

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

And

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY

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June 30, 2022
Start: 1:18 P.M.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Sandra Ung
Chairperson

Alexa Avilés
Chairperson

Jennifer Gutiérrez
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Shahana K. Hanif
Lincoln Restler
Lynn C. Schulman

Diana Ayala
Charles Barron
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Darlene Mealy
Chi A. Ossé
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Julie Won
Shawn Abreu
Robert F. Holden
Vickie Paladino

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

Aixa Torres
Citywide Council of Presidents

Joseph Morrisroe
Deputy Commissioner and Executive Director of 311

Eva Trimble
Executive Vice President for Strategy and
Innovation at NYCHA

Tony Wooten
Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities

Kerri Jew
Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative
Officer for NYCHA

Marsellette Davis

Christina Banks

Lauretta Brumfield
Tenant Association President Coney Island

Ravi Reddi
Asian American Federation

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

Ross Joy
Red Hook Community Justice Center

Victor Bach
Community Service Society

Karen Blondel

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Hello, and welcome to
4 today's joint committee hearings on Governmental
5 Operation, Technology, and Public Housing. At this
6 time, could everybody please put your cell phones on
7 vibrate or on silent mode. If you wish to testify,
8 you have to fill out this testimony slip in the front
9 dais at the Sergeant at Arms desk. If you're online
10 and you want to submit testimony, you may do so at
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is
12 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you. Chair, you
13 may begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Good afternoon. I'm
15 City Council Member Sandra Ung, Chair of the
16 Committee on Governmental Operations. I'm thrilled to
17 be conducting today's jointly hearing-- sorry,
18 hearing jointly, the Committees on Technology and
19 Public Housing, and I'd like to thank my Co-chairs,
20 Council Members Jennifer Gutiérrez and Alexa Avilés
21 on all their hard work in putting this hearing
22 together. I would also like to recognize my
23 colleagues who have joined us today, Council Member
24 Schulman, Menin, Kagan, Paladino, Hanif, Abreu, De La
25 Rosa. At today's hearing, the committees will review
the work of the 311 customer service center in

3 providing critical government services information to
4 New York City residents, businesses, and visitors.

5 In addition, the Committees will examine some of the
6 unique challenges that certain communities have faced

7 in accessing the 311 system. I know Chair Avilés
8 will be speaking about some of the obstacles that

9 NYCHA residents have encountered when lodging housing
10 complaints via 311 and NYCHA's own customer contact

11 center. I share concerns, and I look forward to

12 exploring this issue in greater detail today. Having

13 said that, I'd like to focus my comments on the issue

14 that's been very important to me for a very long

15 time, the challenges faced by limited English-

16 proficient community in accessing government service

17 information, including through 311. As we all know,

18 New York City is a city of immigrants. It's also one

19 of the most linguistically diverse cities in the

20 world. New Yorkers speak over 200 different

21 languages, and nearly half of the City residents

22 speak a language other than English at home. Roughly

23 25 percent, or 1.8 million, New Yorkers are

24 considered limited English proficient. To its

25 credit, 311 call centers offers interpretation

services in over 175 different language and dialects.

3 Unfortunately, callers seeking to utilize these
4 separation frequently encounter obstacles and delays
5 that prevent them from accessing the information and
6 resource they need. In an ideal world, a caller
7 would dial 311, select their preferred language, and
8 then immediately be connected to interpreter who can
9 converse in that language selected. In practice,
10 however, callers who do not speak English [inaudible]
11 request translation services assistance from an
12 English-speaking operator. Then the caller has to
13 wait often for extended period of time before being
14 connected to interpreter. In some cases, when an
15 interpreter finally picks up, they don't speak the
16 correct language, leading to further confusion and
17 delays. In other cases, the caller doesn't realize
18 they're waiting for interpreter and hangs up before
19 they can be connected to someone who can help them.
20 Understand [sic] that a city as linguistically
21 diverse as New York operating a 311 call center
22 represents immense logistical challenge, and I know
23 our partners at 311 are committed to improving
24 language access, but I also want to be very clear,
25 limited English-proficient New Yorkers should not
receive second-rate service simply because they speak

3 another language. Their needs are no less important
4 and they deserve the same level access of government
5 services information as their English-speaking
6 neighbors. I'm happy to say the bills being heard by
7 the Committee on Technology today are bills that I
8 introduced in order to improve the translation
9 services offered by 311. The first bill is
10 Introduction number 206 which would require 311 to
11 report on a monthly basis the amount of time it takes
12 for a caller to be connected to interpreter. The
13 second bill, Introduction Number 296 will require 311
14 to utilize automatic language recognition software to
15 insist in identifying a caller's language. I am
16 hopeful that these bills will address some of the
17 issues that limited English-proficient New Yorkers
18 have encountered while calling 311, and I look
19 forward to discussing them in detail with the
20 Administration. And with that, I'd like to thank the
21 members of the public, the representations of the
22 Administration who has come to testify today. I'd
23 also like to thank Sebastian Bauchi [sp?] and C.J.
24 Murray from essential staff for their work in putting
25 this hearing together. And finally, I'd like to
thank my own Chief of Staff, Alexander Hart [sp?],

3 for his assistance. And now I turn it over to my co-
4 chairs, Council Member Gutiérrez for a statement.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair
6 Ung. Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Jennifer
7 Gutiérrez and I'm the Chair of the Committee on
8 Technology. I am happy to join my colleagues Chair
9 Ung and Chair Avilés in holding this joint hearing on
10 ensuring equal access to 311 and I'm looking forward
11 to discussing the 311 accessibility, especially as it
12 relates to the experience of limited English-
13 proficient New Yorkers and NYCHA residents who make
14 up close to a quarter of New York City's population.
15 New York City's 311 service is important, and as
16 such, we must do the work to understand its current
17 state of accessibility and what could be done to
18 expand this accessibility for the benefit of all New
19 Yorkers. The significance of New York City's 311
20 service should not be understated, as it provides the
21 residents and visitors of New York City with a simple
22 single point of contact for almost every City
23 Department. The 311 system makes it easier for New
24 Yorkers and visitors to communicate with the City
25 government, and likewise provides the City with a
direct line of communication to its populous.

2 Examples of these communications include
3 announcements about city services, alternate parking
4 information, resident reports on quality of life
5 issues, and requests for City services. Recent
6 history has also emphasized the significance of 311
7 access. NYC 311 has received unprecedently [sic] high
8 call volumes with pandemic-related issues and
9 tropical storm impacts, comprising the bulk of tens
10 of millions of calls and requests made to 311 in 2020
11 and 2021. Clearly, having NYC 311 available and
12 accessible is vital. Since the inception of the 311
13 system in 2003, New York City-- NYC 311 has evolved
14 to provide services through text messages, mobile
15 applications, and even social media. But while we
16 are proud of the growth of NYC 311, we understand
17 that there is still room to improve. For instance,
18 many service request types still do not have the
19 option to attach picture or videos. In addition,
20 submitting service requests can be overly complex,
21 requiring the user to go through multiple prompts and
22 web pages to finally submit their complaint.
23 Sometimes submitting a service request is not even
24 possible, as NYC 311 can redirect the user to its own
25 web page or an agency web page that does not accept

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3 service request, either due to technical problems or
4 other issues. This leaves New Yorkers often with
5 little choice but to abandon their attempt to submit
6 a service request. Moreover, NYC 311 still does not
7 allow for the submission of complaints on some
8 critical topics such as illicit film production
9 activity and broken traffic lights. Many have also
10 highlighted GPS location issues, leaving to an
11 inability to provide accurate location information
12 for their request, while others emphasize how 311 can
13 too easily close cases after insufficient
14 investigation from responding agencies with little
15 opportunity to follow up on issues if they persist.
16 Furthermore, unfortunately, not all 311 services are
17 available in languages other than English like Chair
18 Ung referenced. New York City is the center of
19 ethnic and cultural diversity with about 150
20 countries represented by its residents. Having 311
21 provide language access for all New Yorkers would
22 improve the vital connection between New Yorkers and
23 the city government and would also improve the
24 government's ability to understand and be weary of
25 the issues faced by the various ethnic communities
who call our city their home. To improve our NYC 311

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3 improving the function and oversight on our city's
4 311 service. I am looking forward to hearing
5 testimony from the Administration, experts, and
6 community advocates and learning what is currently
7 being done to improve access to 311 as well as what
8 more could be done. I will now turn it over to
9 Council Member Avilés.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. Good
11 afternoon. I am Council Member Alexa Avilés, Chair of
12 the Committee of Public housing, and I want to thank
13 also my co-chairs Council Member Ung and Council
14 Member Gutiérrez for holding this hearing. I'd also
15 like to thank all the NYCHA residents for-- NYCHA
16 residents, advocates and other members of the public
17 for attending today. My co-chairs have already
18 discussed the value of 311 and providing services to
19 New Yorkers more broadly. So as Chair of Public
20 Housing, I'd like to focus in on why it's important
21 for NYCHA residents to receive a voice at the table
22 today. Services like 311 aren't merely a tool.
23 They're essential for tenants to register complaints
24 about subpar housing conditions and to request
25 repairs when needed. 311 is not just a way to lodge
a complaint or make a repair request. It provides

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3 accountability mechanism to ensure that the City
4 follows through on those complaints or requests.
5 NYCHA residents have long been kept from accessing
6 this critical resource. Instead of contacting 311
7 like any other New Yorker, they use NYCHA's own
8 customer contact center. We might hear NYCHA insist
9 that their customer contact center is just as good if
10 not better for meeting residents' needs. But
11 complaints and work orders registered with CCC are
12 not publicly available and there are no consequences
13 when NYCHA fails to deliver on this request. We
14 already know that NYCHA has a 40 billion dollar
15 capital repair backlog. We know that there have been
16 decades of federal disinvestment. We know that the
17 Agency is struggling, but at the end of the day, the
18 people who suffer the most because of these big
19 sweeping problems are the residents themselves, and
20 that means we need to provide them with the best
21 possible means of accessing services. They deserve
22 their voices to be heard, for their homes to be in
23 good repair and for the means of holding NYCHA
24 accountable when violations aren't corrected. In
25 order to right this wrong, the City Council enacted
Local Law 127 last year to better integrate 311 and

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3 the customer contact center. The law requires 311 to
4 take complaints from NYCHA residents and to publish
5 annual reports on complaints and requests at NYCHA.
6 Previously, when a 311-user called about an issue at
7 NYCHA development, they were simply routed back to
8 the call center, but now we are hearing reports that
9 the law is being ignored and that nothing much has
10 actually changed. Again, I must underscore NYCHA
11 residents are New York City residents. They deserve,
12 and quite frankly, pay for all the goods and services
13 that the New York City government is compelled to
14 provide. They do not need to be isolated, set apart,
15 or treated as second-class citizens. They should
16 have top-notch, quality, responsive public services
17 from all New York City agencies, including HPD,
18 including 311, and every agency in our city
19 government. And that's not the only problem with
20 NYCHA and 311. We've also learned that RAD and PACT
21 tenants are in a uniquely difficult situation. When
22 they call 311, they're told their buildings are not
23 registered. So it's the same old cycle, and they're
24 punted back to the call center, and they call the
25 call center. They say they are no longer under
private-- they are no longer part of NYCHA. It is an

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3 awful sight. So, when they call-- when they call the
4 call center, excuse me, as I mentioned, they're told
5 now they're under private management. So which is
6 it? What recourse do the tenants have? Do these
7 tenants-- excuse me. What does the Administration
8 need to do to fix this, to make sure they have clear
9 lines of guidance? The committee recognizes that
10 integrating these services is not a fix to all,
11 obviously, of NYCHA's problems, or that it will
12 magically resolve the backlog of the 600,000+
13 outstanding work orders. But at a bare minimum we
14 need to ensure that NYCHA residents have a way to
15 track what's going on with their work orders, the
16 same as any other resident in New York City. today,
17 the committee expects to hear from the Administration
18 about why NYCHA residents still do not have the same
19 access that every other New Yorker does, and why we
20 as the City Council-- and what we as the City Council
21 can do to strengthen the laws' requirements. I'd also
22 like to briefly touch on Resolution number 68,
23 sponsored by Council Member Kagan. This resolution
24 calls on New York State Legislature and HUD to make
25 serious action to improve accountability over NYCHA
by auditing how NYCHA responds to residents'

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3 complaints and requests. If NYCHA is closing work
4 order tickets without doing the work, we should know.
5 If NYCHA is taking an unacceptably long time to
6 resolve an issue, especially one that affects
7 residents' health and safety like heat and hot water,
8 we should know. If NYCHA isn't providing residents a
9 way to track the work orders, we should know. That's
10 what this bill is about. It is about accountability.
11 So thank you again for joining us today. I look
12 forward to a productive conversation, and with that I
13 will now turn it over to Council Member Menin to say
14 a few words about her bill along with other bill co-
15 sponsors.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much.
17 I really want to thank Chair Avilés, Chair Gutiérrez,
18 and Chair Ung for today's incredibly important
19 hearing. Even today the New York City Department of
20 Health and Mental Hygiene classifies the COVID-19
21 pandemic as a medium alert level in the City of New
22 York. While New Yorkers can obviously now test at
23 home, they can also visit testing sites both public
24 and private across the City. Unfortunately, my
25 office has heard from many constituents that there is
no standardized process for 311 to assist with

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3 testing site complaints. Intro Number 55 would have
4 the Department of Information Technology and
5 Telecommunications create a category when contacting
6 311 for tracking and referring all COVID-19 testing
7 site complaints. During the height of the Omicron
8 variant wave, testing sites that promised results in
9 one to two days literally returned results in 10 days
10 or later, if at all. Other constituents who
11 contacted my office felt uncomfortable with invasive
12 questions about their personal information, believing
13 that these testing sites were a scam. When New
14 Yorkers call 311 today to complain about a COVID
15 testing site, 311 is not taking the complaint and
16 instead is referring caller's complaints to the
17 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the New York
18 State Department of Health, or the private
19 organization behind the testing site. This is not
20 accountability. New Yorkers deserve clear answers
21 when calling about testing sites. This legislation
22 would make an accountable and transparent system for
23 New Yorkers. There's no reason for a confusing
24 process when contacting 311 after more than two years
25 after the start of the pandemic. New York City's 311
must track complaints of specific COVID-19 testing

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3 locations within the City so that we can take action
4 and stop bad actors. After this legislation was
5 introduced, the Department of Consumer and Worker
6 Protection did create at my request an intake website
7 for reporting COVID testing sites that misrepresent
8 turnaround times. This is a great step forward in
9 protecting New Yorkers, but there's much more
10 accountability that has to occur. I thank the Chairs
11 for allowing me to speak and I look forward to
12 today's hearing. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you, Council
14 Member Menin. I also like to recognize Council
15 Member Sanchez, Bottcher, Ossé for joining us today.
16 And I'd like now to welcome Council Member Kagan to
17 give a brief statement about Resolution 68.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you, Chair
19 Avilés, Chair Gutiérrez, Chair Ung for this
20 opportunity to introduce my Resolution 68 together
21 with my colleagues. Many of my colleagues cosigned
22 to this Resolution asking for New York State
23 Legislature and New York and federal Housing and
24 Urban Department to audit NYCHA manager's
25 responsiveness to tenants' complaints. What is going
on for many, many decades, I would say, is completely

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3 absolutely unacceptable and cannot be explained by
4 chronic disinvestment to NYCHA. We don't need 40
5 billion dollars for property manager to be at Tenant
6 Association meetings. We don't need 40 billion
7 dollars to respond to emails or phone calls,
8 complaints from tenants. We don't need 40 billion
9 dollars for many of these things. So my resolution
10 is very simple. It calls for New York State
11 Legislature and Federal Government HUD to audit NYCHA
12 property manager's responsiveness to tenants'
13 complaints. Every day I am spending most of my day
14 every day-- I represent Coney Island and Marlboro
15 Houses. I spent hours and hours [inaudible] lack of
16 heat and hot water, lack of cooking gas, not working
17 elevators, water leaks in apartments, rats and the
18 roaches' infestation, and I can go on and on and on.
19 It's absolutely unacceptable, and I believe the
20 property managers should face some kind of
21 consequences for ignoring tenants' concerns and calls
22 and emails for many, many months. Thank you so much
23 for this opportunity.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll now call up our
25 first panel. Our first scheduled panelists is Aixa
Torres. After that we will hear testimony from the

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3 Administration. Ms. Torres, you will have three
4 minutes to provide your testimony.

