the Passport so our notifications of forthcoming RFPs are announced in the system so people will know that...

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: So there's no outreach to any community boards or any community groups about the RFP?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: When ready, we certainly talk and promote and let people know, working with DYCD has thousands of contracts and we have different program areas. We work with neighborhood development areas, Community Boards, and we always talk about the availability of...

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Could you engage with the Members as well so we could properly engage our community?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah, sure. Social media, the websites, and all this.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Sure. The
3 whole thing is that once the concept paper is out, it
4 certainly will be shared with you and that's
5 basically telling people that RFP is forthcoming.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Sure.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Council
9 Member Williams.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Can you share
11 the breakdown of where the community-based
12 organizations are located by borough? How many are
13 each borough? I think you said there's like 40 so do
14 you know how much in each borough? I know that
15 certain boroughs have higher rates of people who
16 don't speak English or are not literate so just
17 wondering the breakdown by borough.

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Currently,
19 between our baselined contracts and the Council-
20 funded initiatives, we have about 114 programs out
21 there providing ESL, reading, writing, high school
22 prep programs. I actually have a breakdown here.
23 Roughly, out of that number, about 34 percent in
24 Brooklyn and 19 percent in Queens...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: 19?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: 19. 16
percent in Bronx, and 27 percent in Manhattan, about
4 percent in Staten Island. That's a rough breakdown.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. You said
19 percent in Queens, right?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Not that I don't
care about the whole city, but I am from Queens. I do
care about the whole city, but I mean, Queens is the
world's borough, which all jokes aside, what that
means is that we have a lot of folks..

UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That's fine, but
Queens is the world's borough which means that we
have a lot of folks from all across the globe, and I
did recognize that that is one of the boroughs that
do have high rates of folks who are not English-
proficient.

Switching gears a little bit, are you
aware of the Literacy Access Center survey?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Say it
again.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Are you aware of
the Literacy Access Center survey?

1
2 Okay. Apparently they did a study, and
3 they asked about how COVID-19 has impacted students,
4 and, from the survey, they found that 78 percent of
5 respondents reported lower class attendance so I'm
6 also wondering if DYCD has been thinking about how to
7 adjust to this new normal because I think that things
8 will probably still for the most remain hybrid or
9 remote so just wondering if you all have thought
10 through how to maybe better hold providers
11 accountable for providing certain services that are
12 not just in-person and how to incentive people who
13 might be getting services remotely?

14 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Using
15 technology to enhance instruction has always been our
16 priority. Even before the pandemic, DYCD through our
17 technical assistance provider reached out to Google,
18 and we actually trained and familiarized our CBO
19 staff with the Google Classroom platform. Before
20 that, our staff were already learning about the
21 concepts and actually using the platform to manage
22 online instruction. When the pandemic hit us and we
23 pivoted very quickly and our CBOs were very creative
24 and they continued all the services through different
25 kinds of platforms. Of course, at the beginning we

2 talked about Google Classroom and Zoom and then later
3 social media, even WeChat, WhatsApp, emails, phone,
4 whatever to connect people first and to provide the
5 services during those very extraordinary times.

6 Through the pandemic, we learned that we actually can
7 do this. We learned valuable skills, how to do well
8 in terms of providing online instruction. It's
9 important. It's a way to access people that otherwise
10 cannot access literacy services because of different
11 reasons. I understand that. I also know the
12 advantages and disadvantages of online teaching
13 because I've taught online classes. I think at this
14 time as we recover from the pandemic, we cannot and
15 we should not just abandon just abandon those skills
16 that we learned and we should actually build on the
17 success. We should be thinking of creative ways to
18 actually integrate online teaching into the future
19 literacy programming.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That wasn't my
21 question. My question was really like, because I
22 appreciate what you said and it's clear that you
23 certainly and maybe DYCD has an understanding of the
24 importance of technology and things being on online
25 platforms, but the question really is like based off

1
2 of your personal opinions and thoughts on that, has
3 DYCD also holding providers accountable for making
4 sure that they're also thinking through ways to
5 deliver that service?

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: At DYCD, we
7 talk about this, they always share this, and we all
8 agree that it's important. As we recover from the
9 pandemic and as we begin to help to restore the
10 economy and everything and also the risks of the
11 pandemic is relatively low so we provided guidelines
12 to our programs saying that we anticipate programs to
13 begin to return to in-person services. One thing I
14 want to say, I want to share is that for language
15 teaching, for language classes, a classroom where
16 students are there is important. It encourages and
17 facilitates group discussion, interactions among
18 students and between students and the teacher,
19 students helping each other, and that whole
20 atmosphere that you create in a classroom, an online
21 platform, unfortunately, may not be able to provide.
22 I have experience with that. For online classes, yes,
23 if you're highly motivated, you have equipment, the
24 reliable access, and you can dedicate the time
25 without interruption and distraction, yes, you can

2 learn, but, unfortunately, as you probably all know,
3 a lot of our students in the programs access our
4 programs through a phone. Phone with a small screen,
5 has very limited usage in terms of interactions in
6 the classroom do a lot of different assignments,
7 share documents. It has its limits, but, with all
8 that said, we are saying coming back but there is a
9 lot of flexibility built into this. Let me share that
10 with you. We basically have let our programs know
11 that they can have the remote option to provide
12 online assessment, online orientation, online
13 counseling services so wherever students feel
14 convenient they should be able to do that, but, if
15 students want to do the in-person, they should also
16 provide the in-person option so both should be there
17 for these. What we want to encourage in terms of
18 remote is really the instructional piece. We want to
19 see more of that, but we also said that, you know
20 what, if you have limited space because you lost
21 space during the pandemic and you have not been able
22 to get it back, let us know, we can talk about it,
23 and you can plan certain number of classes online to
24 continue services so there is the flexibility there.
25 Also, we said you can work with us to create hybrid

2 classes to accommodate homebound people, people with
3 health issues so then you can do classes like that
4 and accommodate those people. That's basically what
5 we did. We let providers know that this is our
6 expectation, but we also have built in flexibility.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. We will
8 have some more questions about remote and hybrid
9 instruction, but, before going into that, I had some
10 followup in the previous section that my Colleague,
11 Council Member Stevens covered. What kind of support
12 do you provide to providers?

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: To
14 providers? We work very closely with our providers,
15 and we know that, we're monitoring the contracts to
16 make sure that services are delivered and all that,
17 but we know that we're there to provide support, to
18 make sure that they have what they need to provide
19 the services. Of course, we do regular meetings with
20 providers. That's a platform where we hear from them,
21 they hear from us, share information, we exchange
22 resources, we talk about issues, and that's a very
23 important platform and we do that very regularly.
24 Then we provide lots of professional development to
25 our providers. We actually fund the LAC to provide

1
2 technical assistance to our providers. The
3 professional development includes workshops,
4 institutes, curriculum development, digital literacy,
5 training of staff to test students using the best
6 possible standardized tests that we use. Whatever
7 needs arise, we will work with (INAUDIBLE) to meet
8 that need. For example, this year the state has
9 switched from the TASC to GED, and we reverted back
10 to using GED so providers need to learn more about
11 GED in terms of scheduling testing, in terms of the
12 (INAUDIBLE) and all that so then we pivoted and we
13 changed our plan with the LAC and we provided
14 support, training to our providers and shared
15 resources and information about GED so that they can
16 prepare their students for the GED testing
17 seamlessly. As I said earlier, we look at different
18 resources. Google collaboration was one to help them
19 with that, and we work with other providers. An
20 example is we connect providers to college prep
21 programs, for ABE and HSE programs, the students who
22 have the need to go to college, especially for those
23 who plan to go to CUNY. We work with CUNY. In fact,
24 recently we met with CUNY staff just to talk about
25 what that CUNY Start and Math Start program is all

1
2 about. We want to make sure that our students, as
3 they get their high school diploma, get the GED, even
4 though they may not feel ready to go to CUNY, they
5 should go because CUNY has this program to, again,
6 prepare you academically and to help you navigate the
7 system, to make sure you have a successful career
8 there so we do all this support, and we work with
9 City Tutors Program where they have volunteer tutors
10 to coach people at different schedules on different
11 subjects and all that. There are a lot of resources,
12 and we try to bring to our providers. Of course, our
13 providers are very resourceful too. That's why we
14 have meetings, and they always share with us what
15 resources they have and others can also use whatever
16 they learn from their colleagues.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: It's great and
18 encouraging to know that you all convene with the
19 providers pretty regularly. Is that quarterly or is
20 that...

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Pretty much
22 quarterly.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do they have a point
24 person per their borough when questions arise or they
25

1
2 have questions about funding or the contract, who do
3 they reach out to?

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: When they
5 have questions?

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah.

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: That's a
8 platform. When we meet, they have programmatic
9 questions, questions about anything contract related,
10 program related, they let us know, and we help them.
11 If we need to reach out to others, we will. Quite a
12 few of them are actually members of NYCCAL so
13 thoughts, issues, or share there, NYCCAL know that
14 and NYCCAL will advocate. I think that's a very
15 useful platform. All program directors go to that
16 meeting. We usually have a very good turnout. The
17 last meeting, we had 90 people online.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. The breakdown
19 you provided of providers across the boroughs, is
20 that determined by, are there more providers in
21 Brooklyn and that's why Brooklyn has the most
22 programming? How is that determined?

23 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: As I
24 mentioned, there are about 114 programs there. A
25 little bit more than half of them, about 70 of them

1
2 probably, are DYCD-funded programs through our RFPs.
3 When we issue RFPs (INAUDIBLE) needs are always
4 looked at, considered when we allocate funds. In
5 fact, I think the last time we allocated funds by
6 thorough looking at census data and communities. Close
7 to half of programs are Council-designated so we get
8 a list from you guys.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. Now I'm going
10 to move into what Council Member Nantasha began on
11 remote and hybrid instruction. We know that during
12 past 2 years programs have seen the incredible value
13 of online and hybrid adult literacy classes and
14 programming for certain subsets of students,
15 especially for those with mobility issues, childcare
16 issues, transportation issues who don't live near a
17 community-based organization or don't have access to
18 culturally competent services that meet their needs
19 and ongoing concerns about health and safety. Online
20 and hybrid classes and programming clearly provide
21 additional learning opportunities for those who might
22 not otherwise be able to be served. At this moment,
23 is DYCD requiring that programs be conducted in-
24 person?