5 AIXA TORRES: Good afternoon. I was in a
6 meeting with the TA Presidents from NYCHA from
7 Manhattan South and North and with the Borough
8 President. And so I thank you for allowing me to
9 speak. We're going to talk about the call center.
10 We're going to talk about 311, and we're also going
11 to talk about the blatant discrimination when it
12 comes to residents in public housing when they call
13 311, when NYCHA has not responded to the needs of the
14 residents in terms of repairs or things that need to
15 be done. Before I came on call, I spoke to my
16 attorney and we were talking about-- because we had
17 an issue in Alfred E. Smith and we did-- we were
18 doing a 311 complaint about our health issues. As I
19 speak to you today, the health issues with the air
20 quality in Alfred E. Smith are becoming dire. And so
21 we were then sent right back to NYCHA, put through a
22 loop on the 718. The call center has been the worst
23 thing that has ever happened to the residents in
24 public housing. That call center needs to be
25 dismantled, needs to be the way it was, and nobody's
going to lose their job if the unions have a

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3 question, because everybody's who is the call center
4 should be assigned this 300 and something
5 development, assigned to a development where they're
6 the one person who people know this is the person I
7 go to to file my complaints and my tickets, get a
8 receipt and know what's going to happen, not this
9 fiasco that when you go on the call it goes through
10 the loop-- and that's in English. Forget about if
11 you ask for a language, right? And I've gotten
12 complaints, and my development is basically Spanish,
13 Asian, Chinese, Asian, and I do have other Asian
14 residents that are not Chinese speaking, and then
15 English, of course, right? And the calls don't get
16 through. And so the issue becomes one of how do you
17 document that you've made a call or you've tried to
18 to a repair while your apartment is falling apart.
19 I'm sitting here-- when I leave here I'm going to the
20 clinic to get a blood test and an x-ray because of
21 mold in my apartment. The health issue that this has
22 created, and the fact that we really don't have a
23 system where we can actually document it, especially
24 for the elderly and those who are non-English
25 speaking to be able to say I called or somebody
listened to me. It is unconscionable. And I thank

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3 you for listening to me on behalf of not only my
4 district and my development, but all the residents
5 who live in public housing, interim Chair [sic] and I
6 sit on the citywide council of Presidents. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much,
9 Mr. Torres. I think we can go on to--

10 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I'd now
11 like to welcome Council Member Robert Holden, sponsor
12 of Introduction Number 167 to give a statement on his
13 bill.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair,
15 for providing us the opportunity today to discuss my
16 bill Intro 167 which would allow 311 mobile
17 application or website users to submit a request or
18 complaint with no more than four steps. I am a big
19 proponent of 311. As so-- you know, so are my
20 constituents. My precinct, the 104 precinct which
21 covers much of my district had 21,000 311 calls year-
22 to-date. So that's second in the City, the highest
23 number of calls in any precinct, like I mentioned, in
24 the City. I use 311 daily, so I know the frustration
25 my constituents go through when the process to use
311 drags out unnecessarily. We need the user

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3 experience to be easy and efficient. What is the
4 problem, you know, identify the problem, where is the
5 problem located, and you answer it. New Yorkers are
6 always on the move. If the app or web page has too
7 many questions for a simple complaint, or the user
8 comes away with a feeling of frustration, there's a
9 good chance that New Yorker is never going to use 311
10 service again, and they get frustrated. So, when 311
11 is at its best, the service promotes civic engagement
12 and shows New Yorkers that City agencies care about
13 their concerns. There is also a gratifying feeling
14 to the process. You know, you see a problem, your
15 report it, and the City takes action to fix that
16 problem. So, we should not underestimate the sense
17 of community and responsibilities New Yorkers feel
18 when they see the system working. The last Council
19 passed my bill that improved the accuracy of 311's
20 map. I am looking forward to working with colleagues
21 to also pass Intro 167 which would mandate that
22 DoITT, 311, and all city agencies who are a part of
23 the 311 system take a long, hard look at 311 intakes
24 and determine how they can simplify the process,
25 making it more than-- no more than four steps to the
end user. I look forward to hearing the testimony

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3 today and thank Chair Gutiérrez and the rest of the
4 Chairs and the staff of the Technology Committee,
5 especially Counsel Irene Bahavsky [sp?] to my right
6 and my staff for drafting this legislation. Thank
7 you, Chair.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [inaudible] Council
9 Member. I'd now like to call up the representatives
10 from the Administration to provide their testimony.
11 And before we begin, I'll administer the affirmation.
12 To all members of the Administration who will be
13 offering testimony or available for questions, please
14 raise your right hands. I will call on each of you
15 individually for a response. Do you affirm to tell
16 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
17 before this committee and to respond honestly to
18 Council Member questions? Joe Morrisroe?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:
20 [inaudible]

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Eva Trimble?

22 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: [inaudible]

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Tony Wooden?

24 SUPERVISOR WOODEN: [inaudible]

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may
begin your testimony.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
4 and good afternoon Chairs Ung, Chair Gutiérrez, Chair
5 Avilés, and members of the City Council Committee on
6 Governmental Operations, Technology, and Public
7 Housing. My name is Joe Morrisroe, and I am Deputy
8 Commissioner and Executive Director of New York City
9 311 under the Office of Technology and Innovation,
10 also known as OTI. Thank you for the opportunity to
11 testify today on 311 operations, language access, and
12 the legislation before the committees. Here with me
13 today is Eva Trimble, Executive Vice President for
14 Strategy and Innovation at the New York City Housing
15 Authority, and Tony Wooden, ASL Direct Program
16 Supervisor at the Mayor's Office of People with
17 Disabilities. It has been my honor to serve as
18 Executive Director of 311 since 2008 and to represent
19 the wonderful and diverse team of people that make up
20 the customer service frontline of city government.
21 311 reports directly to OTI, an alignment that
22 underscores the importance of this operation and its
23 critical service to the City. OTI provides support
24 for the 311 organization and works collaboratively
25 with 311 on the continual evolution and enhancements
to the service delivery and customer experience of

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3 311. As Executive Director, I oversee all aspects of
4 311, from the operation of the most familiar
5 component, the call center, to the creation and
6 implementation of multiple customer-facing channels,
7 performance results and quality control measures, as
8 well as interaction with City agencies, and data
9 collection. New York City is one of the most
10 multicultural places in the world and its diversity
11 makes it the greatest place to live. I thank the
12 Council for inviting me in to discuss how 311
13 provides quick and easy access to New York City
14 government services and information with the highest
15 possible level of customer service in New York's
16 various communities. As you may know, 311 just
17 reached a milestone in customer service this month
18 when we received our 500 millionth customer contact,
19 which was a call in Spanish for the IDNYC Card
20 program. 311 is available 24 hours a day, seven days
21 a week, 365 days a year. Customers can get help in
22 175 languages by calling 311. People who are deaf or
23 hard of hearing or have a speech disability can text
24 us at 311-692 also use a mobile app and Twitter, or
25 use a Video Relay Service or use TTY or Text
Telephone. The 311 process relies on systems

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3 supported by OTI and partnerships with city agencies
4 to ensure a customer has access to information,
5 assistance, and services through a variety of
6 channels including the call center, 311 Online, text,
7 mobile app and social media. To understand 311
8 operation and customer experience, it is helpful to
9 understand the flow of 311 service delivery, from
10 customer inquiries and requests to the answers
11 provided and actions taken, and the confirmation
12 provided. With few exceptions, public interactions
13 with 311 result in one of the following outcomes:
14 First, it's an information request. As an example,
15 when is my recycling pick-up day? Second is a
16 referral to an external entity. Example is a
17 transfer to the MTA for services that they handle.
18 And third is a service request, sometimes known as a
19 complaint. An example is submitting a ticket. Since
20 311's launch in March 2003, it has received over 345
21 million calls and an additional 155 million customer
22 contacts in our digital channels. Originally
23 launched as a call center, New York City 311 has
24 evolved into the most comprehensive municipal
25 government customer service platform in the nation.
311 received 40 million customer contacts in 2021 and

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3 has been a vital resource for New Yorkers throughout
4 the pandemic. On an average day, 311 interacts with
5 over 100,000 constituents and for an average month
6 311 receives 1.6 million calls, 1.4 million online
7 visits to the companion 311 Online website, 187,000
8 mobile app touches, 30,000 text messages and serves
9 2,300 customers on social media, in addition to
10 publishing city programs, information and services to
11 our 433,000 social media followers. For further
12 context, on an annual basis New York City 311
13 receives more calls than all other U.S. City 311 call
14 centers combined. The 311 mission is aligned with
15 the Administration's goals and vision on equity.
16 Most notably, it focuses on providing the public with
17 equitable service delivery through quick, easy access
18 to all New York City government services and
19 information while maintaining the highest possible
20 level of customer service. The 311 team is focused
21 on meeting our customers where they are by providing
22 an array of channel options to contact the City,
23 ranging from robust self-service solutions to
24 outstanding customer service delivered by
25 professional, polite, and well-trained
representatives. In annual customer satisfaction

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3 surveys conducted by the CFI group over the past
4 decade, 311 ranked to-- I'm sorry, 311 ranked equal
5 to or better in delivering customer service than
6 the best contact centers in the private sector and
7 also far surpassed the best in government centers.
8 Historically, 311's aggregate Net Promoter Score,
9 known as NPS, the leading metric for gauging customer
10 satisfaction across all industries in the U.S., 311
11 exceeded the scores of Apple, JetBlue and Trader
12 Joe's. This outstanding performance reflects the
13 dedication and commitment of the customer service
14 professionals who work at 311 and proudly serve their
15 fellow New Yorkers. It is for these reasons that New
16 York City 311 is the recognized model for service
17 delivery and performance reporting for governments
18 across the nation and around the world who study the
19 New York City 311 model when considering launching
20 their customer service platforms. On language access,
21 Local Law 30 requires covered agencies to appoint
22 language access coordinators, translate commonly
23 distributed documents into 10 designated languages,
24 provide telephonic interpretation in at least 100
25 languages, and develop a language access
implementation plan, among other requirements. 311

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3 is in compliance with this law. 311 provides

4 telephonic interpretation in up to 175 languages

5 through a third-party vendor, Language Line.

6 Language Line provides interpretation and translation

7 services for up to 175 languages and is available for

8 free to the customers 24 hours a day, seven days a

9 week. 311 also provides additional options for

10 customers who speak a language other than English or

11 may be limited English proficient. For the phone

12 channel, a customer can access announcements and

13 messages in the language Integrated Voice Response

14 system. Spanish speakers can utilize the Natural

15 Language Understanding application to receive

16 information and answers to frequently asked questions

17 without having to wait to speak with an agent.

18 Spanish speakers may also receive assistance from a

19 311 customer service representative who speaks

20 Spanish. Annually, 311 services approximately one

21 million calls in languages other than English and has

22 provided service in 92 non-English languages in 2021.

23 We understand that serving such a diverse customer

24 base comes with challenges and that there is more

25 work to be done. To address this, 311 has partnered

with The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to

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3 review 311 and engages with customers with limited
4 English proficiency. We have already made
5 improvements to customer service-- to customer
6 experience handling as a result. Based on Council
7 feedback, 311 implemented a technology enhancement
8 that allows the language name to be passed to the
9 call center representative when a customer selects a
10 language option. Now, when a customer presses a
11 language option, like Russian or Korean, the
12 representative receives a pop-up that indicates the
13 language preference. This allows faster connection
14 to an interpreter and a better customer experience.
15 311 implemented customer satisfaction surveys in 2021
16 in the 10 designated citywide languages that
17 leveraged our technology and align with our business
18 practices. We are learning directly from the LEP
19 community where we excel and where we need
20 improvement. Lastly, I'm excited to announce that
21 311 is working to roll out a pilot program in Fiscal
22 Year 23 to expand our service to the WhatsApp
23 messaging platform. Keeping with our motto "meeting
24 our customers where they are," 311 will expand the
25 number of customer service channels available to the
public to better reach all New Yorkers. I will now

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3 turn to the legislation under consideration today. On
4 Intro 55, the operation of the COVID-19 testing site
5 complaint, we understand the intent of this bill and
6 support a more streamlined approach to reporting
7 complaints directly-- I'm sorry-- reporting
8 complaints related to COVID-19 testing sites.

9 However, as currently written, 311 would not be able
10 to meet the requirements to fulfill this legislation
11 due to the multitude of agencies covering COVID test
12 sites. We are open to discussing ways to achieve the
13 intent of the legislation within the parameters of
14 the 311 system's complaint feedback loop. Intro 167,
15 the number of steps to submit 311 service requests on
16 the website and mobile application. I understand and
17 appreciate the desire to streamline the process for
18 submitting complaints, and where possible, we
19 encourage agencies to collect information in the most
20 efficient way. Whenever the service request is
21 driven by 311, it's always four steps or under.

22 Circumstances under which it may be more than four
23 steps depends on whether the form is on an agency's
24 legacy platform. For many complaints via the website,
25 311 presents the four-step process as what, where,
when-- I'm sorry, what, where, who, and review. This

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3 allows for a consistent customer experience across
4 many service requests. On mobile, there may be even
5 fewer steps. There are circumstances under which an
6 agency's form is used for intake that may not follow
7 the same four-step pattern. If there are specific
8 complaints that require more than four steps, I will
9 take that back to our team to discuss with the agency
10 in charge of addressing those service requests. Intro
11 206, reporting on wait times for interpreters. We
12 support the idea of creating more transparency and
13 accountability of language access. We are currently
14 reviewing available data with our vendor and believe
15 we may be able to report monthly averages of wait
16 times. We look forward to discussing this bill
17 further to reach an agreement on level of data to
18 share based on availability. Intro 240, requiring 311
19 to update complaints available by the effective date
20 of a new Local Law that involves service requests:
21 Having 311 monitoring all citywide legis-- citywide
22 legislation, excuse me, is not a core competency of
23 311. 311 does not create service requests
24 unilaterally. We work hand-in-hand with agencies on
25 new service requests to make sure they sync up with
the agency's technology and with their internal

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3 workflows. 311 relies on agencies to review
4 legislation impacting them and define how to meet the
5 requirements of the law. When an agency decides they
6 will accept complaints through the 311 system, they
7 contact 311 and OTI to create, test and deploy the
8 complaint form with the objective of meeting the laws
9 required implementation date. And finally, on Intro
10 296, requiring 311 to develop a protocol for
11 identifying the language spoken by a customer to 311
12 using automated language recognition software. We
13 embrace the spirit of this bill and understand the
14 eagerness to employ artificial intelligence to
15 enhance 311 customer service. However, as written,
16 the legislation requires the use of automated
17 language recognition software that, to our knowledge,
18 is not yet available. We will continue to monitor
19 new technologies as they become commercially
20 accessible. If Council Members have any suggestions,
21 we are eager to learn more about technologies that
22 could help us improve current customer service
23 operations. Finally, on behalf of my colleagues
24 across all of 311, I thank Chairs Ung, Gutiérrez,
25 Avilés, and committee members for your time and the
opportunity to testify. I appreciate your comments

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3 at the outset, recognizing the importance of 311 and
4 the credit to the 311 people who deliver customer
5 service to the City. I am happy to take your
6 questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you for joining
8 us today. I do have a couple of questions. The
9 first one I have is how many call center operators
10 does 311 currently employ or has under contract?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: So, we
12 have a total of 311 organization staff of 386, the
13 call center staff front line agents and call center
14 supervisors, a little bit over 300.

15 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, and how many of
16 them are able to assist callers in Spanish?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: All of
18 them are able to assist callers in Spanish by
19 Language Line, our translation vendor.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: How about are they able
21 to assist without using the Language Line?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I don't
23 have a precise number. I don't know what the percent
24 of that would be.

25 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, it'd be great if
you could get back to us on that,--

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:

4 [interposing] I sure will.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: and beyond Spanish,
6 actually. So basically, I'm asking how many of the
7 operators can speak other languages other than
8 English?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Operators
10 can speak English or English and Spanish. None of
11 the operators speak a language other than English and
12 Spanish.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, so there is no
14 other-- so the operators either are bilingual English
15 and Spanish and not in other languages.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: That is
17 correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. And
19 currently does 311 have the technological abilities
20 to track the time it takes for a caller to be
21 connected to interpreter?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes, we
23 do. We do that in partnership with our vendor,
24 Language Line.

25 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And how do you track
this information?

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: We use
4 telecom-related reports that have been able to track
5 the time by language, as well as the connect time it
6 takes from the call reaching an interpreter-- from
7 the agent, 311 agent connecting to Language Line to
8 an interpreter answering that call.

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I'm sorry,
10 can you just repeat that again. I'm sorry, I can't
11 hear you that well. Yeah, it's very hard. Yeah.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Okay. I
13 thought I was too loud. I'm sorry. Okay, give me a
14 moment. I'm going to pull this chair forward and
15 I'll pull this microphone forward and see if that's
16 better. Is that better?

17 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Yes.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Okay. The
19 time it takes to reach an interpreter, I believe was
20 the question, and we measure that from the time a 311
21 agent dials to the interpreter, and an interpreter
22 actually answers. So that's the interval.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, so you do have
24 technology to track that time.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Correct.

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great. Thank you. And
4 according to 311 Language Access Plan, is the goal
5 311 to ensure that the average wait time to be
6 connected to interpreter in the four most commonly-
7 requested languages is 30 seconds or less. Is-- I
8 mean, what other concrete steps 311 has taken to
9 ensure that this goal is met? Has this goal been
10 met? Actually, I'm just going to ask this, yeah.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I
12 appreciate both of those questions. So, I'm pleased
13 to say yes on has this goal been met. It has been
14 met and exceeded and I'll speak to how that works.
15 So I appreciate that opportunity. What we-- for the
16 top languages, it is less than-- it's 30 seconds or
17 less. We work closely with our vendor, Language
18 Line. I'll take a moment to share what that looks
19 like from a provider standpoint. Language Line is
20 the largest interpretation and translation services
21 vendor in the United States and ranks in the world
22 with literally thousands of clients and more
23 importantly, tens of thousands of employees, which
24 gives them a tremendous economy of scale that the
25 City gets to leverage. So we have a very good
relationship. We've been working with them for many

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3 years. We benefit from the fact that they compete in
4 the open marketplace, and they have research and
5 development that the City wouldn't necessarily have.
6 They have customer experience knowledge that the City
7 wouldn't necessarily have. So by partnering with
8 them we've learned, you know, the best way to
9 position how to talk to a customer when you're going
10 to bring an interpreter on, how to interact with a
11 customer in those situations. And we have a contract
12 and a process that allows us to give them feedback.
13 So we constantly monitor their performance as well as
14 their qualitative as well as their quantitative
15 performance. We do that by measuring wait times, as
16 you mentioned. We also do that through our own
17 internal process of quality assurance and something
18 we call CX, customer experience where we listen to
19 those calls and gauge how well things worked for the
20 customer, for the agent, and for the interpreter.
21 I'll close that by going back to your original
22 question with are we doing less than 30 seconds in
23 the top languages. For year-to-date 2022, those top
24 languages average less than 10 seconds to be answered
25 by the interpretation vendor.

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, let's get a little
4 bit more into how this works. So, when someone dials
5 311 and selects one of the non-six English language
6 options, when is interpreter-- is the translator
7 online by the time the caller is connected with
8 interpreter?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'm
10 sorry, I didn't catch the question.

11 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, when a caller
12 calls, and I know there's the top six languages where
13 they say it in their own language, you know, if you
14 need like assistance you could hit five in, I'll just
15 say, Mandarin. So when you hit that five, what
16 happens after that?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Okay,
18 thank you for the clarification. For those languages
19 that have that greeting, there's a few things I think
20 I should call out that are notable. Similar to
21 English language customers and Spanish language
22 customers, that greeting presents something that is
23 probably the most sought after and desired piece of
24 information that 311 provides on a daily basis, and
25 that is alternate side parking status. It is by far
the highest number-- the reason most people call 311.

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3 So that information in all languages is presented
4 right up front in that automated system which is an
5 interaction that customers prefer. It's quick. It's
6 easy. It's binary. It's in effect or it's not in
7 effect. That language menu will then also give them
8 additional information or options, and most
9 importantly it closes by saying you will be connected
10 to an English-speaking operator. Please remain on
11 the line. They will bring on a translator. I think
12 it says interpreter, excuse me. So that's a way to
13 set the customer's expectation. At that point, the
14 customer will land with an English-speaking agent.
15 If they pressed one of those options, the agent knows
16 which language the customer has selected. And as I
17 mentioned in my testimony, credit to City Council for
18 calling that out a couple of years ago and working
19 with us to add that as an enhancement so the agent
20 actually knows that. The agent then has an automatic
21 connection to Language Line. Literally click a link,
22 click an icon, I should say, and they select that
23 language so it speeds up the process with Language
24 Line. Language Line then has within 30 seconds to
25 answer that call, and as I mention they exceed that
objective in those top languages.

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. so you're
4 saying when that agent who speaks English picks up
5 that non-English call, that wait time to a Language
6 Line provider would be less than you said--

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:

8 [interposing] The goal is less than 30 seconds. The
9 performance so far this year is less than 10 seconds
10 for those top four languages.

11 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay. And how about
12 when it's not those top languages that's on the 311
13 line?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: IN total
15 for all languages handled by Language Line this year,
16 through a report form-- through the month of May-- I
17 know we're at the end of June, but through the month
18 of May the average was 10 seconds.

19 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Even for those--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:

21 [interposing] The total average.

22 CHAIRPERSON UNG: total, okay.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: All
24 language the total average is.
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay. Is there a way
4 to track what it is-- what's the wait time for
5 different types of languages?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Right now
7 we can track it for, I believe, five or six specific
8 languages, and then a category, a roll-up category of
9 "all other languages." And within that, we see the
10 total wait time, but we don't see the breakdown of
11 the individual languages. There could often be, you
12 know, one or two calls per language in that "all
13 other" category.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, and then just one
15 last question on this. I do notice the step where,
16 you know, when someone picks a language that's not
17 English, that it's the English agent who's going to
18 come back on that line. Is there a way, just
19 technology-wise, that if you already picked, like,
20 number five, which is the one for Mandarin, that it
21 goes straight to a person who can speak that language
22 to, you know,-- does the English agent need to be
23 that in-between person?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I follow
25 the question. Thank you. Currently, both the
process and the structure do require that. We don't

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3 have a customer correct-- connect directly to a
4 vendor interpreter, for example, because the 311
5 agent needs to be able to guide and direct that call
6 and provide the necessary information. So the
7 primary step that we take, and again, a lot of this
8 is based on working through processes and experience
9 with our vendor. And also, I'll share with other
10 311's around the country who experienced this. The
11 goal is have the customers reach the agents. Have
12 the agent get the interpreter services, in our case
13 Language Line, on as quickly as possible, and then
14 let the agent present what's needed to be done, and
15 the interpreter just serves as an interpreter, rather
16 than the interpreter being confronted with how do I
17 solve this problem for New York City versus someone
18 else, or you know, not knowing the 311 process. So
19 it does land with an agent first, and then an
20 interpreter second.

21 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Right, so I think now
22 you're pointing out some of the limitations of using
23 Language Line. So, my next question is, you noted in
24 also your testimony that 311 utilizes the natural
25 language understanding direct dialogue technology for

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3 Spanish callers. Can you explain what is that
4 technology, and how is it being used by 311?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
6 for that question. We've been using Natural Language
7 Understanding technology since I believe 2014, and
8 for Spanish language applications since I believe
9 2018. What it does is allow the customer in-language
10 to speak to our interactive system. The system-- the
11 application is known as Natural Language
12 Understanding. It's provided by an industry-leading
13 vendor named Nuance. And the customer will speak in
14 their language. The system recognizes their
15 question, and what it will do is provide them an
16 option of-- various options that they can choose from
17 for either information such as-- I'll use an example,
18 for my location what's the-- what's my garbage and
19 recycling collection. They'll receive that
20 information back in-language. Or they may have a
21 question that needs to be routed to an external
22 entity. So the City doesn't handle questions for the
23 Department of Labor, for example, and someone may
24 have that question. So in-language it will explain
25 them you're going to be transferred to the New York
State Department of Language and execute that

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3 transfer. It could also provide information such as
4 the alternate side parking information.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So currently right now
6 it's for Spanish. Is there technology available for
7 other languages?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: For right
9 now we don't have access to that nuanced partner. It
10 does provide English and Spanish, but have not yet
11 come forward with a product that we can use for other
12 languages.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. Just one
14 last question on this and I'll turn it over to my
15 other Chairs, sorry. Right now, 311 use speech
16 detection technology to help call center operators
17 with identifying callers' language?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Right now
19 we do not.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Have 311 considered
21 using such a technology?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I
23 appreciate that question, and the answer is
24 emphatically yes. We have been, for some time, been
25 pursuing that. We've, in advance of this hearing,
connected with our partner, vendor partners, both

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3 Language Line as well as Nuance who are, again,
4 industry leaders in their space. They're not aware
5 of existing commercially available software that
6 would provide that. There are a number of one-to-one
7 type of examples of applications that do translation.
8 They often rely on text but are limited to, like say,
9 one-to-one situation. We are very much open to that
10 and very much would look to see how software that
11 could work on a scale would be able to-- we'd be able
12 to use and incorporate.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great. Thank you. I
14 do have more questions, but I'm going to turn it over
15 to my other chairs right now.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: The challenge of
19 three committees. Thank you, Chair. Thank you so
20 much Deputy Commissioner. So, I have a lot of
21 questions also, but I'm going to limit it just to
22 make sure we have enough time. Just going off of a
23 little bit of accessibility that Chair Ung that
24 discussing. Can you share how many languages are
25 supported on the 311 mobile app?

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: The 311
4 mobile app is in English.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Just in English,
6 okay.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: What about 311
9 text messaging service?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: 311 text
11 messaging is predominantly in English. We do have the
12 ability in some cases to interact using Spanish, but
13 no other languages.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. What about
15 via social media? Is it-- can you convert-- is it
16 predominantly Twitter? Yes?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And is Twitter
19 also, or social media, excuse me, is it just English
20 as well?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: So, yes,
22 it's predominantly Twitter. We do also have
23 Instagram and Facebook. It is predominantly English.
24 We do have the ability and have done on a number of
25 occasions to do a tweet, either a program or a
promotion by Spanish.

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3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Are there
4 plans to expand languages supported? I mean,
5 specifically with the mobile app you said it's just
6 English. Are there plans to expand to other languages
7 through the mobile app, through text, and through
8 social media?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes,
10 we're always looking to see how we can meet our
11 customers where they are and expand that access. I
12 mentioned in my opening statement, we are very
13 pleased today to announce we're going to be doing a
14 pilot to expand and use WhatsApp. We have high hopes
15 that that will be a process that works very well for
16 customers, including customers who may not be, you
17 know, utilizing 311 today, and also it works within
18 our integrated process as well. So it will take some
19 effort, but it's certainly a place we need to be and
20 a place we want to be, and we believe that will help
21 us considerably with language access.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Absolutely. I
23 did really appreciate that from your opening remarks.
24 My 70-year-old mother will be excited about WhatsApp
25 service request.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: My team
4 will duly note that you are-- endorsed that when we
5 met.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: that's right.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: So thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Is there-- and I
10 know that it's a pilot, but I think in support of
11 what Chair Ung's remarks and questions have been, is
12 there-- it equal-- is there equity when we're looking
13 at other apps that I think support other communities
14 that are speaking other languages than English and
15 Spanish. I know WeChat is really big in the Asian
16 community. Is that a pilot that you are also looking
17 at?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: We are
19 definitely looking at-- we definitely reviewed other
20 apps, WeChat as you men-- WeGo, I think, I said it
21 right.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'm not the
23 litmus, I'm just I know that there are other
24 applications.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: There are
other apps, and again, whether it's for automated

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3 speech recognition or a version of-- I'll just use
4 text very generically. We have run the gamut of
5 looking at different options. We've had a researcher
6 look at options. Our own team has looked at options.
7 We've farmed it out to other folks. So we are very
8 much looking at that space. You know, if there is
9 something that can be integrated, we are very pro on
10 what I call test and learn. If we can trial it and
11 see if that meets the needs of our customers,
12 [inaudible] meets the needs of the City, let's
13 continue, let's pursue it.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, absolutely.
15 I just-- you know, with everything I want to make
16 sure that we're looking at all these pilot programs
17 equitably so that we're not having to compare who--
18 what communities are being left out and not. In your
19 testimony you also mentioned there were 2,300
20 customers served via social media. Can you explain
21 what the process is for responding to these social
22 media--

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:
24 [interposing] Sure, yep.

25 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: requests?

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Happy to,
4 and we have a social media team that's part of the
5 call center staff that I mentioned earlier. So we do
6 a few things on social media. We do a few things on
7 social media. We do a push and a response. By push
8 I mean on a regular-- on a daily basis we're
9 communicating with the public by putting out program
10 information. It could be alternate side parking
11 status. It could be a new program from the
12 Department of Health. It could be a new-- an update
13 on a garbage and recycling schedule. So a variety--
14 everything 311 handles we could provide that on a
15 push notification. That has worked very well since
16 we've been in the Twitter space. A few years ago, I
17 believe 2018, we started to do Q&A, questions and
18 answers, on Twitter where a user would ask a question
19 of the account, the app NYC311 account, and our agent
20 would field that question, and the response is
21 usually two ways. One is it's a generic enough
22 question that they can respond to the users and other
23 customers would see that response. More often it's
24 what we call a direct message process where the user
25 will ask a very specific question. Our agents will
acknowledge that, ask them if they would come into

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3 the DM, as the phrase goes, and then they can work
4 directly just our agent and the customer to exchange
5 information. And this comes in a lot of times when a
6 customer wants to report an infrastructure issue or
7 an outdoor issue, and we just need a piece of
8 information like an address. The customer may not
9 put that when they send the original tweet, but
10 through a quick series of back and forth in the
11 direct message chat, then we're able to get that
12 information, and the 311 agent then submits that for
13 the constituent.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Fantastic. So,
15 if a customer, a New Yorker, puts in a-- or you know,
16 pings 311 through Twitter, a 311 agent has the
17 ability to put that 311 request in for them?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes,
19 absolutely, including giving them the confirmation
20 number of the service request.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Fantastic. So it
22 seems like that pathway is, I think, a little bit
23 more efficient at least as far as streamlining. It
24 seems like it's a lot quicker response. Are we
25 emulating a similar streamlining when it comes to
folks needing interpretation? It seems like a lot

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3 of New Yorkers, a lot of people are falling through
4 the cracks because they just give up, right? A
5 little bit to more of Chair's Ung's remarks, whereas
6 they're waiting for an interpreter or if they're
7 being told to wait and then someone comes back and
8 tells them in English an interpreter is on the way, a
9 lot of folks-- I mean, I would hang up, right? So,
10 is a similar model of streamlining being conceived to
11 limit that fallout, to limit the New Yorkers who just
12 feel like they're not being listened to and then just
13 hang up, or whatever it is?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
15 for the question, and I appreciate that. First, we
16 don't want a customer to have that experience.
17 That's not our standard. We want to the customer to
18 have the best possible experience. The scenario I
19 described on Twitter is actually the same scenario,
20 whether a customer calls, tweets, or texts. That
21 same interaction an agent goes through is
22 establishing a connection with the customer,
23 acknowledging that connection, what we call probing,
24 to ask-- you know, to figure out what it is that
25 you're asking for, because it's not on the customer
to know city processes or city government. They just

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3 need to know what they want and tell us what they
4 want. Once we confirm that, then we do the-- I'll
5 call it the research. We're accessing the 311
6 system, the content in the 311 system, and providing
7 that back to the customer whether it is by a text or
8 tweet or through an interpreter. But the process is
9 fairly seamless. I accept and I acknowledge the
10 reference to exceptions where a customer may have
11 landed with an agent, and I believe the scenario--
12 they went back to an English-speaking agent. The
13 flow is, you know, sequential and that they do not
14 get bounced around, and the agent when they get to
15 that call stay on the line with an interpreter and
16 then continue through the process. If there needs to
17 be a transfer for a reason, yes, that's a secondary.
18 If an agent goes through the experience that was
19 described, that's not the standard, and I would
20 welcome, you know, examples of that. So in turn, we
21 could drill down and understand what may have gone
22 wrong in the process.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Does 311 have the
24 capability to call someone back who, you know, after-
25 - who has been on hold or who was waiting for

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3 interpretation and then the call drops or they hang
4 up?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
5 for the question. I do understand that, and right now
6 we do not have that technical capability.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Is that something
8 you think would help streamline the process a little
9 bit?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: it's
11 something we have looked at in advance of having the
12 technology to do that. I will say from the industry
13 perspective, there are definitely pros to that.
14 Unfortunately, there are cons t that as well for the
15 customer, not for the provider. So if it's something
16 that will work, it goes into my category of-- we
17 would definitely be in the category--in the business
18 of test and learn to see if that will help the
19 process, especially on days when there may be, you
20 know, unexpected high call volume, for example.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Absolutely, thank
22 you. Is there currently any way for someone to
23 interact with 311 using American Sign Language?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Today,
25 there is a process that doesn't directly involve 311,

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3 but a customer can use a video relay service to reach
4 an American Sign Language interpreter who then
5 conference-- who then dials 311 and initiates that
6 conversation with the 311 agent.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, can you just-
8 - you briefed the process. So, someone using
9 American Sign Language can utilize the vide relay
10 service call, correct?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes.
12 That's not provided by 311, but yes, they can utilize
13 a video relay service, and the video relay service
14 can then conference on 311.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I understand.
16 Okay. Alright. Does 311 work with the Mayors of
17 People with Disabilities to promote digital
18 accessibility?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes. I
20 appreciate that question as well, and I can speak
21 generally. The prior question will allow me to give
22 a very good example of how that works, but yes, we do
23 partner with the Mayor's Office of People with
24 Disabilities. My colleague, Tony, here today with
25 the folks at MOPD, we have a 311 employee who works
at MOPD as well as part of that partnership. And the

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3 reference I made to the video relay service who is
4 MOPD who several years ago brought to our attention
5 that they were receiving questions from constituents
6 who were concerned that their video relay service
7 approach was not reaching 311. We were able to look
8 at a couple of examples, and determined that
9 customers ere dialing their video relay service
10 operator who may have been outside of New York, and
11 telling them they needed to be connected to 311, and
12 the video relay operator would dial 311 and connect
13 them to Denver 311 as an example. So once we
14 determined that we quickly figure out, okay, let's
15 make sure we promote outside of New York City use 212
16 New York which will allow you to go directly through.
17 So, a very kind of wonkish [sic] example there, but a
18 case that wouldn't have happened if MOPD and their
19 constituent had not brought something to our
20 attention and then our ability to correct that.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Absolutely. I
22 also just want to recognize Council Member Charles
23 Barron who's joined us today. Welcome, Council
24 Member. Is there any way for someone to file a
25 language access complaint with 311 other than by
calling the 311 call center? For example, if they--

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3 can someone file a language access complaint on the
4 website, on the app, via text, social media, and what
5 does that process look like.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: We can
7 definitely file one by calling 311. I believe we
8 can, but I'm going to hesitate, because I'm not sure
9 of the full range of what you just said. If that's
10 okay, I'd like to look into that. I'm sure I have
11 folks right now hearing that question and looking to
12 provide that answer, but I'd like to confirm that
13 before I say yes or no on that, and I can get right
14 back to you on that.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Next I
16 want to ask about the vendor, the Language Line that
17 you all utilize. You said it's, you know, nationally
18 the top vendor for interpretation services. How
19 long-- has Language Line been the interpreter since
20 2003, the vendor, excuse me, since 2003?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: The
22 Language Line was not there in 2003. The City used a
23 different vendor at that time. Language Line came on
24 board in 2006.