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ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Not exactly. As I mentioned earlier, we have issued guidance anticipating programs return to in-person services with flexibility there as I just mentioned. You have adult literacy programs, you have different activities. We kind of looked at that. We said guess what, for students' convenience, if they want remote services for the intake, the assessment, counseling, the program orientation, all of those, and the programs have an option to do them online. Also, we said that you cannot deny a person access to these services when they want to do in-person. In other words, you need to have both options for participants.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So there's no requirement that at some date or time..

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: As I previously said, you have the flexibility. You do either in-person or online or both. The whole thing is that the service is to be there. We also, as I said earlier, for classroom instruction, if you lost classrooms and have not been able to regain the space, let us know and we'll work with you. If you lost 1 room out of the 3, we'll look at the 33

1
2 percent so how we build a program that will do that
3 much online so we don't want any services lost.
4 That's for sure. We also said that for homebound
5 people with health reasons, you can let us know and
6 you can build a hybrid program to give access to
7 those people so we have made it very clear to all our
8 providers.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's great. Would
10 you say that attendance has increased through this
11 hybrid model or when the program was remote? Are you
12 capturing that in any way?

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: The whole
14 thing is that we had to do online because of the
15 pandemic. The pandemic had direct impact on our
16 ability to recruit, enroll, and maintain students,
17 even attendance, because of lots of health issues,
18 work schedule, and all that so, at this point, I
19 don't feel there is a good comparison in terms of
20 attendance comparing online versus in-person because
21 you did the online services when there are challenges
22 so only under equal, normal circumstances when you
23 compare them it might give you a better sense. I
24 have heard from programs anecdotally, some tell me
25 that they certainly have more people accessing

2 classes and all that. I believe so, especially with
3 high-level programs, high-level classes where people
4 are better able to access the services and are able
5 to navigate the systems. In the meantime, even though
6 you are online, you still need to think about the
7 number of students in a class. We basically would
8 advise against more than 25 people in a room. That's
9 too many people for low-level students for English-
10 language learners for teachers to address their
11 individual needs. Even if it's online class, you
12 can't have so many students, yeah, they all sign on,
13 are they learning. You still need interaction. We're
14 not talking about a teacher sitting there lecturing
15 students. We're still talking about class. We're
16 still talking about instruction. You need
17 interactions. You need students' participation. Even
18 if it's online, you can't have that many students.
19 It's different from a lecture format, say in a
20 college.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Would you be able to
22 provide us with the attendance of just the COVID-time
23 remote class and then now the hybrid?

24 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Currently,
25 the majority of our programs are either remote or are

1
2 hybrid. I think that probably 90 percent are remote
3 actually. I can give you what kind of attendance we
4 have right now. Probably next year, when we have more
5 in-person classes, then we can do a comparison.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. That would be
7 wonderful. Have you formally collected feedback from
8 providers or program participants regarding the value
9 of online and hybrid classes?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: During the
11 pandemic, they LAC did a survey of all the providers
12 of the online program advantages and what people
13 think about it. There was a report, and the report
14 was shared with us. We looked at that, and we
15 certainly felt that the online services at that time
16 were needed. That's why, at DYCD, we have been
17 supporting programs doing the online services in FY-
18 20, FY-21, all the time. At our provider meetings, we
19 have providers share with us their programs, how
20 they're doing in terms of their instructional
21 modalities and all that, and I remember probably last
22 October we sent out a survey of programs basically to
23 ask them how they're doing in terms of the
24 instructional modalities and how students are
25 adapting...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can you share some of
the findings pertaining to just hybrid and online?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Advantages?

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, or even the
challenges.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Challenges?
Yeah, I can take a look at the LAC report. We can
probably share that report with you. That was over a
year ago. Whatever we have heard from providers, I
can do a summary of that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. What is
DYCD planning to do through the next RFP process to
allow for the continuation or expansion of online and
hybrid adult literacy classes and programming? Are
there some lessons learned from this challenge to
build on the good work?

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Sure. As I
said, we've learned how to do this, and we shouldn't
just abandon. We should continue and build on this.
As I said, at least from my perspective, I'm going to
strongly propose an integration of online services
into the literacy programming. How that's going to be
and will that happen? It all depends how the
programming under the RFP and funds availability

2 because when you think about online programming, yes,
3 they are similar to how you provide classes in a
4 room, but there are certain parameters you must have,
5 there are certain things you must have in place to
6 have a real online program that will enhance
7 students' learning experience, and we want to
8 seriously think about doing that so until the RFP is
9 out I really can't say whether it's really going to
10 be there or whether or it's not going to be there,
11 but we're seriously thinking about it.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. We'll
13 definitely follow up around what the new and
14 transformed curriculum is going to look like to allow
15 for providers to feel more comfortable.

16 I do want to acknowledge that Council
17 Member Chi Osse was here at one point.

18 What policies is DYCD putting into place
19 in FY-23 to ensure maximum flexibility, and I know
20 you mentioned you're sort of still working through
21 the kinks here and are awaiting for the RFP, there's
22 some time here for the planning to really get into
23 gear, but are you able to provide anything in terms
24 of some specific policies that were laid out during
25 the COVID time for effective adult literacy

2 instructional models for remote and hybrid and in-
3 person?

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: First of
5 all, adult learners come from different backgrounds
6 with various needs and different ages so, first and
7 foremost, is to be able to differentiate that,
8 provide instructional services that address that kind
9 of needs. I think formal classroom instruction should
10 always be accompanied by supplemental help so We
11 Speak NYC from MOIA, that online platform, is a great
12 conversational kind of platform for students to
13 practice their spoken English and that's why we work
14 closely to train our providers to use that system and
15 MOIA has provided training to our providers and so
16 it's a great thing. We also have established some
17 kind of referral system so students sign up on that
18 online platform, learn spoken English when they feel
19 they're ready to move on to a classroom setting where
20 you sit with other people with a set schedule and
21 then they get referred to our programs. I think the
22 collaboration with partners, providing those other
23 supplemental services is very important. During the
24 pandemic, we purchased 2 online software programs
25 that were made available to our programs so that

1 students and teachers alike can access the program
2 and can learn reading and writing, math, and career
3 exploration, civics, and other whenever they want to,
4 wherever they are, and these online software programs
5 we made available for our programs. Things like that
6 definitely are helpful. As I said earlier, I think
7 there are certainly advantages to online instruction.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. We look
10 forward to DYCD formalizing some of these policies
11 instead of keeping them informal and informally
12 flexible.

13 I'd like to acknowledge that Council
14 Member Alexa Aviles is here.

15 I also wanted to get an overview of the
16 We Speak NYC program, where it's happening, the
17 partnership with the Council Members, and anything
18 else that you can provide at this time.

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I'll let my
20 Colleagues (INAUDIBLE)

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SAMMAN: Let me just
23 talk a little bit about what We Speak is. It is a
24 facilitated class by volunteers. It is the beginning
25 step for people who are in New York and would like to

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2 begin learning English so, while curriculum is
3 developed through CUNY, it is episodes, and our
4 website is interactive with quizzes and people can
5 either come to the classes or they can do these
6 things on their own should they choose. We consider
7 ourselves a huge bridge for people beginning to learn
8 English and helping to facilitate them in their next
9 steps. Currently, We Speak, pre-pandemic, we were
10 citywide, host sites, different partner sites, again,
11 volunteer based. These sites are not funded. The
12 volunteers that we have, many of which were previous
13 learners which is fantastic, would facilitate the
14 classes. Post-pandemic and during the pandemic, we
15 went fully remote. We actually tripled the number of
16 learners that we have by going remote, and we
17 actually had learners globally so we were having
18 people log in from Russia and South America, it was
19 actually amazing, on some of our classrooms on Zoom.
20 Currently, we have begun with the libraries opening
21 back up for in-person instruction. We have spoken
22 with our previous partners, some of which may not
23 host us again as far as in-person classes, some of
24 which will, 23 will begin seeing people return to an
25 in-person classroom. I will say, just bouncing off a

2 question that someone had asked DYCD earlier, we have
3 found that the online classroom makes it much more
4 accessible for people. We have classes every day. We
5 have them all different times of day which really
6 speaks to different schedules. People don't have to
7 worry about childcare, coming to a site to begin to
8 learn English. We obviously agree with all the points
9 made about in-person learning and how important that
10 is for conversational purposes, but I don't know that
11 necessarily we would abandon fully a remote option
12 because it has given so much access to people who
13 don't have the ability to just leave where they are
14 and come to a class, particularly for work or
15 childcare reasons which is a struggle in the
16 immigrant community.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to
18 ask Council Member Pierina Sanchez to ask her
19 question. We've reached quorum again.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Wonderful. Thank
21 you so much, Chair Hanif and Chair Stevens. Thank you
22 for having this hearing. DYCD, thank you for your
23 hours of answering questions.

24 My question sort of goes back to the
25 reality that we're in. You just finished talking

2 about how much remote options have enabled access and
3 expanded access to constituents so on that point,
4 could you describe how much of DYCD's contracted work
5 on adult literacy includes digital literacy as well
6 as the English and everything else?

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Could you
8 repeat the question?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: How much of
10 DYCD's funded work includes digital literacy
11 teaching?

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Okay.
13 Digital literacy, as I said earlier, it's always one
14 of the most important ingredients in adult literacy
15 program. In our last RFP, which was released back in
16 2014, at that time, the RFP already said that
17 programs need to integrate digital literacy, teach
18 digital literacy skills, integrate technology into
19 instruction so it's always part of what we should do
20 and we have always been providing support programs to
21 integrate computers, laptops, different software
22 programs into programming. Of course, during the
23 pandemic, because of the circumstances, we all kind
24 of were compelled to go online and learn what we
25 hardly imagined that we were able to do, but we did

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2 it and now in our programs, as I just said, and I
3 would just say for FY-20 all programs were online.
4 FY-21, a majority of the programs were still online
5 or hybrid. We have a few programs that started in-
6 person. Currently, all programs are kind of hybrid.
7 Yes, if you talk about whether they're using
8 technology or digital skills, yes, they are
9 incorporated into instruction.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. I
11 appreciate that. Just a quick related followup, you
12 started off the hearing in your testimony talking
13 about the huge demand, and I know my Colleagues have
14 been expounding upon it during this conversation, but
15 when is the next RFP from DYCD scheduled to go out
16 and is there a minimum level of financial commitment
17 that DYCD is willing to spend per student for adult
18 literacy?