25 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: 2006, okay.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: And has
4 been our primary vendor ever since.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. And then
6 could you specify the services that they're required
7 to provide?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: sure.
9 They do provide under our contract, the 311 contract,
10 interpretation and translation services.
11 Interpretation for voice, translation for written
12 document or text. Obviously, our business is
13 primarily the interpretation on voice. As part of
14 that, they have-- we have a contract with them that
15 requires them to answer calls within X seconds. I
16 mentioned earlier, one of the standards for languages
17 is 30 seconds or less. As part of that, we have
18 performance metrics. If, for example, Language Line
19 interpreter does not pick up within a preset service
20 level agreement target, then that call is considered
21 a failed call, technically, even though the call will
22 continue and the customer can still speak to the
23 interpreter and 311 agent. But from a contract
24 perspective, we consider that a failed call, and
25 Language Line needs to credit the City for not
achieving that service level objective.

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3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Fantastic. I
4 don't know if you-- if I missed it because the
5 acoustics in here are a little tough, but my question
6 is about quality control, and I can only speak to
7 Spanish language, for example. I'm curious to know
8 what the quality control process is with Language
9 Line regarding cultural competency in Spanish, and
10 I'm sure I think the same is for other languages, but
11 what does our quality control look like in those
12 scenarios?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Great.
14 Thank you for the question, and I'm going to get a
15 little closer see if that helps with the acoustics.
16 I don't know.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: It's not you.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Oh, okay,
19 okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
22 you. So, on the quality control basis at a very high
23 level, I'll speak to it broadly because we apply a
24 lot of the same measures across all services, all
25 customer interactions, irrespective of language, and
we have a dedicated quality assurance team. They do

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3 call listening in two specific ways. One is to
4 evaluate the cust-- I'm sorry, we evaluate the agent
5 and whether they're following the right protocol, how
6 they're handling the call, etcetera. And then they
7 also evaluate for that I call the content. Is the
8 information we're providing, does it make sense?
9 Does it work for the customer? One of the things we
10 work hard on, we have an excellent content management
11 team, is keeping language in what we call a plain
12 language standard. That serves customers of all
13 languages, whether you're-- whether it's an English-
14 speaking customer, or if it's someone who relies on
15 an interpreter. If the original content is in plain
16 language standards, it makes the interpretation much
17 clearer, much simpler. So one of the things our
18 quality assurance, our quality control looks at is
19 just that. We also utilize interactions with
20 Language Line. While we officially only speak
21 English and Spanish in call center, we can work
22 Language Line to have an assessment of their
23 translators. Are they translating correctly? You
24 know, do they have a level of proficiency that's
25 necessary? So that is something that's available to
us through our Language Line arrangement.

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3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I

4 have one more question before I pass it to Council
5 Member Avilés. You mentioned that Language Line is
6 also in contract to provide interpretation and
7 translation through text. So I'm wondering what's
8 taking so long to get that language capability
9 through the mobile app, through text, just to expand
10 the diversity of languages being offered through
11 these other areas, because they can-- you know, based
12 on your report calls obviously are still profoundly
13 the majority of the way that you all receive service
14 requests, but we also see that through the mobile app
15 and through text and through Twitter. Those are also
16 on the incline. So I'm curious what-- how that
17 contract will be reworked, or what is the
18 inefficiency or what is the issue that's preventing
19 other languages to be offered through these services?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Alright.

21 Thank you for the question. The current contract
22 does translation of languages. It's not real-time.
23 The contract arrangement is--

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: [interposing]

25 It's not real-time?

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'm

4 sorry, it's not real-time. It's not a real-time text
5 process. We would submit documents, for example, and
6 Language Line would translate that document and
7 provide it back to us in hours or days depending on
8 the SLA. So it's not a real-time-- as an example,
9 when you have an interpreter on a phone call. So our
10 translation document-- I'm sorry. Our contract as it
11 speaks to translating documents it-- has a SLA that
12 is not real-time. That's the biggest limitation of
13 incorporating that lets say in a text arrangement.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sure. Does that
15 require a separate kind of a contract, or a separate
16 kind of agreement? Again, I just think it's super
17 vital that we're offering this, especially if we're
18 looking at different-- if you all are looking at
19 different pilots to messaging. I'm curious kind of
20 where they as a vendor fold into that bigger goal of
21 providing more languages through test, through the
22 website in real-time.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Sure. I
24 follow that and understand. Yeah, it would
25 definitely be a service that we don't currently have

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3 through that contract. So it would be a greater
4 scope. We'd have to take a look at that.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. I'll
6 pass it on to Council Member Avilés. Thank you so
7 much Deputy Commissioner.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.
11 Yes, have some water. I'd like to know on-- one
12 thing I didn't hear in your statement was anything
13 about public housing residents. How does 311 track
14 the scale and scope of public housing resident calls?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Sure.
16 Thank you for that question and I can speak to the
17 overall process, and I think that'll answer some of
18 the specific questions. I'll speak in a general
19 level to start. If a customer contacts 311 looking
20 for what they need, we serve that customer whatever
21 they described. I mentioned, we probe, we try to
22 understand their question, and then we use our
23 knowledge management system so the agent can
24 determine what the next step is. If a customer has a
25 specific complaint about a facility or property, a
building, and that is under the New York City Housing

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3 Authority, the 311 protocol is to transfer that
4 customer to the New York City Housing Authority call
5 center. We can provide customers some basic
6 information on New York City Housing Authority
7 policies and programs, but for a complaint or a
8 request, I should say, it's a transfer. The way we
9 track that is through that very process. We can say
10 how many customers contacted us, and in turn, how
11 many of those customers, you know, needed something
12 that had to be referred to the New York City Housing
13 Authority. That's for within the-- I'll call it
14 within the facility, within the structure. If it's a
15 complaint or request for something that is outside of
16 a building, not related to a building, outside on the
17 street, for example a noise complaint, 311 will
18 process that noise complaint as we would any other
19 noise complaint. And we do track that. I think I
20 may have said that, but to answer your second part of
21 your question we do track how many times 311 will
22 handle a question and then transfer that to the NYCHA
23 CCC.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, how-- so as you
25 heard in my earlier testimony, NYCHA has, you know,
both its traditional Section 9 housing and housing

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3 that is transferred into Section 8 under private
4 management. We have heard countless stories about
5 residents calling 311 and being caught in this circle
6 of getting referred back to NYCHA. How does 311
7 maintain an updated registry of properties and ensure
8 that they are providing the correct information to
9 callers?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
10 for the question, and I'll begin by saying I can
11 appreciate any loop that would cause a problem for a
12 customer. That's, you know, again not a customer
13 service standard, and we do strive to achieve all
14 customer service standards. We do have a process to
15 prevent that. 311 works with NYCHA and with the
16 Housing Preservation Development. We do get an
17 updated file of properties when they do move from one
18 state to another state, and then that file then gets
19 incorporated to our system. so when a customer
20 provides the address, the system, as opposed to the
21 agent, will know whether this is, you know, property
22 for NYCHA or no longer-- or non-NYCHA property, if
23 you will. So there is a process, and the file does
24 get-- the file does get provided to 311 and that is
25 updated.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And how often are
4 you updating?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: That I
6 don't know. I can find out how many updates we've
7 done, but off the top of my head I don't know how
8 often that happens. I do believe when we get a file,
9 it's a-- you know, it's a full file. It's not
10 incrementally. It's not, you know, unit by unit.
11 It's a full file of properties.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. We'd love
13 to-- I think from resident feedback we've received it
14 doesn't seem like updates are happening nearly as
15 frequently as they need to be. So it'd be great to
16 understand more clearly what the updating protocol
17 is, and also just clearly around how staff are
18 informed around the 311 NYCHA protocols, the levels
19 of engagement. It'd be good to see what that looks
20 like.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Great.
22 I'd be happy to follow up. In particular, if there is
23 some examples that really helps us zero in on, you
24 know, what maybe one-off or a glitch or problem, and
25 we can address them that way.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And in terms of--
4 you mentioned you do keep analytics on the number of
5 calls that are referred to NYCHA. Can you give us a
6 sense of how many calls you're receiving annually?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes.
8 For-- I can do half of that, six months. I have a
9 data point for January through June through at least
10 this week. We receive and transfer about 100 calls
11 per day on average to the NYCHA CCC.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And would you say--
13 thank you for the updated information. Would you say
14 that trend is increasing? Is that what you regularly
15 see from other years?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: We took a
17 look at that period of time compared to last year,
18 but also to 2019 to get all the pandemic churn out of
19 the way, and it's within plus or minus 10 percent
20 year over year.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. The other
22 aspect we've heard many challenges with is when
23 residents are calling around HPD. We've heard that
24 311 is not taking resident complaints related to HPD.
25 Is this in the protocol or what is the confusion or
disconnect that is happening?

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
4 for the question. I'm not sure of what confusion may
5 exist. I can speak to our process on HPD, and--

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [interposing] Please
7 do.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I can
9 also offer that of our top five service request types
10 annually, two are for HPD for taking heat and hot
11 water complaints and for taking what we call
12 apartment maintenance complaints. So we have a very
13 robust accounting of HPD complaints as well as a very
14 robust process. But speaking to the original point,
15 HPD is absolutely part of the 311 intake and referral
16 process. If a customer had a complaint,
17 aforementioned heat or hot water complaint, something
18 in their apartments, any particular problem their
19 apartment, they go through the process where we will
20 take that complaint, submit it to HPD. Customer gets
21 a confirmation number. The customer, depending on
22 the complaint type, the customer can remain anonymous
23 and make a complaint, for example for an apartment or
24 an entire building. For a more specific complaint,
25 they provide contact information. That is sent over
to HPD. We get a confirmation number. We give that

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3 to the customer. HPD gets that same confirmation
4 number, and then HPD has a service level agreement of
5 the amount of time they need to close that out. I'm
6 not aware of any barriers or prior examples where
7 we've not been able to submit to HPD. As I
8 mentioned, based on the volume, you know, HPD is in
9 the-- kind of in the bread and butter of what 311
10 does.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, if a NYCHA
12 resident tells the call-in center, I'm a NYCHA
13 resident. And obviously the protocol is telling them
14 to transfer to the call center, but insists on
15 putting forward a complaint for-- to HPD. Does the
16 call-in center take those calls or do they continue
17 to direct residents to NYCHA's call-in center?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
19 you. I appreciate the distinction there. There's a
20 couple of options there. We can't take a complaint
21 similar to an HPD apartment maintenance complaint if
22 it's not an HPD property. So that would not be a
23 possibility. The customer can do what we call the
24 agency complaints. They can voice their opinion,
25 their complaint, their position, and that's an option
that every customer would have.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, in the case of
4 no heat or hot water, which is an HPD issue, given
5 that they're public housing residents, you would
6 still not take that complaint. You would direct them
7 to NYCHA?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: If it is
9 a NYCHA property, if the customer expresses it as a
10 NYCHA property, yes, we would follow the protocol and
11 get it to the agency that is best suited to serve
12 that customer at that point in time.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: so you don't receive
14 any HPD complaints for NYCHA residents on NYCHA
15 property?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'm
17 processing that. HPD complaints for NYCHA-- we may
18 receive questions, but we don't have the ability--

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [interposing] You
20 don't process any HPD-related complaints made by
21 public housing residents. You re-direct them to
22 NYCHA's call-in center.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Okay.
24 Thank you for the clarification. Yes, we would
25 redirect them.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, as you're aware
4 we-- there was legislation passed to open up 311 to
5 NYCHA residents. Can you tell me how you track
6 improvements on that, and if in fact you're receiving
7 more calls from NYCHA residents?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes,
9 thank you for that question. This is one that I
10 believe was implemented at the end of last year and
11 went into effect I believe March 7th, on or about
12 March 7th. That law basically codified the existing
13 process of 311 transferring or referring or
14 transferring a customer to NYCHA's call center.
15 Since that period of time we did take a look at the
16 call volume. It's in line with what I mentioned
17 before between June and January of this year. This
18 year versus last year, if I recall correctly, it was
19 about a nine percent decrease in total volume, but in
20 the scheme of the overall size it wasn't a material
21 swing one way or the other. So we have looked at
22 that since that went into effect.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, I think-- I
24 actually have questions for NYCHA colleagues, but I
25 don't know if we should-- this is the challenge with
joint committees. We don't exactly let the

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3 protocols-- can I ask [inaudible]. Oh, okay I can do
4 what I want [inaudible]. Okay. I'd love to shift
5 the conversation to our NYCHA colleagues and
6 understand a little bit better around the protocol
7 and communication that it has with the 311 center.
8 I'd love to understand a little bit on what the
9 engagement is and how NYCHA is managing the inflow.

10 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Thank you,
11 Council Member. As Deputy Commissioner mentioned,
12 the 311 calls for NYCHA do get routed back to NYCHA's
13 call center for follow-up and action. I want to
14 clarify a few points, first of all, about our
15 customer contact center and the service it provides.
16 We are providing the same service and that-- and
17 NYCHA residents, I should say, have the same access
18 to 311 and get the same service as any other
19 resident. When any other resident in New York City
20 has a problem with their landlord, the first place
21 they call is their landlord. If they have a stoppage
22 in their toilet or something that's not working, they
23 call their landlord. If the landlord is not
24 responding, that is when they escalate to a 311
25 complaint and ask for HPD to come out. So, the first
stop for NYCHA residents should be their landlord,

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3 which is NYCHA, and that is happening through the
4 CCC. The value that the CCC provides as well above
5 and beyond 311, is that we can directly schedule
6 those appointments. So when a resident calls the
7 CCC, they have access to the schedule of their
8 property management office and their availability of
9 their maintenance workers. So they're able to
10 directly schedule their maintenance worker to come
11 out. They can say eight to noon on Wednesday, one to
12 four on Thursday, and make that happen. That is
13 information that our CCC has in coordination with our
14 property management. If--

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [interposing] can I
16 just mention one thing?

17 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Often when residents
19 are calling 311, it is after they've exhausted
20 imploring with their landlord or any other city
21 agency for that matter. This is well after that
22 fact.

23 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yeah. So I
24 wanted to just clarify the steps in the process are
25 the same for both NYCHA residents and regular-- you
know, any other resident in the City of New York. So

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3 when NYCHA residents feel like they're not getting a
4 response, I understand that they want someplace else
5 to go, and 311 sends them back to us. However, there
6 are other avenues, as well, for NYCHA residents to
7 escalate their complaints. First of all, we have a
8 Compliance Department that is an internal oversight,
9 and they reach out to the Compliance Department very
10 often to escalate those complaints of non-action. In
11 addition, since 2019 when we signed the HUD
12 agreement, we're under a whole new enforcement
13 regime, and we have partners at the Federal level
14 that are also involved in that accountability
15 structure. So there are places for NYCHA residents to
16 go. In addition, NYCHA residents are able to file
17 Housing Court actions against NYCHA, and they often
18 do. The key is is that the CCC is able to provide
19 that direct level of service as far as scheduling and
20 is part of our new programs that we've been rolling
21 out. We are also adding more areas for NYCHA
22 residents to call and schedule service. So as part
23 of our work order reform, now when they need a
24 skilled trade's appointment they're calling our
25 neighborhood planners in order to directly schedule

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3 that. So we are taking steps to improve that direct
4 access for our residents to schedule repair needs.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can we just take a
6 quick step back, because we're going to get to work
7 order reform. We love that topic. Can you just tell
8 us some basic information around the call-in center?
9 Can you give us a sense of how many calls per year
10 NYCHA receives to the call-in center, how many
11 employees it has, its funding, its language
12 capability?

13 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes. And so I
14 will start, but I may also call in one of my
15 colleagues to add in. So, in 2021, for calendar year
16 2021, we had a total for maintenance calls
17 specifically of 1.8 million calls. We average about
18 155 calls per month for 21-- 155,000, sorry, calls
19 per month, and those are volume of maintenance calls,
20 specifically, since I--

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [interposing] I'm
22 sorry, say that one more time.

23 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: For maintenance
24 repair request calls, on average for the calendar
25 year 2021, it was just over 155,000 calls a month.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: A month?

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3 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: A month. 1.87
4 million calls per year for 2021, for just the
5 maintenance option.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And what is the
7 total calls that the center has received?

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Before you begin,
9 I'll just give you the affirmation. Do you affirm to
10 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
11 truth before this committee-- before these committees
12 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

13 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Please
15 state your name.

16 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: I'm Kerri Jew. I'm
17 the Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative
18 Officer of the New York City Housing Authority. So,
19 in this customer contact center reports to
20 Administration. So the total number of calls which
21 is the maintenance calls as well as Section 8 and
22 applications in tenancy administration for 2021 was
23 about 2.-- almost 2.8 million.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And can you tell us
25 the budget of the call center, the number of staff?

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3 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: So, we currently
4 have 117 staff in the Customer Contact Center
5 Department. That includes not only the call center,
6 but also our two walk-in centers. There's one in the
7 Bronx and one in Brooklyn. There are 76 permanent
8 staff or fulltime staff in the call center. This
9 does not account for the temporary employees that we
10 hire in the call center, which we find necessary to
11 adjust with seasonality.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Do you employ any
13 NYCHA residents in the call center?