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We have
20 been working on the concept paper and RFP. As I said,
21 new programs under the new RFP are scheduled to start
22 July 1, 2023, so that means we will need to get the
23 RFP out this fall. I don't have a specific date.
24 We'll have to work with our procurement to have the
25 specific timelines, but, based on my personal

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2 experience with this, you will need that much time to
3 get programs in place in order to avoid any gaps in
4 services. We're going to look at every aspect of
5 programming, including price per-participant. What
6 that is going to be like, at this point the budget
7 numbers have not really been finalized so I can't say
8 for sure what it looks like, but we certainly will
9 look at it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Got it. Okay,
11 thank you. We'll continue to push for more funding on
12 our students. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I just have
14 a followup to Council Member Sanchez's question then
15 I'll pass it along. The LAC report that you mentioned
16 that DYCD supported set the ideal rate at 3,700 per
17 student. If we have the ceiling money of 50 million
18 as mentioned that you referenced, in your opinion, do
19 you agree that 3,700 would be idea per-student
20 investment?

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: First of
22 all, let me say that that 50 million is not my
23 number. It's what I heard.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: A number you heard
25 that you support.

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We know the
3 news is out there, and I support to provide as much
4 as we can to help to give people the access to
5 education so I certainly that. What was your second...

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: The 3,700 per student.

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: If we had
8 enough funding, ideally and of course, in that report
9 it talks about integrating into the literacy program
10 14 building blocks for the program. They include the
11 comprehensive wraparound services including full-time
12 instructors, include good digital infrastructure,
13 space, and a lot of things. In an ideal world, I wish
14 we could have that, and I'm a literacy person and
15 certainly support these things, but I also know that
16 we have to work with what we have, with our limited
17 resources right now. We do our best to provide the
18 quality of services that we do. With what we have, we
19 have to make sure that our current classroom seats
20 need to be filled, fully utilized, we should make
21 sure that we have good attendance, students are there
22 regularly, and really learning. These are the things
23 we must try our best to do. Do the best with what we
24 have. Of course, always advocate for more to support
25 the services.

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2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Certainly. Thank you.
3 Go for it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I'm back. I have
5 a question. Is it possible for you to give me a
6 breakdown of percentages of programs that are offered
7 for English as a second language classes and adult
8 basic education/HSE classes, like the different
9 breakdown for that?

10 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: When we
11 first issued the RFP, we actually were very
12 intentional with that. We know New York City is a
13 city of immigrants. The immigrant population keeps
14 going up so when we looked at that, we intentionally
15 had, I think there was a split, I think it's a 60/40
16 percent split between ESL and A...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So 60 percent of
18 the programs are ESL and 40...

19 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah, from
20 the original RFP, and now as we mix in the Council-
21 designated providers and mixed in the ESL civics
22 education programs which was the old IOI, if we mix
23 this in so actually our services for ESL, for
24 language instruction, is way higher. I think it's
25 around 75 percent right now.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So it's about 75
3 percent? All right. Thank you. I know DYCD does not
4 hire staff and teachers for these programs. That's on
5 the provider side, but could you talk to me a little
6 bit about how do you encourage for providers to look
7 at folks who come through the program, people from
8 the neighborhood, and really building that pipeline
9 of folks because it's always great when you have
10 people who have these experience and now in these
11 programs so how does DYCD encourage those types of
12 involvement in the program?

13 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Okay. Say
14 it again. Sorry.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: About teachers
16 and staff of these programs. I know that you guys do
17 not do the hiring. That is on the providers, but how
18 does DYCD encourage that to happen within the
19 programs?

20 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Staffing
21 the programs is extremely important. Whether students
22 will stay with the program has a lot to do with
23 instructional quality, how the instructors work. As
24 you know, we have minimum requirements as to the
25 qualifications for instructional staff and of all

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2 staff in our programs. Also, as we all know, within
3 the community advancement organizations,
4 unfortunately, there are a lot of part-time teachers
5 and then, because of that, the staff turnover
6 actually is, I feel, more serious than many other
7 fields. To address that in DYCD, in our RFPs, we
8 always encourage programs to hire full-time people.
9 If you, because of whatever limits, you can't have a
10 full-time teacher for this contract, you can actually
11 hire a person, giving this person different roles to
12 make that person a full-time employee so that that
13 person can receive fringe benefits and all that so
14 that..

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That's kind of
16 interesting because that means that they would have
17 to put them on multiple contracts and that seems a
18 bit presumptuous to think that they could put them on
19 multiple contracts so that's a little interesting to
20 recommend.

21 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We allow
22 that. The program centers ask us whether they can do
23 that..

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, I know.
25

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2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: So then we
3 said, well, you know, it'll help the person to become
4 a full-time employee and that will help with the
5 retention of the staff.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely.

7 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Why not?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, and I also
9 think, even thinking about that's one of the reasons
10 why having a higher participant rate makes for the
11 contract to have more money so we can pay teachers
12 full-time as opposed to having part-time so I think
13 that those are things we also need to make sure we're
14 considering in the next RFP. Just thinking about,
15 even with the retention, when we talk about retention
16 and staff turnover, I've found even when I ran
17 program it was always great when you had people who
18 were in the program, mentorships, teach the teacher,
19 and all those things. Are those things that you're
20 looking to have in the concept paper, especially
21 during a time when providers and non-profits are
22 struggling with retention? How are you guys looking
23 to help and support non-profits with building
24 capacity around retaining staff?

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2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We are
3 always very supportive of providers. One of the
4 things we do is that we want to make sure that the
5 CBO staff are well-equipped to do what they're hired
6 to do, to provide quality services and all that. We
7 have a TA provider so we work very closely. We
8 constantly look at our plan, monitor and revise our
9 plan to meet the needs of the teachers. Previously,
10 when you talked about staff development plan, you
11 always think about workshops then we say single
12 workshops, one (INAUDIBLE) workshops, how helpful is
13 that so then we started to develop institutes, series
14 of workshops so that you have followup, and people
15 learn something, go to the classroom, test it,
16 experiment with it, come back and report and share so
17 that's one way to interact with teachers, to engage
18 teachers, and they love that and they love to share
19 that. Later we found, to help them even more, more
20 targeted is to actually provide one-on-one coaching
21 so that's something we worked out also. Coaching is
22 one-on-one. We need a lot and resources for that, but
23 we manage to provide as much as we can individual
24 coaching. We have our staff, we have LAC staff going
25 out, observe teachers, observe classrooms, and

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2 provide feedback and provide coaching. I think a lot
3 of teachers benefited from that and they are grateful
4 to that. Very often, LAC will tell me we have this
5 much space and it's pretty much filled. I was really
6 happy that we were able to do that and we were able
7 to provide very targeted, purposeful assistance to
8 people who really need it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I think those
10 things are definitely needed and important, but we
11 should also be thinking about other ways to get folks
12 who are in these programs involved and hired in the
13 programs and thinking about creating those pipelines
14 but thank you because coaching is definitely
15 important.

16 I just have one more question. Can you
17 talk about the evaluation process for these programs
18 and how is participant feedback included in that
19 because one of my big push has always been around 360
20 evaluations because it's always very one-sided and
21 how are we going to be moving more into hearing more
22 voices and feedback from the community from these
23 programs?
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2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: You're
3 talking about evaluations our monitoring of the
4 contracts?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yes.

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: First of
7 all, we contract the providers. We have a lot of
8 confidence in our providers. That's for sure. In the
9 meantime, we assess the needs, we provide support as
10 needed. As I mentioned a lot of support we've
11 provided. Monitoring is an important part of our DYCD
12 work. We want to make sure that contracts are in
13 place, well-managed. Our staff go out to visit
14 programs on a regular basis. What they do is that
15 they go out there, they observe classrooms. There you
16 can talk with teachers, we can talk with
17 participants, then you have post-observation
18 interview with the teacher and the program director
19 asking questions around whatever is set in their work
20 scopes, in contracts. For example, work scopes, we
21 emphasize that you are supposed to have linkages and
22 partnerships with other entities to make sure that
23 your students' needs other than education get met and
24 you should refer people to those places, you should
25 have a system, you should have a system and you

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2 should document those. Those conversations with
3 program directors are this. This is how we monitor
4 programs. Of course, we have a tool, we call the EMS,
5 contract management evaluation, you about that in the
6 previous...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I ran programs so
8 I'm fully aware of...

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: We use
10 those indicators that basically are expectations and
11 all that that's originally written in the RFP and we
12 turn that into an instrument to kind of check off to
13 make sure what needs to happen happens and, if there
14 is a need for assistance, for support, for technical
15 assistance, after each visit we have a report that we
16 will share with providers with all the findings, and
17 there are times when we have to call them in to say
18 here we have certain issues, what's happening, why do
19 you think it's happening, how do we address that, do
20 you need additional help. At DYCD, we have a capacity
21 building unit whose sole purpose is to provide all
22 kinds of (INAUDIBLE) services to providers so, if
23 necessary, we'll make that connection, refer them to
24 that unit for extra support.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Where in there is
3 feedback from participants, if there's any?

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: As I said,
5 when we observe classrooms, there is the opportunity
6 to talk with participants..

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It's okay to say
8 that you don't have it. It's okay. (INAUDIBLE)

9 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: It's not
10 that much, but we do, but you also know that DYCD
11 does surveys of program participants, not just
12 literacy programs, throughout.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can you share with us
14 what that survey is?

15 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: I can ask.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We need to see it.

17 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Chair
18 Stevens knows that. She ran programs. She knows the
19 stories.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Building on Council
21 Member Stevens' question, just one more. I do want to
22 better understand how the curriculum is created.
23 Given that you taking feedback, does DYCD provide
24 support?
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2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: That's a
3 good question.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Council Member Stevens
5 is shaking her head, and I ask this because we've
6 been pushing our schools, for example, to have
7 histories that teach about black studies, LGBTQ,
8 communities to have curriculum around Asian
9 histories, are those being incorporated into the
10 programming?

11 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: That's a
12 very good question. One thing I want to make clear is
13 that we do not have a prescribed curriculum across
14 the board. Based on what I know, you have people of
15 different backgrounds, different needs, and you
16 should leave it to the programs for them to create
17 their own curriculum, their own syllabus, lesson
18 plans, and one thing we do is that through our TA
19 support, first of all, in our RFP we always say that
20 class instruction, classrooms need to be
21 contextualized, to incorporate those very important
22 topics and themes that are relevant to students'
23 lives so things like healthcare, digital literacy,
24 financial literacy, civic engagement, employment. All
25 these things are there, and they're supposed to do

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that and we go out there, we look for instruction that actually incorporates those concepts in there, and the TA support. Our TA support always will look at how we can incorporate themes for contextualized instruction. The LAC engaged a vendor that's called something History, actually it's looking at different historical periods and looking at a certain context and teach people the historical figures, events, and certain periods of time and have students understand that, and we have incorporated civics in our instruction. We have also provided workshops on curriculum development and revision. When we had our civics classes, the LAC was able to provide a series of workshops that helped people to incorporate ideas and strategies to enable programs to do an integrated program that has both English instruction and civic education so yes, there are lots of incorporation of different themes.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank You. That's my final question to the admin. I want to pass it to Council Member Aviles for some questions

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. Thank you so much. Thank you to the DYCD staff and to MOIA for being here. My name is Alexa Aviles, Council Member

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for District 38 in South Brooklyn which includes
Sunset Park and Red Hook, home to thousands of
incredible immigrants so for our community, adult
literacy programs is quite critical, it's a
fundamental service so, in fact, if you ask me, the
50 million dollars seems about right no matter where
it came from because we know at its current level it
is certainly not meeting how foundational adult
literacy is for life, yes, we're getting hands, I
will agree to the 50-million-dollar mark as the goal
of what we should be providing services for. You
don't have to agree with that, Commissioner.

Because I came late, I apologize if some
of these questions you've already answered them, but
they are important to me because these services are
so important to our community so I wanted to be sure
to have the answers.

In your testimony, with the additional
6.7 million in funding for fiscal '23, will that RFP
allow for enhancement services or is it purely
relegated? Enhancements, what I mean is wraparound
services and additional resources for the same number
of participants of fiscal '22 rather than the 6.7

1
2 fully relegated more and more students at the same
3 low rate.

4 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: First of
5 all, the 6.7, we saw that number and it's new money,
6 and I don't have the full understanding of that
7 money, whether it's money beyond FY-23 or it's a one-
8 year money. It's not sure at this point. The RFP has
9 the FY-22 baselined 8 million dollars in there, and,
10 certainly, as I said earlier, we're looking at
11 everything in that program, better program model with
12 as much as support service as we can, and I already
13 mentioned that we are seriously looking at adding,
14 for example, counseling services in this, and we
15 think they are very important, we want to propose
16 that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. Just to
18 make sure it is as explicit as possible, we would
19 like to see the rate increased from it's current rate
20 which many providers feel is really insufficient so
21 we would love to see the new RFP increase that rate
22 significantly so that they can provide as much robust
23 services to members as possible. Is that also under
24 consideration to increase the per-pupil rate?

2 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Everything
3 is under consideration, and it all depends on how it
4 comes out and also the availability of funds. We
5 support that. In our last MDA RFP, which was released
6 a year ago, in that RFP, there is literacy
7 programming in there and the rate in that RFP had
8 already been raised. We always look at that, and,
9 when possible, we definitely would want to do that.
10 We're all here to support literacy services.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Absolutely. I
12 think I'm also hearing you're a big fan of quality as
13 I am so quality over quantity would be really
14 important so a larger rate for providers to be able
15 to provide the full scope of service that is
16 necessary is something I think we'd all be very much
17 in support of so we look forward to see all the
18 considerations and that one particularly be
19 prioritized.

20 In terms of also the RFP, are you looking
21 to consider hybrid instruction to be allowable in
22 fiscal '23 as well?

23 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: The RFP is
24 not written yet. I also said earlier that personally
25 I think online teaching is an important part and DYCD

2 always puts emphasis on technology so, yes, we want
3 to think of ways to integrate online teaching in our
4 programming so we hope that it will happen.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. We do too.
6 Chair, if I may, I just have one more question.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Go for it.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: You mentioned good
9 attendance. I guess my brain translated that as both
10 physical attendance and hybrid attendance. Is that
11 what you meant when you were talking about...

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: You mean
13 for quality?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Yeah.

15 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Yeah.

16 Attendance means whatever classes you offer.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Okay.

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: People need
19 to be there.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Right. Okay. I'm
21 just underscoring how important hybrid is. Last but
22 not least, our favorite topic of contracts. We're
23 entering fiscal '23. Obviously, talking about that.
24 Some of the providers that I am aware of have not
25 been paid one cent for the work that they've done in

2 fiscal '22. Can you tell me about the status of the
3 payment of those contracts for our providers, and, if
4 so, what is being done to ensure timely payments on
5 contracts?

6 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: The one
7 thing I can say, I'm sure you already know, that
8 addressing this backlog of contract registration is a
9 priority within our agency, within the
10 administration. You know that the Mayor and
11 Comptroller have set up a taskforce just to look at
12 this issue, and it came up with lots of
13 recommendations to improve the process. Within DYCD,
14 this has been our priority last month, and we have
15 actually set up a team of experts in contract
16 processing looking at every step of the way, and
17 we're determined to clear the backlog within a short
18 period of time. The group meets, I think it's every
19 morning, and they do a report every week to us where
20 we are. Just last 2 weeks, I heard great progress in
21 clearing backlogs. A lot of efforts are being made,
22 and we have a special group of people with a project
23 manager and, yes, we're addressing that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: I'm glad to hear
25 that. I would love to, perhaps, get a report on the

1
2 actual status of where those contracts and their
3 payments are. In particular, I know obviously there
4 are many contracts across the agency but particularly
5 with the adult literacy providers, if we could get a
6 status update on where those payments are and
7 absolute timeframes. Short period could mean years in
8 city time so we'd love a more definitive time of when
9 those contracts will get paid out so that our
10 providers can do the work that we've set out to do.
11 Thank you so much.

12 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you all so much
14 for answering our questions, and we look forward to
15 further engagement on the questions that weren't
16 answered quite fully.

17 We can now go into public testimony.

18 ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER ZHANG: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you,
20 Chair. We will call the first panel of witnesses
21 starting with Johan Lopez followed by Jason Bocko and
22 then Caroline Scown. Johan on Zoom.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: I don't see
25 Johan, and, since it doesn't seem like he's

1
2 responding, we will move on to Jason Bocko. Jason,
3 you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

5 JASON BOCKO: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Jason Bocko. I'm the Academic Coordinator at Northern
7 Manhattan Improvement Corporation. We're also known
8 as NMIC, and we serve all New York City residents
9 with a focus on those in Northern Manhattan and in
10 the South and West Bronx. I want to talk a little bit
11 about City Council pilot funding and how it's
12 necessary to ensure that our program is going to be
13 able to meet these post-pandemic needs. Our biggest
14 barriers during the pandemic were technology access
15 and technology skill. As work and learning moved to
16 an online world, many of our students are at risk of
17 being left behind due to the lack of skills and
18 technology. With the City Council pilot funding, our
19 program was for the first time able to meaningfully
20 engage this problem and create contextual curriculum
21 that reduces the digital divide for our students and
22 prepares them for the realities of a post-pandemic
23 New York. That's not to say that some of our students
24 did not overcome their digital difficulties. In fact,
25 we were able to reach students that previously had

1
2 been unable to engage in classes due to a variety of
3 reasons, including childcare, transportation, work
4 schedules, and other conditions. What we fear is that
5 a return to only in-person, our program will lose
6 many students who will not find somewhere else to go,
7 and these are students who for the first time were
8 able to engage in this type of educational
9 opportunity. Furthermore, the pilot funding has
10 allowed us to recruit and retain high-quality
11 teachers with deep ties to our community. A perennial
12 challenge in adult education, something that we've
13 discussed, is the high turnover rate of instructors,
14 and these are because of inconsistent schedules, low
15 pay, several reasons that come with being part time.
16 Consistency in any educational program is the
17 cornerstone of success. Students come to rely on
18 their instructors, and learning communities are built
19 over time with consistent instructors. The additional
20 funding allowed us to hire a long-time instructor
21 full-time, and our instructor was actually a member
22 of the community, and it just deepened that
23 connection.

24 As we move into post-pandemic New York,
25 additional support for adult literacy programs is

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more important than ever. This support looks different than it did in 2019. Adult literacy programs need support to offer broader curriculum and more holistic services with flexibility and flexibility depending on where we are, what our agency is able to do. Continuing the pilot program and continuing the support for online learning will allow us to pivot in a nimble and meaningful way that serves our communities as they face new challenges and adapt to the world post-pandemic.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

Next, we have Caroline Scown.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I just ask that you keep your testimony to 2 minutes.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

CAROLINE SCOWN: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to Chair Hanif, Chair Stevens, and the Committees on Immigrant and Youth Services for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Caroline Scown, and I'm a teacher with the Chinese American Planning Council. Last fall, we began

2 teaching hybrid classes and discovered that our
3 outdated technology was completely inadequate. With
4 the adult literacy pilot project funding, we were
5 able to buy new laptops, new webcams and speakers
6 that made hybrid classes possible. With the help of a
7 new administrative assistant funded by the pilot
8 program, my students were able to find jobs, enroll
9 in higher education, and receive citizenships. One of
10 my students actually escaped a domestic violence
11 situation, and, because of our higher capacity, we
12 were able to immediately connect her with shelter
13 resources. Providing hybrid classes was really key
14 for me. The majority of my students didn't and still
15 don't feel comfortable leaving the house at all
16 because of COVID and public safety concerns. we also
17 reached a lot of people who are caring for children,
18 other family who have mobility problems as well as
19 older community members who wouldn't be able to keep
20 taking our classes if they become only available in
21 person. Continuing to have classes both in-person and
22 virtual is the best way of providing equitable
23 opportunities to our most vulnerable New Yorkers.
24 This is all a pretty good start, but our programs
25 really need so much more. Continued additional

2 funding means we'd be able to upgrade, for example,
3 our wi-fi connection. At times, the wi-fi in our
4 classroom was so poor that I needed to supplement it
5 with my own phone's hot spot during class. Many of
6 our classrooms are still using old chalkboards or
7 whiteboards when students could be using smartboards
8 and utilizing 21st century classroom equipment.
9 Digital literacy education could really go a long way
10 towards addressing some of our students'
11 technological challenges and preparing them to enter
12 the workforce.