14 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: Yes, we do.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: How many residents
16 to you employ?

17 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: we have about 10
18 percent are residents. Again, that's just with the
19 fulltime NYCHA employed staff. That does not include
20 the temporary staff.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, of the 76
22 fulltime staff members, 10 percent of that are NYCHA
23 residents?

24 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: Of the 117 fulltime.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Of the 117.

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3 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: In the Department,
4 correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Do you think the
6 Agency can do better with employing NYCHA residents?

7 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: I think the Agency
8 tries very hard to employ residents. The job is very
9 difficult and very stressful. So we do outreach to
10 residents. The fulltime position, as you know, is
11 civil service competitive. So in order to hire
12 someone into a fulltime position, when there's an
13 active civil service list we have to adhere to that.
14 So we do encourage residents as well as temporary
15 employees who come to take the civil service exam
16 when offered, and hopefully they pass and are on a
17 place on the list that we can reach them.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Do you provide any
19 particular programming to support residents to
20 pathways into employment with the call-in center?

21 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: Specifically, with
22 the call-in center, I'm not aware of any training for
23 that.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it. In terms
25 of language accessibility, can you describe what that
looks like?

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3 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: We also, we have
4 bilingual Spanish call center representatives who are
5 able to handle calls directly in Spanish in English.
6 We also have a vendor who we use for the other
7 languages that we may need in order to service our
8 residents.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Who is the vendor,
10 and what's the scale of the contract?

11 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: The vendor is
12 Language Service Associates. And it's over 100
13 languages, is that what you mean? How many
14 languages?

15 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: No, I think
16 similarly to our DoITT colleagues, it's a question
17 around performance indication-- performance
18 indicators and also specifically what the scope and
19 scale and services that's provided.

20 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: So, Language
21 Services Associates is a contract that we entered
22 into in 2021. We had a different vendor prior to
23 that. We have-- so between February 2021 when the
24 contract started through June of 2022 there were
25 232,000 almost 233,000 calls that Language Service
Associates Assisted the call center with.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Does the call center
4 also do translation, written translation or is it
5 just verbal?

6 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: No, it's verbal.
7 It's-- it becomes a three-party call similar to what
8 was described for 311.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And what is the
10 quality control process?

11 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: Similar to 311, we
12 have supervisors who are listening into the calls as
13 well. Calls are recorded, so we are able to play
14 back if there are issues that are raised specifically
15 about a caller so that we could do the research on
16 that. And we are able to train and performance manage
17 call takers based on the supervisors listening in to
18 the calls.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: I realize I can go
20 on forever. My colleagues are patiently awaiting for
21 their questions. So, I will circle back for
22 questions. But I was curious about how-- what is the
23 call time wait and response mechanisms of the call
24 center?

25 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: So, the call time--
you mean the average speed of answer? Okay. So the

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3 average speed of answer in 2022 through-- from
4 January through June has been on the maintenance
5 side, about 12 minutes and one second. The average
6 handle time has been five minutes 10 seconds.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Wow. Okay, I think--
8 my brain is like processing. I think I would love to
9 turn it over and open it up for our colleagues.

10 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: I'm sorry, oh, no,
11 no.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay.

13 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: Yes, yes, yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Council Member
15 Holden?

16 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: I'm sorry, I
17 misspoke. That was all calls. That wasn't on the
18 maintenance side. On the maintenance side, the
19 average speed of answer has been in 2022 from January
20 through June 44 seconds, and the handle time has been
21 three minutes, 32 seconds. I'm sorry, the time to
22 answer and handle calls for all of the call center is
23 higher when you add in the Section 8 and application
24 Tenancy [sic] Administration because those calls take
25 longer to handle. The questions are more in-depth.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. Could you
4 provide the Council with a description of the quality
5 control measures and where-- how performance is
6 doing--

7 VICE PRESIDENT JEW: [interposing] Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: across whatever
9 dimensions you're tracking at this time? Great. And
10 with that I'd love to pass it over to Council Member
11 Holden.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.
13 You know, I love the 311 app, and I'm going to make
14 some suggestions because I use it every day, multiple
15 times. It does have some shortcomings which I'll go
16 over. But first I want to do a follow-up. As former
17 Chair of Technology, in October of 2021 hearing,
18 former DoITT Commissioner Jesse Tish [sp?] stated
19 that new digital 311 phone system replacing the
20 current analog system is going live in the first or
21 second quarter of next year, meaning this year, and
22 that pressing zero when you were calling 311 you'd be
23 directed to a live operator may be an option.
24 Because every one of us who's called 311, sometimes--
25 and during the pandemic, I think it was like a five-
minute message of all the, you know, services you

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3 were going to get or related to COVID, but you would
4 have to sit through. If you weren't interested in
5 that, you'd have to sit through messages. Can we
6 press zero and get a live operator now?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
8 you, Chair-- Council Member Holden, and I do recall
9 the hearing last year. To answer your specific
10 question, currently no. We do go through the
11 process. It is something with the technology
12 advancements-- technology enhancement that'll be
13 coming later this year, we may be able to do.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Also, do you plan
15 on designating a separate category for film shoot
16 related complaints? Because we can't do that on the
17 app, and we can't do it, you know, I think on the
18 website either.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
20 you. I do understand the question. I'm not sure.
21 We'd have to work with our partners at the
22 appropriate agency, which I believe is--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]
24 Because we could put in legislation, you know. I
25 mean, we'd like you to try it, because it's not a
difficult measure. Because I have a number of

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3 complaints of the app. Let me just go over a couple,
4 and I could put that in a letter to you. But for
5 instance, you have-- and I mentioned this to the
6 previous commissioner, you have on-- because I do a
7 lot of parking violation complaints, and you have a
8 pull down "describe parking violation." There's only
9 eight parking violations, and some are missing, and I
10 know you can put that under posted rules, for
11 instance, like parking at a bus stop. There's no
12 pull-down for that and that's quite common. Or, you
13 know, or parking in a bus lane. I guess that would
14 be under posted rules, but we are getting other
15 complaint. So I think we-- we have so much space
16 under the pull down menu here that we could limit
17 the, you know, the complications by just adding more
18 pro-- you know, more parking problems or situations
19 that we-- and it's very easy to do. And we did get--
20 by the way, I did mention to the previous
21 Commissioner that we had no blocking crosswalk, which
22 is a quite-- you know, all you have to do is walk
23 outside, you'll see it. So we got that added, but it
24 seemed like only one a year we're getting. We need
25 to really get to the-- really, the major complaints.
For instance, under-- like I have a lot of commercial

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3 vehicles parked in my district, but it's more than
4 just over night. You just have commercial overnight,
5 but there is a parking violation that commercial
6 vehicles do. They're only allowed in residential
7 areas to park for three hours. That should be a sub-
8 menu under commercial vehicles, because that's quite
9 common. In my district we have a lot of people
10 parking their vehicles the whole day, and they go to
11 work at night. So, 311 is very, very good. Like I
12 said, my district already has-- one precinct, 20,000
13 complaints this year to-date, and we urge our members
14 or our constituents to call, but there are
15 improvements that I'd like. You know, I will talk to
16 you. Maybe we can talk at one point. Because I use
17 it-- like I said, I'm a habitual user for 311, but I
18 won't use-- I won't call because I have to listen to
19 a lot of messages, and I don't-- you know, I don't
20 have time for that. So, the app is great, but it
21 needs to be updated. But I thank you for that. If
22 you have any changes coming, please let us know,
23 because it is important that we get a working app.
24 And on my legislation, I think we could get to four
25 steps if we make some, you know, improvements. But
thank you so much. Thank you, Chairs.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'd just
4 like to announce, thank you Council Member Holden,
5 and I will say you're a power user as opposed to a
6 habitual user, and we thank you because the feedback
7 is very much appreciated.

8 CHAIRPERSON UNG: thank you, Council
9 Member Holden. I also want to acknowledge that
10 Council Member Brewer has joined us, and I believe
11 now Council Member Kagan has a couple questions.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you so much.
13 My first question is to 311. So, I called about
14 sanitation conditions 86th Street and [inaudible] to
15 complain because I was told all the time we don't
16 have enough records of complaints, so I decided to
17 try myself. Thirty-five minutes phone call, 35
18 minutes. It was about terrible sanitation conditions
19 on 86th Street and [inaudible]. So it's not always
20 the experience. I had a lot of good experiences, but
21 my point is like what kind of training do you provide
22 to your workers? It's like taking a call complaint,
23 simple complaint about sanitation condition on one
24 block in Bensonhurst [sp?] takes 35 minutes. Not
25 everybody has so much time and patience.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
4 for the example and the personal experience. I
5 appreciate that. Without knowing, you know, any more
6 of the details, I will agree that's too long a period
7 of time. We do focus from the customer's
8 perspective, but also for the efficiency of the
9 operation to have a most-- you know, the most
10 streamlined call process. Sometimes customers need to
11 take a little longer which we accommodate that. But
12 we want to be and need to be in a mode that's
13 streamlined. So I'd be interested in finding out a
14 little bit more about the details of your experience.
15 One of the things we do, I mentioned earlier, we have
16 a very robust quality assurance and quality control
17 process. We can listen to calls. We can go back and
18 hear what happened if there needs to be, you know, a
19 streamlining of the process, we're happy to do that.
20 So, I appreciate both version of your example, good
21 examples as well as, you know, examples that didn't
22 meet the standard.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: [inaudible] call,
24 but besides the [inaudible] after that [inaudible]
25 everything was resolved, everything is okay. For the
record, nothing was resolved. I brought Sanitation

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3 Commissioner later on, and ow it's much better, but
4 my point is like nothing was resolved, but the ticket
5 was closed.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'm
7 sorry, if I can clarify. So you submitted it. It
8 said it was resolved, but nothing had been resolved.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I received text
10 message of your complaint and everything. As result,
11 everything is okay. Nothing was done, zero.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I'm sorry
13 about that situation.

14 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: My second question
15 is about NYCHA. So, can I talk about NYCHA? People
16 are calling me, NYCHA residents, that they're filing
17 the complaint. First of all, they have problem to
18 get ticket number to begin with. They're not going to
19 ticket-- they're like, oh, we don't have tickets for
20 you. Like, a different problem. Call management,
21 don't call us. That's the first problem. Second, I
22 do not know how is it even possible the ticket was
23 closed without resolving anything, and that person
24 has to call again and again about the same issue to
25 get the new ticket and new ticket and new ticket. Is
there any kind of responsibility of anybody? Anybody

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3 can call management. What are you doing there? Why
4 people calling same person about same problem for
5 like a week and you giving them new tickets and
6 closing them without doing anything? Sorry.

7 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Thank you,
8 Council Member. I truly share in your frustration on
9 that, on that situation. The instance of closed work
10 tickets is something we are aware of and something we
11 have started to look into. Again, we absolutely
12 share that frustration. No ticket should be closed
13 without communication to the resident as to why it's
14 being closed, and that is something we are working on
15 now to facilitate. So, for example, we're working on
16 two specific changes to that exact issue. The first
17 is right now when you call the CCC for any type of
18 complaint or issue, you don't get any documentation
19 of that call. So, it's incumbent upon the resident
20 to make sure they have a pen and paper handy, write
21 down that work ticket number and make sure they never
22 lose that paper, because otherwise they've lost that
23 ticket number. And so what we're working number one
24 to do is to create an email document of that
25 communication so that once you've had that call with
the CCC, the resident will get an email with the

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3 service request number, the ticket number and the
4 summary of the conversation, whether something was
5 scheduled or whatever type of complaint was taken.
6 So that's something we're looking to put in place
7 this calendar year. Second, we actually conducted a
8 closed work ticket study, of tickets that were closed
9 with no work done, and we're looking into the
10 situations around that. One of the biggest
11 resolutions of that was-- or recommendations, rather,
12 from that study was to create this communication with
13 residents so that we were clarifying when and why
14 tickets were closed. So that is absolutely something
15 we're working on. If you find instances and when you
16 hear of instances of that, I encourage you to bring
17 that to Intergovernmental Affairs so we can follow up
18 on it. We have been using some of those case studies
19 from other resident leaders and Council Members in
20 order to inform our changes that we're trying to
21 make. So really sympathize with that situation.
22 We're aware of it and we're trying to fix it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Sometimes I'm
24 sending emails to Intergovernmental Relations
25 representatives. There's four tickets from the same

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3 resident about the same issues in one week. So that
4 shows me that nobody cares.

5 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: And I will say to
6 your accountability point, there are a lot of people
7 that care, and that is something we're trying to
8 improve across NYCHA, is our commitment to service
9 for our residents. And I also wanted to just take a
10 moment to comment on your accountability points,
11 because you're right, all the capital in the world
12 does not come along with accountability. But in 2020
13 we issued our transformation plan. I highly encourage
14 you to take a look at it. It's on our website. It is
15 part of the 2019 HUD agreement where we were required
16 to create a new organizational plan, and the key to
17 that organizational plan is improving accountability,
18 and many steps and initiatives are a part of that
19 plan that when rolled out and fully implemented we
20 hope will make those improvements and our residents
21 will be able to see it, and you'll be able to see it.
22 It will take some time, but that is what we're
23 working on. So we share those values with you, and I
24 hope that you will work with us to get there.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Thank you.

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3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'll be fast. I

4 do have a question regarding NYCHA. So, like my
5 colleague Council Member Ung just mentioned that
6 often times NYCHA tenants will call 311-- and
7 actually, I want to share anecdotally that I'm sure
8 they call our offices after CCC, and then before 311.
9 So, it's-- 311 is probably like plan b, plan c,
10 because often times they're at their wits end. Is
11 there a process for NYCHA tenants to complain about
12 their CCC experience to 311 without being punted back
13 to NYCHA? Is there a mechanism where tenants who are
14 raising-- putting in service requests-- I know you
15 don't like complaints-- service requests about their
16 experience, about their customer experience,
17 specifically about the call center, is there a
18 mechanism that exists for 311 to record that? To,
19 you know, I don't know what the back end looks like,
20 but I'm curious what that looks like.

21 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes, and I'll
22 hand it off to 311, and correct me if I'm wrong. When
23 311 takes a NYCHA complaint, they take the
24 information and that information is passed over to
25 NYCHA. It's not necessarily just passed to the CCC.
It's passed over to NYCHA Customer Operations, and

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3 they then hand that complaint off to the relevant
4 NYCHA unit. So if it's about a maintenance repair or
5 a service request, it would most likely go to CCC in
6 order to get-- to be followed up on as a maintenance
7 request. If it's about service from the CCC, then
8 that would go to my colleague Kerri Jew and the
9 Administration department to be reviewed as part of a
10 complaint about the CCC experience. In addition, we
11 do have CCC surveys that go out after calls where
12 people can document the service that they felt they
13 had during the call.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so just to
15 confirm, there's nothing-- do you know-- [inaudible]
16 So it goes right back to NYCHA, even though the
17 complaint is about that customer experience, right?

18 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Thank you
20 for clarifying that. And I will wrap up, but I have--
21 - my questions are for Deputy Commissioner just
22 regarding the remarks you made on Intro 240,
23 specifically. I know in your remarks you said that
24 there's no real, I guess, like interest because the
25 role of 311 is not necessarily to follow Council
legislation each time this happens. So what is the

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3 current process of adding a new service request
4 category to 311?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
5 you. There's a couple of different paths. They can
6 come in from legislation. It could be an agency
7 initiative, a new program, mayoral introduction.
8 There is a very structured process and very
9 encompassing process because it does depend on a lot
10 of things connecting correctly, if you will. So the
11 best way is we have an intake process. The OTI
12 organization would have an intake process. An agency
13 brings forth a proposal or a scope of what they want
14 to be able to do or make them in through legislation
15 as I mentioned before. That comes into the intake
16 process where it'll go through a design assessment
17 approach. Do we have something that exists already?
18 Is it something we can modify? You know, what's the
19 scope? If you think of a standard service request
20 form that shows the what, the where, the when, and
21 even the who, those are some of the elements. We
22 call them fields, values, etcetera. We have to make
23 sure do we have something? Can we build that out?
24 Are there dependencies? Is there an if/then
25 situation? So all of that gets worked by a team of--

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3 I wouldn't say a team-- a number of people on the
4 team-- I'll loosely call it, you know, analysts
5 trying to figure out what happens. Then you could
6 build a timeline. Then you could determine how long
7 it would take to deploy. You know, there's some
8 cases there would need to be, you know, post
9 deployment support. That is training. There's a
10 whole bunch of different paths. It really would
11 depend on is this a tweak to an existing service
12 request, or is this a whole new temp-- a whole new
13 service request type that we'd have to implement,
14 build and implement.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And so just a
16 little bit to Council Member Holden's question
17 regarding categories that-- including like illegal
18 dumping, what are the factors that you-- that 311
19 would need to be reflected there to include it as a
20 new service request?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: The
22 primary step is the responsive agency. They're the
23 ones who are actually going to fulfill on the
24 request. So they would need to outline what are
25 their requirements, what can they take, what level of

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3 detail can they take. Then that works with 311 to
4 handle on the intake side.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So 311
6 determines, based on their conversations with the
7 agency, if they are in fact able to respond, then
8 they'll add it as a service request?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:
10 Basically, yes, yeah. The agency comes forth. They
11 say this is what's required or what's needed. Does
12 that work? Does that fit into our model? Can we put
13 those two together? But it does start with the
14 agency saying this is the way we want to handle this
15 request.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But NYCHA does
17 not-- I don't think that NYCHA does that response
18 time as-- like, do you under-- I'm just curious. I
19 don't think NYCHA does that in an efficient way for
20 responding to service requests. Is that part of the
21 reason that the 311 calls go just-- they go right
22 back to NYCHA for NYCHA tenants?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I would
24 say from our perspective, you know, protocol we
25 follow is to refer it there, I believe that's because
the NYCHA system is integrated with its fulfillment

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3 system. But again, I defer to my colleagues at
4 NYCHA, if it's a deeper NYCHA question.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. So I would
6 love to work with my colleagues on the illegal
7 dumping piece with DSNY. Obviously, I think that
8 that's a really-- that's a really huge piece and a
9 lot of our-- for a lot of our communities. Okay, I
10 think that's it. That's it for my questions.
11 Council Member, do you have--

12 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: A quick follow-up
13 just to make sure I understood properly. Did you
14 just mention that 311's, I guess, interface or
15 mechanism integrates with NYCHA's call-in center? Do
16 those systems-- are they able to talk to each other?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I
18 apologize for any confusion. No, they're not able to
19 talk.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: They do not.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: They do
22 not.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay. I just--
24 yeah. Okay. In terms of-- actually, let me hand it
25 back to you, because I have a bunch of other
questions.