13 Second, enhanced funding would address
14 our staff shortages. For example, if I'm not able to
15 teach, I have to cancel my class and reschedule for a
16 future date because we don't have the funding for
17 substitute teachers. We need culturally competent
18 technology assistants who can train and troubleshoot
19 problems for teachers and students. We also need
20 teaching assistants so that classes are not
21 overcrowded and students can get the feedback and the
22 practice they need. I want to emphasize that the
23 previous funding model is not good enough. The only
24 reason our classes have been so successful with such
25 low funding is because our staff works tirelessly and

1
2 overtime to provide the services that our students
3 need, and I really think that we and our students
4 deserve more. Thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

7 Next, we are going to call a panel up here. It's
8 Yekaterina Berkman (phonetic), Lisa Diomande, and
9 Jillian Vigon (phonetic). I apologize for any names I
10 have butchered. You can go ahead whenever you're
11 ready.

12 YEKATERINA BERKMANS: Hi. I'm Yekaterina
13 Berkman, teaching with Agudath Israel. I've been
14 teaching online classes, and, one maybe new thing
15 that I'm going to say today is that I am an
16 interactive teacher, and, surprisingly, unlike what
17 I've heard, interactive classes were possible and
18 even better than in-person classes in remote
19 education. One of the reasons being we heard people
20 were happy to have the classes available and people
21 were very relaxed and open in the comfort of their
22 homes. Also, there are technical means to do that
23 like you could create chat group, break-up groups so
24 interactive education is something that has totally
25 worked. Students were very happy with the classes. In

1 fact, what we've seen in remote groups is that
2 students directed a lot of other students who were
3 unable to come to in-person groups but were really
4 able to come to remote groups. Another thing that
5 we've been seeing is that because people had to use
6 technology that they hadn't been exposed to before,
7 not even just the English proficiency but the
8 technological proficiency of our customers has
9 really, really raised, and people who were only ready
10 to submit a piece of written homework have been
11 sending incredible materials with pictures and typed
12 stuff, and we'd be happy to provide you with evidence
13 of that.
14

15 Let me just reiterate that we have
16 reached a lot of unreached groups of population like
17 working people who couldn't incorporate traveling to
18 classes into their schedule, a lot of stay-home moms
19 that are so happy to be able, for example, to nurse a
20 baby and learn English which has been great, people
21 with health issues. I'm so proud of my population of
22 elderly students who are now able to use technology
23 and take care of their families, their English-
24 speaking grandchildren, their health needs. That's
25 basically it. I'm really, really hoping that the

2 funding will allow the remote education to continue.

3 Thank you.

4 LISA DIOMANDE: Hi. My name is Lisa
5 Diomande. I am the Program Coordinator and instructor
6 at Henry Street Workforce Development Center so I am
7 one of those very special people that teaches and
8 administers and I have a full-time job. Congratulate
9 me. I understand a lot of these things because I look
10 at it from both sides, but I care mostly about the
11 teaching because my students are my reason for being
12 an administrator. I think it's very important. We
13 heard a lot today. 25 percent of native people,
14 according to what we heard today, is the percentage
15 that was given for people that are born here that did
16 not make it through school. This is a population that
17 I think is greatly overlooked. In New York City, we
18 praise and we support immigrants, maybe not enough,
19 but more than we do the natives and the social
20 inequities that we've seen in our city. Those people
21 are left behind in a huge proportion. I find that
22 those students have many more problems that go back
23 generations because it's about being in low-income
24 situations generation after generation so I think we
25 should try to expand our services to include an

1
2 understandings of what it is for first-generation
3 Americans, second-generation Americans that are still
4 dealing with bilingualism that was never adequately
5 addressed in K-12 and isn't being addressed
6 adequately in adult education. That's one of my
7 biggest points.

8 I also would like to say that hybrid is
9 totally important for all of us. It was a very
10 difficult transition, but we have to learn from what
11 the society learned. Everybody went back to work at
12 home, and they found out that they could do their
13 work and take care of their families and it was
14 better. The same thing with in-class instruction. It
15 is better for everybody. It's a transition, it's a
16 change, it's an adjustment, but we do have many more
17 tools and options. I think it's very important for us
18 to really understand that we are in transition here
19 to a new model, and we are all aware of what the
20 tools should be and need to be and we should just
21 start adopting them right away. Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

23 JILLIAN VIGON: Good afternoon, Council
24 and Chairs. My name is Jillian Vigon. I'm here today
25 to testify on behalf of the need to increase funding

1
2 for each adult student in New York City. Although I
3 was able to achieve my TASC High School Equivalency
4 Diploma through the Henry Street Workforce
5 Development Center with the help of Lisa, I believe
6 that this was despite the funding at the time. It was
7 the result of determined teachers and their
8 providers. Increasing student funding will provide
9 more tools and time to our undervalued community-
10 based organizations to ensure tremendous success in
11 achieving GED diplomas. I realize I am the exception
12 to the general demographics of adult literacy
13 programs. The profile I carry of a New York City
14 native Caucasian female often worked to my
15 disadvantage. The assumptions are that someone with
16 my characteristics would not need additional support.
17 My inability to finish high school was not a result
18 of a lack of learning but rather a lack of support.
19 My education pitfalls resulted from life
20 circumstances that included family issues, financial
21 challenges, and health complexities. I also lacked a
22 general belief in myself, especially when compared to
23 those in my community. This became not a case of
24 conquering science and math but rather conquering
25 myself. I enrolled in the HSE preparation program at

1
2 Henry Street Settlement 9 years after my expected
3 high school graduation date. I was pursued outside of
4 the program hours to get myself to commit to a
5 process of learning that I thought I would fail at. I
6 was seen as capable and worthwhile. This was the most
7 essential piece of my success, increasing my sense of
8 my own worth. This program motivated me to commit to
9 myself. Additionally, the use of remote learning was
10 a value add for this process for those like myself
11 with health limitations which increased my commitment
12 and attendance to learning. If my struggle was as
13 hard as it was, what was it like for people with more
14 significant challenges like immigrants, people
15 without English, family, income, or housing, people
16 with emotional, mental, or learning disabilities? How
17 would they go the distance without more support from
18 the city? I'm presenting my story today of mixed
19 struggle and privileges an example of someone who is
20 luckier than most. I still almost failed. I almost
21 failed myself. This great city of New York must step
22 up and provide greater funding per student so that
23 they can succeed sooner, faster, and more completely.
24 Ultimately, this will cost the city less as fewer
25 people cycle in and out of programs. Today, I stand

1 here proud to be a product of these resources, but I
2 feel more is needed. I have a newfound passion for
3 social impact to improve the lives of others like
4 myself. It was inspired by the support I received at
5 Henry Street, and I am paying it forward by working
6 with and for them today and appealing to you to do
7 more. Please do not fail the thousands like me who
8 want to succeed. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Question
11 for this panel. It's so encouraging to hear about the
12 positive outcomes of remote and hybrid courses
13 offered. Were there directives around how to go
14 remote and/or hybrid? Is there anything in place
15 right now or are you all just sort of coming up with
16 that?

17 LISA DIOMANDE: I'm a great
18 improvisational teacher so I integrate digital
19 learning as it comes up, and it comes up all the
20 time. As was said today, we have a lot of smartphone
21 learners. We try to rent out laptops and we try to
22 teach them, when they come in to register we give
23 them a quick tutorial, we send them home, and then we
24 just keep on them and help them to expand their
25 learning so that's been my approach.

2 YEKATERINA BERKMANS: Mine has been very
3 much the same. I'm also another great improvisational
4 teacher, and I think it, just for me, was just very
5 infectious with the students once they see it's
6 working, they really catch on.

7 JILLIAN VIGON: As a participant, it was
8 extremely effective for me to be able to improvise
9 and then also be able to build my own study course
10 within my own lifestyle and how it would suit best
11 with all my challenges that I had at the time.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Nothing in writing,
13 like here's scenario 1 to do hybrid, scenario 2 to do
14 hybrid or to go fully remote, here's what we're
15 offering. You're relying on your improvisational
16 skills to...

17 YEKATERINA BERMANS: Not only, but I'm
18 very grateful to my Directors at Agudath Israel, and
19 there's been a wonderful set of workshops that were
20 available so that was available and I'm very happy
21 that it was.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: If there's one or two
23 things that you're looking for to strengthen the
24 hybrid model, what would you share with us?

25 JILLIAN VIGON: Technology.

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2 LISA DIOMANDE: I am shocked that the city
3 of New York has not established wi-fi connections for
4 the entire city that is just of a certain basic
5 standard. My students don't have wi-fi connections if
6 they do have a phone or they do have a laptop so then
7 we have several hurdles all built in. Why do we have
8 internet access in subway stations but we don't have
9 it above ground throughout the city. I do not
10 understand, but then, after that, we give everybody a
11 laptop, we rent it to them, we loan it to them, but
12 they get experience. We create computer labs. The
13 GED, we've gotten very little establishment of what
14 that means, but the GED test is now only in these
15 computer centers so why am I supposed to do to my
16 students to get them ready for that kind of an
17 experience? I only have paper tests. I don't have GED
18 tests. I don't have computerized tests so I'm sending
19 them in blind. I could go on.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. This is
21 really helpful to hear.

22 YEKATERINA BERKMANS: Maybe laptops
23 available to everybody would be something really
24 helpful.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Have the providers
3 been receiving laptops or are you all on your own
4 purchasing for loan?

5 LISA DIOMANDE: We have new laptops given
6 to us through, I think, the MOIA or whatever the new
7 initiatives are.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay.

9 JILLIAN VIGON: I would say, I'm actually
10 running the Summer Youth Employment Initiative funded
11 by the DYCD through Henry Street and even just our
12 technology availabilities there are just quite poor
13 and we often have to pull from our other programmatic
14 efforts for technology as well including our HSE
15 prep.

16 LISA DIOMANDE: But they're better than
17 they were in 2019.

18 JILLIAN VIGON: This is true.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. That's good to
20 hear. Does having these laptops ensure that every
21 student is covered or are there moments when students
22 have to share?