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I'm going to give NYCHA
4 a break here. No NYCHA questions. Just a couple more
5 311 questions. This is actually not language access
6 related, but is there any way for 311 to internally
7 transfer complaints? I'll just give you an example.
8 I have calls from, you know, noise complaints that's
9 in my district, which other manager [sic] transfer to
10 109 because that's the police precinct in my
11 district. But the noise is not actually coming from
12 my district. It's actually coming from another
13 district. So then what happens is 109 transferred
14 that call to another police precinct, and then 109
15 automatically closes out. So and there-- you know,
16 and when the 311 complaint, you know, my constituents
17 seeing wow, that call got closed out in one second or
18 like five minutes, let's put it that way. There's no
19 feeling of I actually had my, you know-- someone
20 responded to my complaint. So is there any way to, I
21 guess, in 311 call center to transfer that
22 internally?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Track the
24 question. When you say internally, you mean to a
25 different precinct?

CHAIRPERSON UNG: Yes.

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3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I

4 [inaudible]. So, the service request process,
5 whether you call in or whether a customer submits
6 with no agent involved, you know, self-serve, follows
7 the same process, and the location drives-- the
8 location of the incident drives the distribution to
9 the precinct. There's no human intervention that
10 could-- in that process to divert it or to re-route
11 it.

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I see. Thank you. So
13 my other two questions is more language access
14 related. Back to the question of-- I asked earlier
15 about bilingual speakers. As you said, there's only
16 Spanish bilingual speakers. Has there been efforts?
17 Is there regulations? What's the reason of not
18 having, other than Spanish, more bilingual speakers
19 as 311 operators?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
21 for that. I don't believe there's been any
22 regulation, you know, encouraging or discouraging
23 that from happening. In larger part it's a model
24 that's followed by other call center industries.
25 It's efficient and more real-time responsive to be
able to rely on a vendor to do the translations

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3 because that's their-- that's their core competency.
4 That's their size and scope, whereas, it's not
5 something that an operation of our size would have.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So you're saying it's
7 more efficient to use Language Line than to think
8 about hiring bilingual speakers?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: What we
10 look at is the process is a 24/7 process, and that
11 quickly gets into a lot of coverage. You can have an
12 on-demand resources that you're paying for on a
13 transactional basis such as Language Line for when
14 those-- when that demand comes up. It's more
15 difficult to staff that, whether you're a government
16 call center or a private sector call center on a pure
17 staffing basis, if you will.

18 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, based on that
19 there's no-- there's no desire on 311's part to hire
20 bilingual speakers? You'd rather, you know, rely on
21 Language Line?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: There's
23 no resistance to hire bilingual speakers. In order
24 to make the process work, the volume and the
25 frequency and what we call the arrival pattern of

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3 calls makes relying on an in-place vendor much, much
4 more efficient.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I see. Thank you. I
6 would still like to follow up to the Spanish
7 bilingual speakers--

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE:
9 [interposing] Yes, I got a note on that and we'll get
10 that to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, thank you. And
12 then one last question I do have is about the
13 customer satisfaction. I noticed in your report, you
14 did say that there's-- you guys rank pretty high over
15 the past decade. So, I also noticed in my committee
16 report that customer satisfaction survey is 94.6
17 percent of the responses were received from English
18 speakers. The rest are not. So there's actually
19 customer service is actually a high amount of English
20 Speakers that's coming back. Is there any efforts
21 about targeting popula-- you know, populations with
22 English-- limited English proficiency? I'm asking
23 you this question to see what type of effort is there
24 to reach out to the population of limited English
25 proficiency to see how they are-- you know, how are

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3 they are dealing with 311, any sort of feedback they
4 have for 311.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
6 you. I do appreciate that question, and the broader
7 topic of the in-language or the language survey as we
8 call it, which just was introduced last year, and
9 believe you all received the report today. So we're
10 very interested in getting more feedback from non-
11 English speaking customers. Our survey tools over
12 the years for English speaking customers, and to an
13 extent Spanish speaking customers have been
14 incredibly valuable, both for improvements, but also
15 to acknowledge work that's being done. When we
16 launched the in-language survey last year in the 10
17 citywide designated languages, that's our goal, is to
18 start getting more feedback from customers we may not
19 hear, because of the language preference. So the
20 start is small. There's several-- several languages
21 that have given some responses, several that have
22 not. We do conduct the survey on a regular basis.
23 We try to find as many ways as possible. But we're
24 really interested in reaching more customers who
25 speak languages other than English and understanding
how they feel about 311.

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3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: No, I appreciate the
4 intent. You don't have to answer it now, but I think
5 my question goes to beyond intent. What are the
6 efforts that's actually being done to reach
7 populations with English-limited proficiency? And
8 it's something I recognize you might be better able
9 to answer it now, but something to definitely think
10 about, about actually how to target that.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: We understand that
14 DoITT received a 45 million dollars, I guess,
15 allocation for hardware, software, professional
16 services necessary to complete the first phase of the
17 311 telecom system modernization. Can you explain
18 what is involved in phase one? Also like to hear
19 what contracts are represented within this massive
20 total, specifically also do we know what percentage
21 are granted to MWBE's and/or local vendors? And also
22 would like to hear a little bit more about how many
23 phases will there be and what are they?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you
25 for the question. I am familiar with the time you
mentioned, but I don't have a level of detail or, you

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3 know, a deep understanding of some of those
4 questions. So I would have to take that back to my
5 colleagues within OTI and be able to get back to you
6 that way.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Okay, great. We
8 await the response. In terms of-- I guess back to
9 NYCHA requests. Can you tell us what the level of
10 specificity that 311 collects in terms of data that
11 is then redirected to NYCHA?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yes, I
13 can answer that. We do not collect any location or
14 customer information. It's a tracking that a request
15 was made or a transfer was made.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it. In terms
17 of-- we know that 311 triggers, can trigger DOHMH for
18 private residents to hold landlords accountable for
19 complaints. Is there a similar system of
20 accountability for NYCHA residents?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: I track
22 with the question, and I'm thinking I'm not sure. It
23 would definitely be something I'd have to look into
24 and get back to my team and get a better
25 understanding on that.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Does NYCHA ever
4 refer residents to DOHMH?

5 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: I'm not sure
6 about that either, and I don't want to misspeak, so
7 we'll get back to you on that as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. I guess
9 moving on to the work orders and accountability. We
10 know in 2015 the New York State Comptroller audited
11 NYCHA's maintenance and repair practices. We know
12 there is a very large backlog. What is the current
13 backlog of work orders and can you break that down by
14 work type?

15 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes, let me see
16 what I have here. I know that our work order backlog
17 right now is over 600,000. It's actually over
18 633,000 open work orders including-- just over 25,000
19 work orders for maintenance complaints, and 405,000
20 for skilled trade, and then there's another 200,00
21 that are assigned to vendors.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can you say that
23 last one again? Sorry.

24 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Just over
25 200,000 assigned with vendors.

CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: What does that mean?

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3 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: It means that we
4 are using a vendor to complete that work order. So
5 it's usually skilled trade, but to complement our
6 skilled trades we also assign vendors.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Got it. Got it.
8 Thank you. Can you break down any complaints that
9 are received by a PACT development? Residents who
10 are in PACT developments?

11 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: So, NYCHA-- so
12 once a development converts through the PACT or RAD
13 program. Those maintenance complaints go to their
14 landlords. So we are not tracking that. However, we
15 do stay in communication with our PACT partners, and
16 if there are a prob-- if a resident brings a problem
17 to our attention, we do bring that to our PACT
18 partners' attention as well through our Asset
19 Management Department.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, I guess in that
21 regard it's the PACT Compliance unit. Do they keep
22 track and report on complaints received and their
23 status?

24 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: I don't believe
25 they are keeping track. Again, those residents can
now bring those complaints directly to their landlord

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3 to resolve. They obviously now can also call 311 to
4 have HPD follow up if they believe there's a code
5 violation in place.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Right. Which leads
7 to the spiral of hell and 311 hears public housing
8 because folks will refer to themselves as still
9 living in public housing under PACT program, and they
10 are not allowed to do HPD. They're sent back to a
11 management company that they're having problems with.
12 In terms of-- what are the main roadblocks to
13 completing the work orders in a timely manner, and
14 how is NYCHA keeping residents informed when there's
15 a delay in fulfilling their repair request?

16 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Thank you. The
17 biggest issue with our work order backlog is
18 obviously our capital need. We have a-- as it's been
19 well told, a 40 billion dollar capital gap, and that
20 is reflected in our work orders. I also want to
21 clarify that the volume of work orders is something
22 we-- you know, we don't discourage. We want our
23 residents to call in their deficiencies. We want to
24 understand what's going in the properties. It also
25 helps us address conditions in a different way. So
for example, for heat and hot water complaints, it's

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3 very important that we know what's going on and that
4 we're getting every resident to call so that we can
5 quickly understand is this something that's happening
6 on a specific line? Is it the whole building? Is it
7 the whole development? That kind of data is helpful
8 in helping us figure out our response and targeting
9 our response to that condition. So, the volume isn't
10 necessarily, you know, always a bad thing, but we do
11 understand we have a significant volume. It's due to
12 our capital backlog. It's due to, you know, the fact
13 that our buildings are so old, and we could go in
14 there today and fix a pipe, and tomorrow a pipe may
15 burst somewhere else. So we are trying to do our
16 best to improve our operations to address how we
17 respond to those work orders, but without significant
18 capital, it will be very hard for us to completely
19 reduce that backlog.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Right. I understand
21 there's a-- I'm not going to call the plan, its
22 appropriate name, but your NYCHA's rolling out a work
23 order reform plan.

24 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes, our work
25 order reform plan is designed to more quickly address
those skilled trades needed. So, again, I can't

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3 guarantee the pipe won't burst again, but what I'm
4 trying to guarantee that we will show up when we say
5 we're going to show up and that we're going to do our
6 best to fix the repair at that time. So work order
7 reform includes an investment of 450 new staff across
8 all the skilled trades, and de-centralizing the skill
9 trades to the property so that we can more quickly
10 respond. It also includes the addition of
11 neighborhood planners, so that residents have a
12 single point of contact within their neighborhoods to
13 schedule the repairs at their own convenience. Right
14 now, we admit that a lot of our repairs are scheduled
15 without any resident interaction, which doesn't
16 ensure a positive outcome. So what we're looking to
17 do is create that direct customer service link with
18 our residents, schedule repairs at their convenience,
19 and actually show up when we say we're going to show
20 up.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And has there been
22 any consideration to that kind of reform with the
23 call center? As you heard in Ms. Torres' testimony,
24 it also seems to suffer from a-- not being connected
25 to the developments and to the residents in many
regards and residents feeling dismissed. How-- what

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3 is the plan and training that is offered to call
4 centers, and is there any thinking done around how to
5 restructure it so that there's improved quality
6 service?

7 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: We still believe
8 that the call center is the most efficient way of
9 providing this service to over 400,000 residents
10 across the City. The call center has information,
11 again, on all the property management offices and the
12 availability of the maintenance workers. It is the
13 first step in the process for reporting a repair. I
14 think where most of the frustration actually lies is
15 not in the fa-- not in that initial call with the
16 call center, but in the follow-ups that happen there,
17 in the black hole that we hear from our residents
18 that many of our work orders fall into, and we're
19 very conscious of that. We understand that that's a
20 real problem and we're trying to solve for. So,
21 residents have that initial maintenance, but so many
22 of repair-- our homes need so many repairs that they
23 require that skilled trade follow-up, and until work
24 order reform, we didn't have that direct connection.
25 So work orders went to waiting to schedule, and
residents didn't know who to call or how to contact

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3 to get that scheduled or to find out how long am I
4 going to be waiting, what's going to happen. And
5 frankly, even now with work order reform and our
6 investment of 450, we still have long wait times
7 because we have this 633,000 backlog. So, it's steps
8 in the right direction but we admit it's not perfect.
9 The-- that waiting time is where residents start to
10 get frustrated and impatient and call back the CCC
11 and find out what's going on. And now what we're
12 trying to do is take some of the burden off that CCC
13 and have the residents call the planners for that
14 follow-up and to be able to talk to that planner
15 about what's going to happen next in the process and
16 free the CCC up to take the initial request and focus
17 on that customer service at the front end.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: But that's a system
19 that you're rolling out. So what percentage of the
20 NYCHA developments will actually engage in this
21 process?

22 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: so, everyone by
23 the end of the year. So we are rolled out right now
24 in Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Brooklyn is
25 right now planned for August 1st, and Manhattan for
the end of September. And so by the end of this

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3 calendar year, the work order reform will be fully
4 implemented across the City.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And what will be the
6 feedback loop for residents to let you know if we're
7 achieving the goals of work order reform or not?

8 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: So, we have been
9 holding work order reform resident briefings I would
10 say every two months or so. So it started obviously
11 just as Queens, Staten Island. Then we've added in
12 the Bronx, but we've now added in Brooklyn already in
13 anticipation of the roll-out so that they can hear
14 the feedback. And the point of rolling out one
15 borough at a time is that we are taking that feedback
16 from both employees and residents on what's working
17 and what's not working, and improving the process as
18 we go. So, this is about continuous improvement
19 iterating seeing, you know, this didn't work in
20 Queens/Staten Island; let's do it differently in the
21 Bronx, and so on and so forth. So, actually last
22 night we had a-- we had one of those calls with our
23 residents, and I'm happy to share the information on
24 those calls with the Council going forward so you can
25 participate as well.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Fantastic. So, can
4 you explain how NYCHA records and tracks actual
5 completion of work orders?

6 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: So, all the--
7 all work order information is held in our Maximo
8 [sic] system. That is our system of record on all
9 work orders. Work orders that are closed or
10 completed are closed with-- you know, the goal is
11 that work orders are closed with work done and with
12 pictures proving that the work was done.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: With pictures--

14 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: [interposing]
15 With pictures.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: proving that it's
17 done.

18 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yeah, so--

19 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: [interposing] I have
20 pictures of work that was proposed to be done. It
21 was abysmal.

22 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: I understand
23 that. So we have a Quality Assurance Department. we
24 have actually three oversight departments that were
25 instituted as part of the 2019 HUD agreement:
Quality Assurance, Compliance, and Environmental

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3 Health and Safety, and they all work together to
4 review work orders that have been done, look for
5 improper practices and really provide that, you know,
6 insurance of compliance with rules and regulations.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Has there been any
8 consideration to getting agreement from the resident
9 that the work has been properly done.

10 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes, prior to
11 COVID, we used to require a residents' signature on
12 work orders as part of the closing. We stopped doing
13 that as part of COVID because of the concerns of
14 touching the work order devices. But I believe that
15 is-- I will double-check. I don't want to misspeak,
16 but I believe that resident signatures are coming
17 back into the process.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Great. I also
19 appreciate the improvements that are made in terms of
20 sending the residents back, you know, documentation
21 of their calls, because that is a burden they should
22 not bear, although they do have-- keep quite diligent
23 track of the multitude of work orders that they put
24 in, and the circus of them getting closed when work
25 is not even started. So thank you for that
improvement. In terms of-- I think I did not hear

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3 this correctly, but how much does it cost NYCHA to
4 operate the call center?

5 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: [inaudible] So,
6 for 2021 the total cost for the call center--
7 actually, I don't want to misspeak, and I have
8 something that's confusing in front of me, so we will
9 get back to you with that information.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So, would it save
11 money for NYCHA if the call center were just under
12 the DoITT calls?