23 LISA DIOMANDE: Most of my students are on
24 Zoom.

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CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Understood.

3

Thank you. We can move on to the next panel unless,

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Council Member, do you have any questions?

5

JILLIAN VIGON: Thank you so much.

6

LISA DIOMANDE: Thank you.

7

YEKATERINA BERKMANS: Thank you.

8

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

9

The next panel we will call is Anthony Tassi followed

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by Lena Cohen then Zenaida Leonova (phonetic) and

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Lauren Higgins. Anthony, you can go ahead when the

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Sergeant calls time. Please, everyone note that there

13

is a 2 minute timer for testimony, and the Sergeants

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will let you know when your time has lapsed.

15

ANTHONY TASSI: Good afternoon, Chair

16

Hanif and Chair Stevens. I'm not sure if you're still

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there. I really all the time and effort you put into

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this hearing. I'm the CEO of Literacy Partners. We're

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an adult literacy program that focuses exclusively on

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immigrant and low-income parents of young children,

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and my daughter is a student at MS-88 where Council

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Member Aviles has played a leading role in advocating

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for just education funding and I want to really

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appreciate her for that.

25

1
2 I previously served in a previous
3 administration as the Director of Adult Education for
4 the city, and I tell you I cannot recall a more
5 thoughtful conversation on adult literacy as the one
6 we're having today, and, frankly, more engaged
7 leadership than you're demonstrating today, Chair
8 Hanif, so as a New Yorker I really want to extend my
9 appreciation.

10 I also want to reiterate and support the
11 comments about the per-student funding. At Literacy
12 Partners, we spend about 2,400 dollars per ESL
13 student. We get great results. We'd like to spend
14 more. Certainly, an RFP of 2,000 dollars or more
15 would give every community-based organization that
16 has funding the wherewithal to provide the level of
17 service that our students really deserve. As a
18 starting measure, I would encourage you to encourage
19 DYCD to issue that RFP. Extending contracts from 2014
20 into 2023 is not a good look for any municipal
21 agency, and there's certainly great benefit that will
22 come from finally issuing this new RFP with a higher
23 per-student rate.

24 I also want to just mention remote
25 instruction. We have found that we've been able to

1
2 generate better results under remote instruction. Our
3 ESL students have made educational gains quicker than
4 they used to when we were in-person, and, if you
5 think about the dynamics of the 20-person classroom
6 with one teacher and maybe one or two teaching
7 assistants versus Zoom when you can go into breakout
8 rooms and target and level the assistants and create
9 the context for much more language..

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

11 ANTHONY TASSI: The students. We used to
12 have 23 volunteers in our English program. We now
13 have 115, and those volunteers come to every class
14 and they go into breakout rooms for one-on-one
15 conversation practice or small group conversation
16 practices so the time on task in terms of
17 conversation is much higher on Zoom and WhatsApp than
18 it was in an in-person classroom so I think in
19 addition to the massive equity issues of taking away
20 an online resource from students who may have
21 childcare issues, who have financial issues with
22 Metro cards, time in commuting, and so on and so
23 forth..

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 ANTHONY TASSI: There's also an
3 instructional quality issue, and, just as Rong Zhang
4 said, DYCD does not promulgate a standard curriculum,
5 they shouldn't promulgate a standard methodology.
6 They should invite programs to submit their best
7 thinking backed by evidence...

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Anthony. If
9 you could just wrap up.

10 ANTHONY TASSI: One final point. I think a
11 terrific role for your leadership would also be to
12 advocate with the state on behalf of New York City
13 programming. GED testing is just something that was
14 mentioned. It's actually a very, very challenging
15 situation because of how the State Education
16 Department does their work, and I think the city
17 would be well-served to have a single powerful voice
18 of advocacy representing all of us. Thank you so
19 much.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much,
21 Anthony, and for your comments.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Next, we
23 will move to Lena Cohen. Lena, you can start when the
24 Sergeant calls time.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 LENA COHEN: Thank you so much. Good
3 afternoon. My name is Lena Cohen. I am a Senior
4 Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses. We're
5 also a proud member of the New York City Coalition
6 for Adult Literacy. UNH is a policy and social change
7 organization. We represent 45 settlement houses
8 across the state of New York. We have 40 members in
9 the city, and the majority of those members provide
10 adult literacy education as a core piece of the
11 wraparound supports that they offer across the whole
12 organization. I really just want to first start by
13 echoing what Anthony just said which is just a huge
14 thank you to Council Member Hanif, Council Member
15 Stevens. I also want to give a shoutout to Council
16 Member Won and all of their Colleagues for making
17 historic progress in the city's adult literacy
18 education budget in this Council's first new budget.
19 We as a field are thrilled to be able to have these
20 questions to ask about the ways that the new funding
21 is going to be spent so the purpose of my testimony
22 is to just emphasize what a few of my colleagues have
23 already said but just really emphasize the things
24 that this funding should actually be spent to do to
25 make sure that every dollar is going to support the

1
2 work that is happening at these programs day-in and
3 day-out and that work, which ultimately supports the
4 students.

5 First, I just want to emphasize how
6 critical it is that the new 6.7 million allocation
7 that was funded Fiscal Year '23 gets used to enhance
8 existing contracts to serve the same number of
9 students that are currently being served but,
10 therefore, just to allow these DYCD-contracted
11 providers to meet their students' needs with a fully
12 array of wraparound support services and resources.
13 That's really the main thing that I'm emphasizing
14 because...

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

16 LENA COHEN: The unique moment in time
17 that we have to influence the next RFP so that's the
18 one point.

19 I'll close by just adding on that another
20 way to maximize these dollars is, again, just to
21 really drive home the fact that hybrid models work
22 best to reach all of these students, and that is
23 something I don't need to spend too much time because
24 a lot of colleagues have already done so, but just
25 given all the lessons we learned and all the things

1
2 that we know about adult students, their schedules,
3 their responsibilities for childcare, supporting
4 older adults and their families and jobs, this is not
5 comparable to the K-12 education system, and, as
6 such, we see New York City as being the perfect place
7 to really jumpstart how hybrid models can
8 restructure, enhance, and stabilize adult literacy
9 programs moving forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much.

11 LENA COHEN: Thank you so much for the
12 time. I appreciate it.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

15 Next, we will move on to Zenaida Leonova followed by
16 Lauren Higgins. Miss Zenaida, are you on the Zoom?

17 Seeing no response, we'll move on to
18 Lauren Higgins. Lauren, you can start when the
19 Sergeant calls time.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

21 LAUREN HIGGINS: Good afternoon. My name
22 is Lauren Higgins, and I will be testifying on behalf
23 of (INAUDIBLE), Manager of Community Education at the
24 Academy of Medical and Public Health Services, or
25

1
2 AMPHS. Thank you, Chair Stevens and Hanif, for the
3 opportunity to testify.

4 Over the past few years, much of our work
5 has included improving basic adult literacy skills in
6 the most vulnerable New Yorkers (INAUDIBLE) various
7 issues. Our adult literacy process has served as a
8 lifeline for community members during the pandemic to
9 not only secure language skills necessary but as a
10 platform for COVID-19 information and resource
11 dissemination as community and solidarity..

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Lauren, could you slow
13 down a little?

14 LAUREN HIGGINS: Yes. I was told to make
15 this within time.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You can also share
17 some of it, and we will be reading every testimony so
18 keep to the time and go from there.

19 LAUREN HIGGINS: Sounds good. Last year
20 was the first year that we received the funding from
21 the adult literacy pilot project which you hope to
22 expand to 6.7 million dollars in FY-23 for RFP-
23 contracted programs to continue funding additional
24 wraparound services, supports, and resources.
25 Receiving the pilot project funding last year has

1
2 (INAUDIBLE) our program, allowing us to hire
3 educational case managers to provide work readiness
4 and college class HSE support for our students. We
5 loaned devices to community members that could not
6 afford internet access for their classes and provided
7 professional development to more effectively train
8 our teachers. Funding enabled us to also begin
9 building out our civics education and digital
10 literacy curriculum to support student integration
11 into their communities. Funding also allowed us to
12 successfully provide online instruction to the most
13 vulnerable residents in NYC. These same students are
14 urging us to continue providing remote instruction.
15 In hybrid and blended programs, students can obtain
16 an array of new real-world skills that could continue
17 to benefit their careers for years to come. These
18 include things like independent research skills,
19 self-learning, proficient communication across
20 modalities, and computer literacy. (INAUDIBLE) has
21 also expressed openness to a hybrid approach. We ask
22 that DYCD allow for remote and hybrid instruction
23 both in Fiscal Year '23 and in the next RFP.
24 Continued funding under the adult literacy pilot
25 project will enable us to 1) integrate technology and

1
2 learning tools designed for adult students to
3 strengthen their capacity to navigate an information-
4 based society, 2) hire case managers, counselors, and
5 social workers to better support adult students and
6 their families to develop resources and assist them
7 in systems navigation...

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

9 LAUREN HIGGINS: 3) more effectively
10 support work readiness, job placement, and college
11 transitions to help students move forward to
12 achieving long-term goals, and 4) provide organized
13 curriculum instruction contextualized to students'
14 long-term goals and career interests that apply
15 principles of adult learning and engage students to
16 become more skillful English speakers, problem
17 solvers, and leaders.