13 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: I can't speak to
14 a cost/benefit analysis, but from an operational
15 standpoint, I don't think there's an advantage of
16 combining our call center with the 311 system,
17 because our call center, again it takes very
18 specialized information from our residents in order
19 to transfer that to our workers and respond
20 appropriately. So for example, we are going through
21 a series of specific questions as to the problem that
22 the resident is trying to report, whether it's a
23 problem with a wall. What room is the wall in?
24 What-- where is the wall? Where is the problem
25 within the wall? So that kind of information is just
more specialized. It also includes all of our

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3 maintenance worker schedules and our staff schedules.
4 So it has information from our other systems in order
5 be able to say I have a maintenance worker available
6 at your property Wednesday from 1:00-4:00, would you
7 be available at that time? So that's a
8 specialization that I think is best managed by NYCHA
9 within NYCHA.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: In terms of-- I
11 guess this comes from some colleagues. Why doesn't
12 NYCHA have a simple website where users can view the
13 names of all the developments, complaints of tenants
14 to these developments, and whether these complaints
15 were resolved and when? So it is a question of
16 transparency. Can you speak to that?

17 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Understood.
18 Actually, the state just passed a bill this session
19 that includes a searchable database of work tickets
20 so we are working right now for compliance to publish
21 that, and so it would be on our website. Once you
22 have a work ticket number, you can then look up the
23 work ticket and look at the status of that ticket
24 which preserving any personal information and privacy
25 of the resident. So it would be removing any
personal information. I do want to add something

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3 that we haven't spoken about as an addition to the
4 CCC service. NYCHA has a very extensive app, the My
5 NYCHA app. It's also available-- it's available as an
6 app. It's also available as a desktop, like a
7 desktop website, and residents are able to submit
8 service requests, work tickets through the app.
9 They're able to see the statuses of the work ticket
10 at any time. They're able to track the scheduling of
11 it. Right now, the app is available in Spanish and
12 in English, but we're working right now on
13 translation into also Russian and Mandarin, which we
14 expect to have done this year as well. So the app
15 also is a great tool for residents to have all that
16 information at their figure tips, and we have over
17 115,000 app subscribers right now.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Can you say that
19 last part, 115--

20 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: 115,000.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And in terms of
22 tenants with limited proficiency or without computers
23 and broadband service, which is a prolific problem
24 throughout the developments. How do residents get
25 relief?

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3 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: The NYCHA app is
4 also available at our kiosks in all of our property
5 management offices.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Does every
7 development have a kiosk?

8 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: And I guess I would
10 assume any web interface would be available in
11 multiple languages.

12 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you. I feel
14 like I could keep going but I-- you know there's
15 folks testifying. Thank you for your patience.
16 [inaudible] pages of questions. I think maybe we
17 will-- actually, one more question, and I think I'd
18 love to hear the testimony of the public. Does NYCHA
19 support Reso 68 calling for the state legislature and
20 HUD to increase NYCHA accountability by auditing the
21 responsiveness of NYCHA managers to tenants?

22 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: So, NYCHA right
23 now is already under significant federal monitorship.
24 So, in 2019 when we signed the HUD agreement, it put
25 in place a federal monitor. In addition to the
federal monitor we have HUD and the Department of

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3 justice southern district involved in extensive
4 oversight over our agency. We have significant
5 meetings with all of them. There are continual
6 checkpoints as to our compliance with the HUD
7 agreement metrics. The monitorship involves, again,
8 compliance not just with the six pillar areas which
9 were, you know, everyone kind of thinks of as the HUD
10 agreement. But I want to clarify that the HUD
11 agreement also required a new organizational plan for
12 NYCHA, and that organizational plan, our
13 transformation plan, is where we bring in the issues
14 of accountability and property management and doing
15 an all-around better job. And HUD, the southern
16 district and the federal monitor re ensuring
17 compliance with those improvements in the
18 transformation plan and the organizational plan. On
19 a daily basis we're involved in working with them to
20 ensure that compliance. So, I believe all of that is
already well underway.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: So under-- in terms
22 of the federal monitor, NYCHA is compelled to respond
23 to all the, I guess I'll say, shortcomings or
24 recommendations that is provided by the monitor?
25

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3 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Absolutely, and
4 the HUD agreement requires, frankly, stricter
5 requirements than some of the HPD enforcement. So,
6 you know, for a HPD-- a landlord that fails to
7 provide heat and hot water, I could be wrong, but I
8 believe there's 30 days until HPD acts with their
9 enforcement tools. NYCHA's being held to, you know,
10 12, 24, and 48 hours for restoration of heat.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Which is often not
12 the case.

13 VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: There's obvious
14 infrastructure challenges in meeting that, but the
15 issue is that we are being monitored and enforced to
16 that level of compliance.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Right, and embedded
18 in the question is the experience of the residents
19 who feel like they do not get relief and there is no
20 accountable agency, and in fact-- I guess the
21 question related to the resolution is in terms of
22 managers, you know, with 335 developments in multiple
23 conditions. There hasn't been a consistent level of
24 service provided to the residents at the development
25 level, and no transparency around what NYCHA is doing
to ensure that it is providing appropriate level

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3 service. So, I think with that, we can-- oh, yes.
4 Council Member Kagan, please?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I know it's like
6 time is already-- I cannot just let it go, you know?
7 I can fill out City Hall right now. I can fill out
8 City Hall right now by the residents of NYCHA
9 developments in Coney Island in my district who will
10 tell you that they're calling, emailing every day
11 about the same issues for a month, and nobody not
12 just not doing anything. Not anyone replying them.
13 Not anyone saying yes we got your complaint. Forget
14 about doing anything. And you mentioned federal
15 monitor, I personally had several hours' conversation
16 with Mr. Bart Schwartz [sp?] I believe his name, and
17 I told him in his face that like all of this
18 monitoring doesn't work, and the property manager
19 loses his or her vacation if for six months same
20 problem over and over again and nobody did anything.
21 Then it will have an effect. That's why we need this
22 resolution, and that's why we need not just
23 monitoring but accountability. Sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you so much for
25 your testimony and participation today.

VICE PRESIDENT TRIMBLE: Thank you.

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3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.

4 We'll now move to public testimony. So, please note
5 that each panelist will be given three minutes to
6 speak. For in-person panelists, please come up to
7 the table when your name is called. For panelists
8 who will be attending virtually, we will be calling
9 on individuals one-by-one to testify. Once your name
10 is called a member of our staff will unmute you and
11 the Sergeant at Arms will set the timer and give you
12 the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant
13 to announce that you may begin before delivering your
14 testimony. I'd now like to welcome Marsellette Davis
15 to testify, followed by Christina Bueno, and then
16 Laretta Brumfield. Marsellette Davis, you may begin
17 when the Sergeant calls time. So, we're having some
18 trouble getting a hold of Marsellette Davis. We'll
19 circle back to her. Oh, we see her.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: you may need to
22 accept the unmute request. Looks like you're still
23 on mute.

24 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: Hello, hello. My
25 name is Marsellette Davis. I'm familiar with the
background. I have a black shirt on. I'm a woman,

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3 and I have a flowered band across my head, and I wear
4 glasses and lipstick and earrings. And thank you for
5 having me here. I am an individual advocate for the
6 Diversity of the Deaf Community including sign
7 language for the deaf, blind, hard of hearing, and
8 those with hearing loss. And I want to discuss--
9 specifically, I want to focus on technology related
10 to calls for the 311 system. For people when they
11 call 311, for example, how I would do it-- I use a
12 video phone, and when I connect to 311, they don't--
13 let me clarify. I have direct ASL services, but it
14 doesn't redirect for the ASL. So, when I call
15 directly to 311, first of all, I don't get referred
16 to ASL direct. The other thing is related to the
17 app. So on my cell phone, for example, as an
18 individual I'm looking at the app on my cell phone
19 and it's very difficult to find the ASL direct. It
20 takes a lot of navigation to find ASL direct, that's
21 one thing. And now I'd like to move on to the next
22 item. When I'm communicating with different members
23 of this level for the deaf community, what I'm
24 finding is many of the members of the deaf community
25 don't have a lot of experience with technology. We
want our organizations to be able to provide

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3 education for the members of the deaf community so
4 that they can learn more about the technology. Also,
5 in relationship to signing in English in ASL. This
6 program has been in operation for nine years. And
7 what I've noticed is is that any time--

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] time's
9 expired.

10 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: there's new features
11 for 311, they do not communicate and provide that
12 information to the deaf community. And so deaf
13 people like myself who are experienced with
14 technology and know how to navigate the system, and I
15 have to hunt and find this information, and then I
16 have to inform the deaf community. It shouldn't be
17 me. 311, I feel when they develop new technology and
18 new programs, they should have like, you know, a deaf
19 person to sign and explain exactly what the new
20 technology is about. And for example, LinkNYC, the
21 kiosk on the street for example, I see a video
22 message at LinkNYC describing different things about
23 311, different videos, and then sked the deaf
24 community do they understand the videos regarding 311
25 and many of them do not understand. They feel like
they're missing a lot of information because there's

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3 no sign language access. And so depending on the
4 level of English or the visuals, the pictures, I
5 suggest that you should have someone that is signing
6 in ASL on the LinkNYC so that deaf people can have
7 access, better access to 311. So, moving on, in the
8 past 2020 I was sharing during the COVID epidemic.
9 That communication was very important, and but what
10 happened was, was that the leaders that were involved
11 in the deaf community, they themselves were hunting
12 for information on COVID to share with the deaf
13 community. And finally they saw that they had to
14 have an ASL interpreter, and then they had better
15 access. And that should also be happening in 2021.
16 That also did happen in 2021. So, 2021 when COVID
17 began to decrease and they're in the different areas.
18 They were reopening businesses again, but there were
19 still problems continuing because the community was
20 behind in all of the information that was being
21 provided. And so the leaders in the deaf community
22 were continuing to try to find information and
23 provide to the deaf community current information.
24 And we have a variety of people that have different
25 beliefs. Some people did believe in getting the
vaccination. That's their individual beliefs, but

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3 technology and information, there wasn't enough. It
4 needs to be more visual and more-- better technology
5 for deaf access. That's a very important thing.

6 Next, people who live in NYCHA or in public housing.

7 What they've seen, what they've noticed is that many
8 people who live in public housing are really far

9 behind in the news with new policies and new

10 programs. And often, some of the information that's

11 updated, like for 311, they have some flyers and

12 they, you know, pass them out at houses, you know,

13 under the door. And when member of the deaf

14 community get these flyers, they're in English. It's

15 not in ASL. That's not their first language, so they

16 don't always comprehend everything they're reading.

17 Approximately 60 percent of the deaf community live

18 in public housing do not have access to technology

19 like video phones and the internet, and they're

20 unable to get information. Many members of the deaf

21 community, for example a deaf person is dependent

22 upon another member of their family or member in

23 their household that is hearing, and the deaf person

24 has to ask them for information, but it's not the

25 full information. It's reduced. When the hearing

person gives them the information it's not exact, and

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3 that has a real impact on their ability to know
4 what's happening. So, when I call 311 and they're
5 transferred to ASL direct, what happens sometimes is
6 they're sent to the wrong location. For example,
7 they will be like sending me to Queens HRA, but I
8 live in New York, so I'm referred to the wrong
9 borough. At the same time, ASL Direct in Queens, for
10 example, in HRA, NY HRA, I have noticed if they have
11 a problem connecting with public housing, they will
12 connect ASL direct in Queens and they don't help us.
13 They refer us to a different HRA area, and so that's
14 where the confusion begins to happen, and I can
15 visualize [sic] that ASL 311-- ASL Direct for
16 providing services should have-- should have ASL
17 Direct. HRA Queens should be providing the correct
18 information for HRA. For example--

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time's
19 expired.

20 MARSELLETTE DAVIS: HRA has their own
21 line to ASL Direct and they should be for others as
22 well. HRA has a tendency to provide services in their
23 local area, and I understand the different areas for
24 HRA. However, the point is is that ASL Direct is
25 community-wide, and they need to use that system but

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3 they cannot get response for the different HRA
4 offices or areas, and that really causes a tremendous
5 problem in general. And next, NYC HA, the buildings,
6 they do not have box communication where the address
7 can be connected to the building for repairs or
8 different problems that's happening in the building
9 for like the apartments. So when they inform [sic]
10 box, some of the buildings have them, and some of
11 them do not. The office often struggles with
12 technology and most offices that are involved in NYC
13 HRA buildings have not received practice or training
14 on language access. And also for example, the
15 community, if they already have a contract with
16 interpreting in ASL-- for example, if a deaf person
17 lives and they need acc-- in a building where they
18 need to access the manager, the staff do not have
19 training on how to obtain an interpreter, and I feel
20 that there should be training and some sort of device
21 where there's a VRI or some monitor, something for
22 access to interpreting. The irony is that the
23 Language Line provides 175 different wonderful
24 language access for everyone except for deaf people.
25 They do not have access for deaf people. So we're
left out again. I'm still wondering what NYC

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3 commitment-- I feel like they're continuing to break
4 their commitments. They make commitments again and
5 again, so should we have a deaf contact person so
6 that there would be a better quality access for the
7 deaf community, specifically regarding the
8 technology. And once again, 60 to 85 percent of the
9 deaf community here who have moved here from another
10 country do not get information about direct access
11 from the government. They meet other members of the
12 deaf community who provide them information and that
13 is just not appropriate. And for example, a hearing
14 person from another country moves here and they have
15 everything that has provided them their language, all
16 the information, all the access, everything is
17 beautiful, and they, you know, receive all the
18 information needed. So where is ASL access? There
19 is none. And again, you are trying to advocate for
20 access. When you think of access, you need to think
21 of all languages which includes sign language. And
22 also-- or I'd like to see what happens with 311, ASL
23 Direct, and the technology, the people that take care
24 of for the deaf community are different deaf
25 organizations that would be included in the loop and
any new technology, any new services, any new

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3 programs should be disseminated into the deaf
4 community through NYCHA, and importantly the deaf
5 community needs to understand what is happening and
6 what the improvements are, and not just once in a
7 while, but you know, constant updates like everyone
8 else would receive. Thank you for listening.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'd now
10 like to welcome Christina Bueno to testify. After
11 that I'll be calling on Laretta Brumfield and then
12 Ravi Reddi. Christina Bueno, you may begin when the
13 Sergeant calls time.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will begin.

15 CHRISTINA BUENO: Hello, my name is
16 Christina Bueno, and I'm the Dir-- I want to explain
17 my background. I have colors behind me. A light is
18 green. Who I am, is I'm an activist involved with
19 human rights, specifically deaf human rights and
20 accessibility. And what Marsellette recently
21 commented about, I relate to what she's saying. I'd
22 like to share my experience using 311. During the
23 early summer of 2020, two years ago, I was depending
24 upon the relay service. What that means is is that
25 there's a third party who uses sign language to help
me communicate between other hearing people, and so I

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3 was calling 311 Direct and it would not go through.

4 I had the interpreter there, so I was calling through
5 the interpreter, and 311 kept disconnecting. We could
6 not get through. So I was thinking about what to do.

7 I became very frustrated, and I had to go to the
8 internet and look to see where I could file a housing
9 complaint related to what was happening in my

10 apartment. There was some leaks. There was some

11 bugs, different issues, and you know, that still had
12 not been repaired. So I was hunting on the internet

13 to find another number for 311. So I don't remember

14 if it was 347 or 212 area code, but anyways, I did

15 call through the relay service through my video phone

16 and finally I was able to get through and the person

17 told me that I had to call through 311, and I told

18 them well, that's what I did. I started by calling

19 through 311, and they said sorry can't help you, and

20 hang up. So I called through 311 and couldn't get

21 through. So then I hung up and I called back that

22 nine digit number again, and what happened is I was

23 connected to the same exact person and they said,

24 "You have to call 311." And I said I've already done

25 that and I cannot get through, and I'm becoming very

frustrated. So she went ahead and took the order

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3 from me and asked me, you know, to file a complaint
4 against the property manager of the building. That
5 was in 2020. So, I requested for a C-- a free air
6 conditioning. I heard you could get free air
7 conditioning for senior citizen people and people
8 with disabilities. So, I called and told them I'd
9 like to request free air conditioning unit, and after
10 that I never heard back from them, and I never
11 received the air conditioner. So, now the manager in
12 our building and another member that lives in our
13 building, they have gotten air conditioning units. I
14 asked the manager, but he ignored me and didn't help
15 me. There's such a lack of communication. I'm not
16 on their list, so they don't help me. I called 311,
17 and I can't get help, and I couldn't get an air
18 conditioning unit. I called them. They never called
19 me back. So now he were are in 2022, and a few weeks
20 ago I called 311 and I didn't remember everything
21 that happened in the past, to be honest, but the same
22 thing happened again. 311 kept disconnecting, and I
23 would hang up and call again. I called through the
24 relay service again thinking maybe the relay service
25 technology, maybe with an interpreter I would be able
to get through, but I was not able to get through.