18 I thank the City Council for funding
19 these initiatives in the past fiscal year and
20 strongly urge the Council to continue them in the
21 future. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

24 We will move on to Jeff Lau followed by Migdalia

1 Cortez (phonetic) and then Angie Rendon Caicedo.

2 Jeff, you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

3
4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

5 JEFF LAU: Good afternoon, everybody.

6 Thank you, Chair Hanif, Chair Stevens, the Committees
7 on Immigration and Youth Services, for this
8 opportunity to testify about the importance of adult
9 literacy funding. My name is Jeffrey Lau. I'm the
10 Director of the Adult Literacy Program at the Chinese
11 American Planning Council. This spring I testified
12 here that adult literacy providers citywide needed
13 increased funding to keep pace with the needs of
14 immigrant communities, provide adequate services to
15 assist community members, and provide a living wage
16 for program staff. With the passing of the city
17 budget, I want to begin by thanking the Mayor, all
18 Members of the Council including these Committees for
19 recognizing the importance of adult literacy and
20 education. Throughout the years, adult literacy
21 programs like ours have testified that at the current
22 price-per-participant rate is not sustainable in
23 maintaining adult literacy programming. The current
24 rate means many programs make difficult financial
25 decisions every year that affect the well-being of

1
2 our community members and staff. Program Directors
3 like myself often struggle with questions like can I
4 hire another counselor to meet the students' needs,
5 do I have enough supplies to last a whole year
6 teaching, can I afford the rent at this location for
7 another year, can we give instructors a living wage
8 or even move them to a full-time position, we will be
9 able to cover another year of cost-of-living
10 adjustments. Today, I stand before you to advocate
11 the doubling of the per-student rate so that we can
12 at minimum meet some of these basic needs for our
13 communities and staff. CPC is a recipient of the
14 adult literacy pilot initiative which sought to
15 answer what a fully funded adult literacy program
16 could provide to our communities. Even though only a
17 fraction of the asked amount was given, we can
18 testify today that even a modest true investment can
19 go a long way. At CPC, we have seen a tripling of the
20 wraparound services provided with this initiative. We
21 have dedicated significant hours towards students
22 looking for childcare, senior care, housing, food
23 assistance, college access, and workforce counseling.
24 We've upgraded our technological infrastructure to
25

1
2 introduce new teaching tools for students to learn
3 digital literacy skills needed to...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 JEFF LAU: Remain competitive. Going
6 forward, I urge the city to continue recognizing the
7 needs of adult immigrants as they work to build a
8 future in New York City. As I said before, schools
9 are often the heart of the community, and adult
10 literacy classes have stepped up, invest, enhance the
11 funding to adult literacy programs, double the rate
12 so that we can provide the needed services and let's
13 support our communities. I thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

16 Next, we have Migdalia Cortez followed by Angie
17 Rendon Caicedo. Migdalia, you can go ahead when the
18 Sergeant calls time.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Hearing no
21 response from Migdalia, we will move on to Angie
22 Rendon Caicedo. Angie, you can go ahead when the
23 Sergeant calls time.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 ANGIE RENDON CAICEDO: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Angie Rendon Caicedo. I'm originally from
4 Columbia. I'm part of the Fifth Avenue Committee
5 family. I would like to tell you something about the
6 impact of the adult literacy pilot project that you
7 have included in the city budget. First, I got a job
8 because of that funding so thank you. I was hired by
9 the Fifth Avenue Committee as a Program Assistant to
10 help to the (INAUDIBLE) of the services, the
11 (INAUDIBLE) students need and to connect them with
12 those services. Working with great students and
13 colleagues, I learned more about the challenges
14 facing the immigrant community in Sunset Park,
15 Brooklyn. Something I already knew having to come to
16 the U.S. at the age of 14, I know how hard it is when
17 your own rights seem limited. We screened many, many
18 students for what is called wraparound services. We
19 help them get COVID information, get vaccinated, get
20 food stamps, legal assistance, digital literacy
21 services, get a Chromebook, a hot spot, and learn how
22 to use them. The Fifth Avenue Committee developed an
23 online banking curriculum and internet safety
24 protocols. We refer eligible students to job training
25 programs. We connect families with 3 and 4-year-old

1
2 children to the Pre-K for All program and assisted
3 them with the online registration. We partnered with
4 the New York Immigration Coalition to offer Know Your
5 Rights workshops. With the pilot funding, we can send
6 4 people speaking 3 different languages into the
7 community to connect them with services that enhance
8 their lives and we did the normal stuff, we taught
9 English, collected data, kept files, and went to
10 rallies. We were able to do this because of this
11 funding, because of the idea there is more to be
12 done. It is sometimes hard to look at data and get a
13 picture of what happens in an English class. You can
14 see attendance and test scores, but you cannot see
15 what happens when a community of people really care
16 about each other. It is hard to show in numbers. You
17 can talk with them, hear their struggles, if you have
18 the resources you can help them. If you can help
19 them, you have done so much more for them and their
20 family...

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

22 ANGIE RENDON CAICEDO: Than just teaching
23 them English. It is something great seeing how a
24 small change can do so much. I know this is true
25 because I work in this field. Thanks to this pilot

1
2 program, I can work so, again, thank you for my job
3 and thank you for this support to my Hispanic
4 community. Thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

7 Next, we will call Liza Schwartzwald followed by
8 Ariel Savransky and then Giovanna Perciballi. Liza,
9 you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

11 LIZA SCHWARTZWALD: Hi. Good afternoon,
12 everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to
13 testify today. My name is Liza Schwartzwald, and I'm
14 the Senior Manager of Education Policy at the New
15 York Immigration Coalition.

16 First, I want to thank the Council and
17 the Mayor for the 6.7-million-dollar enhancement in
18 this year's budget for adult literacy and to thank
19 the DYCD for your testimony and also your work.

20 In support of adult learners, we would
21 call on the Council, the Mayor, and DYCD to support
22 the 3 critical steps everyone's been talking about
23 today. First, the additional 6.7 million dollars in
24 funding in FY-23 for RFP-contracted programs should
25 be used to fund enhancements for the same number of

1 students as those programs served in FY-22 and not be
2 used to try to expand services to more students at
3 the same unsustainably low rate.

4
5 Second, DYCD should commit to increasing
6 the per-student funding rate in the next RFP from the
7 950 dollars it is now to at least 1,900 dollars per
8 student.

9 Third, DYCD should allow for remote and
10 hybrid instruction both in FY-23 and in the upcoming
11 adult literacy RFP.

12 Unfortunately, the 950-dollar per-student
13 rate has not been raised sufficiently in years as
14 many programs have talked about, and it's a real
15 struggle for programs to supplement that funding to
16 continue paying qualified teachers and maintaining
17 usable spaces for classes so the amount per student
18 has not reflected the significant increases in the
19 cost of running programs and maintaining living wages
20 for staff. The 2.5-million-dollar adult literacy
21 pilot program that was passed by the Council last
22 year and renewed very happily in this year's budget
23 really provides a template for what a fully funded
24 adult literacy program can look like. This additional
25 money has enabled programs to make significant

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improvements to the quality of services they provide including updating and expanding curriculum, adding and improving remote services, increasing focus on digital literacy, increased student outreach, and supporting some of the 456,000 limited-English-proficient parents of children in the city. That's actually 30 percent of all the parents in the city are limited English proficient so we need these programs for them too.

Finally, I just want to reiterate that we really do significant...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

LIZA SCHWARTZWALD: Flexibility for remote and hybrid planning for all of the families that really can't get to these programs for all sorts of reasons.

Thank you so much for your time and happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

Next, we will call Ariel Savransky followed by Giovanna Perciballi. Ariel, you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Thank you. Good
3 afternoon and thank you, Chairs Hanif and Stevens and
4 Members of the New York City Council Committees on
5 Immigration and Youth Services for the opportunity to
6 testify. My name is Ariel Savransky, and I am a
7 Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation
8 of New York. I just want to start by thanking the
9 Council and the administration for the historic
10 investments in adult literacy programs in the FY-23
11 budget. Also, we really appreciate our Council
12 champions and are so grateful for your poignant
13 questions and deep understanding of the issues our
14 providers face. I just want to touch on 3 critical
15 points which you've already heard from my colleagues
16 so I'll be brief.

17 I know this is no surprise, I'd like to
18 echo that the additional 6.7 million in funding in
19 FY-23 must be used to fund enhancements so additional
20 wraparound services, supports, and resources for the
21 same number of students as those programs served in
22 FY-22 and not to expand services to more students at
23 the same low rate.

24 Next, DYCD must commit to increasing the
25 per-student funding rate in the next RFP from 950

1
2 dollars per student to at least 1,900 dollars per
3 student. We know that the 950 dollars has not been
4 increased in many years. We also know that the true
5 cost per slot is about 3,700 dollars. While this goal
6 has not been reached, the 2.5 million dollars adult
7 literacy pilot program really allowed us to get a bit
8 closer. You've heard from many of the programs that
9 got this funding about the amazing work they've been
10 able to do with additional funding. It's really
11 monumental, and so we really need to take that into
12 account as we prepare for this new RFP. We're really
13 looking forward to seeing the concept paper once it's
14 released, and I really just want to give a shoutout
15 to Council Member Stevens for emphasizing how
16 important it is for providers to be part of this
17 process.

18 Last, this will also come as no surprise,
19 but DYCD must allow for remote and hybrid
20 instruction...

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

22 ARIEL SAVRANSKY: both in FY-23 and in the
23 next RFP. You've heard what programs have been able
24 to do virtually throughout the pandemic, and it's
25 really important that we build on these successes and

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I know we heard from DYCD earlier that we should not abandon the skills developed during the pandemic and we should build on success by integrating online teaching to future literacy programming. We really appreciate the acknowledgement of the positive impact of the positive that this has had for students. We really hope that the Council and the administration can allow for hybrid and remote classes in addition to in-person in order to provide greater opportunity for New York's language learners to access these necessary resources.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

Next, we will move on to Giovanna Perciballi followed by Noah Veloz and then Julia Quinton. Giovanna, you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

GIOVANNA PERCIBALLI: Good afternoon. My name is Giovanna Perciballi, and I am the Assistant Director at the CUNY New York City College of Technologies Adult Learning Center. I'm testifying today to highlight the impact adult literacy classes

1
2 make on the immigrant community and the New York City
3 community but also to embrace remote and hybrid
4 instruction and shift the way education for adults is
5 viewed. One of our longtime students, Carmen, first
6 started with us in an ESOL class then moved on to a
7 high school equivalency class in Spanish and then
8 returned to take a contextualized ESOL class for
9 students learning to be healthcare workers. Carmen
10 just finished and is hoping to get a job as a direct
11 support professional. The funds for Carmen's HSE
12 class came from the City Council adult literacy
13 discretionary funding as most government funding
14 prohibits instruction in a language other than
15 English, which is why we fully support NYCCAL's
16 budget priority to renew the funding and thank the
17 City Council for including it in the FY-23 budget.
18 Carmen was able to pass the TASC exam after only 3
19 months of classes, opening the doors to greater
20 opportunities for jobs and for more educational
21 opportunities.

22 I also want to recognize that the
23 availability of remote and hybrid classes has really
24 expanded our reach in the community. We're located in
25 downtown Brooklyn, but providing an educational

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opportunity that didn't exist before COVID with remote classes really expanded our reach. To quote Carmen, "after the pandemic came, I couldn't continue with my study plans which discouraged me and I gave up. I gave up my goals and my dreams to continue studying." That was until she began taking virtual classes again with us. Mothers with young children at home can learn English, those with mobility issues can get to class without frustration, and we've even had taxi drivers pull over to participate in class. Adult learners experienced success with virtual instruction in a way that K-12 haven't. Our staff and teachers have spent the past 2 years getting training and implementing strategies around remote learning so that having a remote option has become a new normal. In addition to the real financial...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

GIOVANNA PERCIBALLI: Burden of travel expenses, our students have expressed legitimate fears around traveling on the subway, especially for evening classes. Childcare no longer needs to be viewed as a barrier to education if we can continue to provide remote or hybrid instruction.

1
2 Carmen is still working towards her goal
3 of attending college, and it just gives me great joy
4 to know that we played a role in that.

5 Thank you for allowing me to testify
6 today.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

9 Next, we will call Noah Veloz followed by Julia
10 Quinton and then Laura Rizzotto. Noah, you can go
11 ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

13 NOAH VELOZ: Thank you. Thank you so much.
14 I've been blown away by the comments I've heard today
15 from the Council and from those present advocating
16 for what we do. My name is Noah Veloz. I'm the
17 current Program Director of the BronxWorks ESL
18 program in the South Bronx, one of the programs
19 participating in the adult literacy pilot project. I
20 definitely second what I've heard today about hybrid
21 instruction access issues, but I will speak on the
22 importance of enhancing the funding rate per
23 participant. It's intuitive to understand that
24 English classes are important for adult immigrants,
25 but it is less intuitive to understand what this

1 means. We don't just teach English for citizenship.
2 We teach how to navigate complex bureaucracies, we
3 teach students how to use their voice in the
4 community, we teach students, some who have never
5 learned to sign their name or set foot in a formal
6 classroom, how to become lifelong learners for them
7 and their children because they're learning does not
8 start with and will not end with our programs. We
9 employ trauma-informed teaching methods to help
10 stabilize relationships and to help our students
11 restore the autonomy lost in the immigration process.
12 We connect our students to food, housing, workforce
13 development, health insurance, and other wraparound
14 services. We encourage our students to set goals
15 towards GED, college, and employment, and we prepare
16 them for job interviews, citizenship exams, and
17 parent-teacher conferences, and, of course, we also
18 teach English. To do this mission, a teacher and a
19 classroom is not enough as many of our students lack
20 foundational skills, stability, and support necessary
21 to engage with long-term learning, especially since
22 our students with the lowest literacy levels are
23 consistently rejected for adult basic education, HSE,
24 and the reading and writing classes. For many years
25

1
2 now, adult literacy has worked miracles with funds
3 that sometimes don't even support the salaries of our
4 instructors. We are asking for this enhanced price
5 per participant because we're not just teaching
6 English. We are and always have been working to close
7 the loop of education and to empower the parents of
8 our children and the leaders in our neighborhoods.
9 The pilot projects, case manager projects...

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

11 NOAH VELOZ: Proving the necessity of case
12 managers, counselors, admin assistants, full-time
13 staff, supplemental educational resources like
14 reading and writing classes that cannot be found
15 else, resources we have not had previously. We are
16 grateful for the opportunity to show through these
17 pilot projects what we can do when we receive more
18 appropriate funding, and we hope to continue to
19 receive your support. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
22 Next, we will have Julie Quinton followed by Laura
23 Rizzotto and Breck Gordon. Julie, you can go ahead
24 when the Sergeant calls time.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 JULIE QUINTON: Thank you so much. I'm
3 continuing the redhead parade. I'm Julie Quinton. I
4 direct Make the Road's New York Adult Literacy
5 Program, and it's an honor to be here with Noah and
6 with all the other folks who have just testified as
7 well as with yourselves. You've been amazing
8 advocates on our behalf.

9 Make the Road has 25,000 members, and
10 we're serving over 800 students a year. Very happy to
11 be able to speak today. We basically at Make the Road
12 are trying to work with the Council and
13 administration to ensure that the adult literacy
14 budgets every year address both the depth of the need
15 which we know is out there and really do it in a
16 thoughtful and effective manner, and that means
17 funding providers like us in ways that don't put the
18 organizations like ours at financial risks and also
19 it means trusting our ability to deliver programming
20 effective, whether in-person or virtually. It's been
21 really inspiring to hear people speak to that. I'm
22 going to just put our own spin on it.

23 We did not receive pilot funding this
24 year but are very pro the concept of enhancement
25 funding. We would love to see the newly allocated

1
2 adult lit funding be distributed as enhancement
3 funding. That would allow us to pay for dedicated
4 curriculum rating time, expand professional
5 development time, purchase hardware for classes, and
6 to keep case managers on staff who only started 6
7 months ago with funds from a very short-term DYCD
8 initiative that's timing out. We also really want
9 enhancement to be codified in the RFP as people have
10 been saying. Like Jeff, we really need a minimum of
11 doubling. The rate increase is a long time in coming.
12 The last RFP was released many, many years ago, and
13 we've been getting one-year extensions so we've seen
14 no cost-of-living increases. We'd love to have funds
15 cover our costs. Right now, that's a dream, and we're
16 kind of reliant on organizational slush funds and
17 general operating and chewing gum and hope. Lastly, I
18 want to call on the DYCD..

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

20 JULIE QUINTON: To increase instructional
21 delivery flexibility as my colleagues have said. We
22 have been very successful at delivering it that way,
23 and we believe we can continue to do that and
24 programs need to be trusted to be able to provide
25 instruction in a variety of means.

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CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much.

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JULIE QUINTON: Thank you.

4

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

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JULIE QUINTON: I appreciate it.

6

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Next, we

7

have Laura Rizzotto followed by Breck Gordon and Nona

8

Agranova (phonetic).

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Seeing no

11

response from Laura, I will call Breck Gordon

12

followed by Nona Agranova.

13

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

14

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: I don't see

15

a response from Breck. Is Nona Agranova on this call?

16

That is actually the end of our panelists. Is there

17

anyone that was not called and would like to testify?

18

I think we're done, Chair.

19

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I did have

20

a question for Noah on the point you made about some

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of the students getting rejected. Could you expand on

22

that?

23

NOAH VELOZ: Yes, I'd be very happy to. In

24

the 4 years that I've been in this position, in South

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Bronx we get a lot of students from certain

1
2 communities, especially indigenous students for South
3 America and our women from smaller communities in
4 West Africa who never got the opportunity to do any
5 sort of formal schooling so they come with, no one's
6 a zero level, but they come with very, very, very
7 little reading and writing skills and so we can get
8 them up to a certain level of speaking regardless
9 with a lot of effort and support, but what we have
10 found is that every single time we try to turn them,
11 even to our own agency which I'm not managing, they
12 say we can't take them. They need to have a 6th grade
13 level of reading and writing for them to begin our
14 pre-HSE or ABE course. The lowest I've seen is
15 someone say 3rd. I've even asked our Program Manager,
16 Rakeesha Glover, at DYCD who is primarily a manager
17 of GED and HSE programs. She provided me a list of a
18 dozen different programs she said would be able to
19 help us, and, with our counselor, which again we
20 really need, we contacted each of them and one-by-one
21 they said no, we cannot help anybody that low. I've
22 heard rumors that there exist programs, they're
23 usually in other boroughs, in Brooklyn, our students
24 are in the Bronx. I've never found a place to send
25 these students, and, since I've worked here, the

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number one thing that we have gotten is teacher, I
need reading, I need writing. That's all they care
about.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Right. Thank you so
much, Noah. This is very insightful, and I'd love to
connect in the coming weeks to talk more about this
and see what we can do together. Thank you.

NOAH VELOZ: I would love that.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: This was a very... oh,
do you have?

LISA DIOMANDE: May I just add to this...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure, go for it.

LISA DIOMAND: West Africans come with no
education, and I've taught a lot of them myself, and
what we did was we just slid them into the program
despite the fact that they did not have...

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you speak into
the mic so that our friends on the Zoom...

LISA DIOMAND: In my time at the YMCA, we
got a lot of West Africans that had never even
stepped into a classroom, don't know how to pick up a
pencil, don't know what to do with a piece of paper
so we start with 0 and what we did was we just
slipped them into the program despite the fact that

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2 they were not meeting the requirement so it's a
3 question of the dedication of the program and we may
4 get problems about that because we have to then
5 justify their eligibility, but we're there to help
6 them at whatever level they're at. I also want to say
7 that this particular piece means that the whole ABE
8 level of learning is much broader than we can
9 acknowledge because people are coming in much lower
10 than the standard so it actually takes them much
11 longer to get past the ABE level into the pre or HSE
12 level, but we have to try to keep them in the process
13 because they need the learning.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Right, right. This is
15 very helpful to know, and I'd love to tease this out
16 even more so that we can determine what are the next
17 steps around this given that this is an issue. In the
18 few other hearings I've hosted, this hasn't come up
19 so I'm learning and want to continue just building on
20 my own advocacy around this and then use the support
21 of all the incredible providers who've shared
22 testimony today including from students on how to
23 improve on all points of access.

24 LISA DIOMAND: I don't know if anybody's
25 talked about this before, but there's also a big part

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2 of the native English-speaking community that a lot
3 of them come from bilingual homes or monolingual, not
4 English, is that their learning experience in K-12 is
5 so dismal that they also fall through the cracks and
6 they don't even come and try to get schooled. Again,
7 our numbers do not reflect the need, and we are not
8 looking at, when I hear 25 percent for native
9 speakers, I know, I live this experience but it's
10 still appalling to me that we let so much of our
11 local community overlooked, the immigrant thing is
12 great, ESL is wonderful. Of course, we want to
13 continue to do that, but we don't want to overlook
14 people that have already been here for several
15 generations that just keep slipping through the
16 cracks.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. Thank you
18 so much. Thank you all for your continued advocacy
19 and staying so engaged in this work and the effort to
20 make sure that all who need this program and these
21 services have access.

22 I will wrap up here. Thank you all so
23 much for sticking around including those who are on
24 Zoom and those listening elsewhere. We really, really
25 appreciate it, and we'll continue to expand on this

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conversation and work together. Thank you all so
much. [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 4, 2022