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2 Even with an interpreter, I cannot get through to
3 311.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

5 CHRISTINA BUENO: So, I have to repeat
6 again and again trying to get through, unable to get
7 through. So, how am I going to get fairness? How
8 can this injustice be resolved? I live in stable
9 housing, and if part of the requirement doesn't
10 accommodate-- I'm a human. I have rights. I have a
11 right to file a complaint for 311 not doing their job
12 and not doing the repairs that are needed. So that
13 was a long time ago. Those should have been taken
14 care of a long time ago, and still yet today they're
15 not taken care of. I'm being ignored. My back-up is
16 311 to get help, and I can't get through. So then I
17 have to call that nine digit number and they don't
18 want to help me, and it's very frustrating. The same
19 problem as what happened a couple years ago. So the
20 result was before I even get through to talk to a
21 person for 311, it took me 40 minutes to finally get
22 through, and I can't get through because they keep
23 hanging up. So I wait 40 minutes to get through, and
24 then they hang up. And then I call the nine digit
25 number, and then I wait another 40 minutes to get

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3 through, and they don't want to help me. And I know
4 other people that have disabilities other than
5 hearing loss, and they have equal access to get
6 through on 311, but the deaf community does not have
7 equal access. Because I cannot call 311 directly and
8 I have to try and figure out how to find an
9 alternative way-- 311 does not let me connect. How
10 do I connect to 311? I feel like everybody else, you
11 know, even with disabilities, but they can hear, have
12 better access, and the deaf community is left out of
13 the 311 access. I'd like you to consider this and
14 think about not leaving us to be the last to have
15 access. Marsellette Davis made a comment saying that
16 you should have a deaf person that can work with you
17 in different agencies to make sure that their
18 programs are providing equal access for deaf people.
19 This is a very important issue for deaf people, and
20 it should be important for the hearing community as
21 well. Thank you very much for your time.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'd now
23 like to welcome Laretta Brumfield to testify. After
24 that I'll be calling on Ravi Reddi and then Lisha Luo
25 Cai. Laretta Brumfield, you may begin when the
Sergeant calls time.

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

4 LAURETTA BRUMFIELD: Okay, good

5 afternoon. My name is Laretta Brumfield, Laretta,
6 Laretta Brumfield. I'm the Tenant Association
7 President for Coney Island Houses. I'm calling
8 because when you call 311 for a NYCHA complaint, they
9 direct you automatically to the 707 number, which
10 actually just makes a ticket. When they make a
11 ticket, if you have to have a scheduled person-- if
12 you have a broken pipe, they have to call a plumber,
13 but you supposed to have a plumber, a plasterer, and
14 a painter. So therefore, the plumber is supposed to
15 close a ticket and open a ticket for the painter,
16 which they never do, and then you're waiting months
17 for to get on schedule for paint-- for a plasterer,
18 and a plasterer supposed to open up a ticket for a
19 painter, which they never do, and then you have to
20 wind up calling again, and then the painter takes
21 months. So something that can be done within three
22 days, takes over a year to get done, because they're
23 not doing-- they're just closing a ticket. Sometimes
24 they close a ticket and it don't never come back, and
25 then you still have an open wall. That's what they
do. I have three tickets since February, my personal

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3 self, that's still open, that I didn't even get
4 scheduled for yet for three different things in my
5 apartment. That's what happens. Also, living in
6 Coney Island, when we have no heat, National Grid is
7 in charge of heat in certain developments, which
8 definitely mine's Coney Island Houses. [inaudible]
9 the temperature has to be 65 or below, which in Coney
10 Island is always colder than other areas in New York
11 City because we're surrounded by water. But National
12 Grid is not allowed to come in our house and take
13 temperature. So and also you cannot call National
14 Grid and tell them that your heater is not good. So
15 I have to call out NYCHA in 707 number, tell them
16 that I don't have any heat. Then NYCHA comes to your
17 apartment, checks the heat in the apartment. They
18 call National Grid. National Grid is supposed to
19 come out, fix the heat, and then call NYCHA and
20 they're supposed to come back and see if the heater's
21 on in your apartment. One, if you call and say no
22 heat, if you have on any kind of your stove or
23 anything, if they come in and they check the
24 temperature, it's going to be above 65 because you're
25 in here and you're freezing. That's another thing.
They're not being held accountable for that.

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3 National Grid cannot come in your apartment and check
4 the temperature. NYCHA has to do it. I don't
5 understand why NYCHA is just not in charge of turning
6 back on the heat or giving you hot water. Also, they
7 need to scale workers back to being NYCHA workers.
8 Instead of giving it to vendors, because vendors you
9 have to wait six months or more, years, for a vendor
10 to come. NYCHA needs to be back in charge, have
11 skilled workers, put these people into programs, make
12 them skilled workers, and come back and start working
13 and doing the work for the development themselves and
14 stop giving it to vendors. Also, the managers and
15 the supers have to-- need to be accountable for the
16 way NYCHA buildings look, for them just closing on
17 your tickets and not be doing the work. All housing-

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
19 expired.

20 LAURETTA BRUMFIELD: workers need to be
21 accountable. They have to be accountable for the
22 work that's supposed to be done and they're not
23 getting it done. If you call the management
24 [inaudible] we call the [inaudible] call 707 they
25 have to be accountable for taking care of the

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3 tickets, not just shutting it down. Somebody has to
4 be accountable, and it needs to be either property
5 manager, super, assistant super. They're supposed to
6 go through the buildings. They're supposed to
7 building checks. They're not doing it. NYCHA needs
8 to be accountable for NYCHA. They need to stop
9 doing-- giving vendors they're jobs. They need to--
10 they need people back to school and get them skilled
11 workers back, NYCHA workers, instead of using
12 vendors, because the vendors is clearly not working,
13 because I have tickets open since February and still
14 haven't been scheduled an appointment. So therefore,
15 they need to do-- go back to the old way and let
16 NYCHA take care of their own problems, and being held
17 accountable for their own problems, because it's easy
18 for them to blame National Grid for not giving us any
19 heat or hot water. Too many times in the winter that
20 NYCHA developments in Coney Island does not have any
21 heat or hot water, and it's too cold out here for
22 that to be. So that's what they need to do, and they
23 need to be held accountable, because they all go home
24 to their warm homes and we're here freezing every
25 winter. So that's what-- that's what I needed to
say.

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3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'd now
4 like to welcome Ravi Reddi to testify. After that
5 I'll be calling on Lisha Luo Cai and then Ross Joy.
6 Ravi Reddi, you may begin when the Sergeant calls
7 time.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

9 RAVI REDDI: I want to thank Chairs Ung,
10 Gutiérrez, Avilés, and the Council Members of the
11 committees for holding this hearing and giving the
12 Asian American Federation the opportunity to testify
13 on language access needs of our community. My name
14 is Ravi Reddi. I'll be speaking on behalf of and in
15 place of Lisha Luo Cai, and I'm the Associate
16 Director of Advocacy and Policy here at the Asian
17 American Federation. Legislation like Intro 206 and
18 Intro 296 introduced by Chair Ung will help
19 illuminate the barriers our LEP New Yorkers face in
20 accessing the most basic government services via 311.
21 At a time when our LEP communities are in crisis from
22 accessing mental health services to navigating city
23 inspection codes to small business owners, to
24 accessing food delivery services providing additional
25 information on the experiences of our LEP New Yorkers
is critical. Language access has always been a

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3 primary barrier between our community and the
4 services they need access to. So while 311 is a
5 primary gateway, issues with telephonic
6 interpretation have been consistent and well-
7 understood by community-based organizations that have
8 always shown up to help our vulnerable when city
9 systems couldn't. Having language capacities already
10 within city systems that our community members depend
11 on and their staff is absolutely critical. To that
12 point, for the first time the city budget will
13 support critical proposals like a community
14 interpreter bank and worker co-ops related to
15 language access that address the need for language
16 access capacity by centering the communities who have
17 it. Within these proposals we will see the pay-off
18 in multiple ways, from providing employment
19 opportunities for our immigrant communities to
20 relieving strains on existing CBO capacity to
21 providing interpretation to addressing the serious
22 gap in quality of language interpretation for the
23 communities that need it the most. As you mentioned
24 on Monday at a Contracts Committee hearing,
25 immigration policies are in such a state of flux that
our communities will need sustained in-language

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3 engagement to stay abreast of changing policies,
4 processes, and documents. And when it comes to
5 assisting our small businesses in crisis, even when a
6 service is much needed, it is crucial to provide an
7 ease of accessibility for LEP immigrant business
8 owners to access it. Throughout the pandemic, our
9 community has been in crisis, seeking out
10 assistances, seeking out mental health resources and
11 basic needs services. They have consistently come
12 out our member organizations first, and when
13 attempting to reach City services, have had difficult
14 experience that reinforce the need to reinforce the
15 work our CBO's are doing and treat them as the
16 experts of providing culturally competent and
17 language accessible services. In our work and the
18 work of our member and partner organizations we're
19 consistently reminded that much of the limited
20 accessibility issues our community is grappling with
21 relate to issues of capacity. Our communities are
22 often the last to know about key information, and the
23 pandemic has demonstrated that there is still much
24 work to be done in making sure our communities, many
25 of whom are our frontline workers, benefit from the
work of our city agencies. Legislation like Intro

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3 206 and 296 are steps in illuminating where the need
4 is in validating and addressing the experiences of our
5 community members. AAF stands ready to work with City
6 Council to make sure City services are as responsive
7 as our community members need them to be. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And since
9 Mr. Reddi mentioned that he'll be testifying in place
10 of Lisha Luo Cai, and I can see she's not on the
11 Zoom, I'll now call up Ross Joy to provide testimony.
12 After that, I'll be calling on Victor Bach [sp?].

13 Ross Joy, you may begin when ready.

14 ROSS JOY: Good afternoon. My name is
15 Ross Joy. I work at the Red Hook Community Justice
16 Center. Thank you Chair Avilés, Chair Ung, and Chair
17 Gutiérrez for listening to me and having us here
18 today. The Red Hook Community Justice Center we partner with NYCHA
19 residents and NYCHA staff, HRA, and many others to
20 prevent evictions, ensure repairs and expand
21 opportunity. As a Center for Court Innovation
22 project citywide, we partner with the City Council
23 and communities across the City to improve safety and
24 ensure a fair, effective, and humane justice system.
25 At Red Hook, our community court partners-- is a

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3 community court in partnership with the New York
4 State Unified Court System. It includes a housing
5 court where public housing tenants can bring their
6 complaint against NYCHA for violating this City
7 Council's Local Laws. Those Local Laws are known as
8 the Housing Maintenance code. These tenant actions
9 are called in court as an HP court case. Public
10 housing tenants just like private tenants deserve the
11 protection of this City Council's Housing Maintenance
12 laws. We agree-- we very much welcome this council--
13 this committee's actions last year passing Local Law
14 192 that would even expand more public housing
15 tenants being able to access and report their
16 complaints against the Housing Maintenance Code.
17 However, as was stated today, this is still not
18 implemented and falls fall short of still not
19 treating NYCHA tenants like private tenants being
20 able to have their complaints heard by HPD, which is
21 the only agency that's required to enforce the
22 Housing Maintenance Code. When tenant's complaints
23 are investigated by HPD, we do see results.
24 Violations are cited and tenants-- and it gives
25 tenants more-direct independent power to back up
their claims. When you say you don't have gas, you

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3 can get a housing code violation with it being cited.

4 So far this year, just this year alone, 54 Red Hook

5 public housing residents have brought their

6 complaints to court and has received an HPD

7 inspection throughout their HP court case. And an

8 alarming 401 violations have been documented. These

9 include 46C emergency, immediately, hazardous

10 violations. There's a chart on the back that breaks

11 this down. Some violations of note include 44

12 violations of leaks, 28 violations of mold, and 164

13 violations of peeling paint or plastic. When tenants

14 come to court, they very often show us tickets that

15 have been open for months, if not years. Yet, HPD

16 routinely cancels NYCHA public housing tenants'

17 complaints in their internal system. They do not

18 comply with this City Council's Open Data law

19 requirements related violations discovered at NYCHA

20 and does not even have a proper record of NYCHA

21 residential addresses, often time sending the

22 inspectors to the wrong addresses known as NAK [sic]

23 addresses. You can see an example of that tenant

24 cancelation notice in the packet. It explains that

25 it's been -- the tenants' complaints have been

cancelled just for being in NYCHA, and instructs,

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3 confusingly, if you have these conditions still
4 exist, please file a new complaint with 311. We
5 definitely agree that residents should have access to
6 the court system, but like private tenants, they
7 should have access to HPD directly to submit
8 violations. I will just say that residents, we 100
9 percent agree that NYCHA should have a high-quality
10 communication with their residents. And that should
11 be-- we welcome continuing innovation with that. The
12 work order reform we're very excited about as well,
13 but there's got to be a back-stop, and this City
14 Council has established that back-stop in Local Laws.
15 Unfortunately, a lot of our residents end up using
16 911 in replace of 311. We very often see sewerage
17 backflow problems, electrical fires, many other
18 issues that could have been prevented by a 311
19 complaint that end up and escalate without action and
20 turn into a 911 complaint. I would welcome the City
21 Council to continue to investigate NYCHA's compliance
22 with Local Law. I think it was very encouraging that
23 VP Eva Trimble did admit that NYCHA residents should
24 have an access to have their complaints heard as code
25 violations, not just mere tickets. In Red Hook
alone, just this past two months, we've had three gas

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3 leaks that are now affecting 27 different residents.

4 Council Member Kagan also expressed those leaks.

5 This City Council passed in 2015 Local Law 47 that

6 requires all landlords, including NYCHA, to issue

7 notices of service interruption when these gas leaks

8 occur, encouraging landlords to communicate with the

9 renters [sic] what-- and what action steps in order

10 to restore service. HPD is the only agency that's

11 required to make sure landlords are enforcing that.

12 And this code of silence between NYCHA and HPD that

13 they're both not holding each other accountable just

14 can't continue anymore. We thank you so much for

15 your partnership and continue to work on these very

16 difficult issues, and with 100 percent agreement that

17 public housing is essential to New York is so

18 important to our communities and we want to continue

19 to see it thrive and strengthen. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much

21 both for your patience of sitting through the hearing

22 the entire time, your work, and your testimony and

23 providing every clear examples of some of the serious

24 problems. I think one of the things it's clear that

25 we were not able to address in this hearing is how

city agencies close tickets as well, and what the

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3 feedback loop and areas of discretion are to the
4 agencies back to 311 system, back to residents. So I
5 think you've highlighted a new area of questions that
6 we need to follow very clearly. I was curious if you
7 could explain a little bit from your perspective how
8 you have-- in your experience with so many residents
9 in Red Hook, what their experience of the call system
10 has been, and where there are particular areas of
11 improvement that you would suggest?

12 ROSS JOY: Yes, thank you.

13 Interestingly, as a state court help center, I often
14 do receive referrals from 311 callers myself, and so
15 I'm experienced with that. If you call in South
16 Brooklyn, have a tenant complaint, the 311 operators
17 will often sometimes bring my desktop phone so I can
18 see at both ends when helping people make calls, and
19 as well as receiving calls through the 311 system. I
20 think there's a fundamental-- there's a deep
21 disparity that residents in using just don't feel
22 that 311 is for them, and that's because too often
23 the agencies are told, "No, you need to call NYCHA,
24 this is the wrong type of government." And that's--
25 well, as we know, is simply not the case. Speaking
26 directly about NYCHA's current systems, again, I

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3 think we are promising reform from work order reform
4 as this neighborhood planner. We were promised a
5 neighborhood administrator as well, and that's more
6 localized. If you think about it, their borough-
7 level operations are so disconnected, and to see the
8 agency moving back to a neighborhood approach to its
9 management process is very encouraging, and having a
10 neighborhood planner, someone who could actually
11 schedule your repairs, having that person's name and
12 number accessible, we're very excited to see, because
13 we know how difficult it is to call this 707. We also
14 use the 707 line for other areas, and not just
15 repairs, but if you need help recertifying your lease
16 or asking about a rent charge, you have to call 707
17 as well. Accessing NYCHA lock box unit is quite a
18 difficult one. It probably takes 10 or more punches
19 to get to that unit, and also we find it difficult
20 sometimes, especially seniors. Folks who are
21 ineligible, non-citizens who reside in public housing
22 and keep a different social security number on file,
23 it's very difficult for them to access the self-
24 service portal, and we really do rely on that hotline
25 to problem solve, and that's not always someone that
the property management office has access to as well.

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3 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much.

4 You have hit on several other hearings for the future
5 for sure and things we need to follow up. We
6 appreciate your testimony and your work.

7 ROSS JOY: Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Oh, wait, I have
9 one question. Thank you so much for the testimony
10 and certainly the work that you are all doing at Red
11 Hook. My question is what do you think-- do you
12 think 311 in this instance-- like I thoroughly
13 appreciated, ironically, the responses that NYCHA
14 tenants get when their issues are no resolved
15 pointing to have them call 311, ironically. It is
16 the cycle that we're in. But what in your opinion or
17 in your experienced do you think is the role in
18 expediency, efficiency that 311 can play here?
19 Because I think a lot of what you're saying, and I
20 think you're right is that HPD has a responsibility
21 here. NYCHA tenants are tenants, right? They have a
22 responsibility because NYCHA has proven itself to be
23 colossally ineffective. So what in your opinion do
24 you think is the most ideal streamlining, and what
25 role can we push, for example 311, into making that
happen or a reality?

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3 ROSS JOY: Yes, that's the-- absolutely.

4 I think that there needs to be some more concrete
5 conversations with HPD about their role with public
6 housing. I think too long there are still stances
7 that are going to-- they say they're hiding behind
8 the City Charter's conflict of interest, that theirs
9 can't be interagency accountability against another
10 agency. I think that's a disservice to the-- what the
11 City Charter says. It's public services and public
12 trust. We need this efficiency and transparency, and
13 there's no-- there's no conflict there in making sure
14 that-- it's quite opposite that cancelling a tenant's
15 complaint whether it's documented mold, a leak and
16 electrical issues. Just simply cancelling those,
17 that's definitely a disservice of public trust. So I
18 think HPD itself needs to be held accountable to what
19 is-- clarifying what their role is when residents
20 like public housing residents are identifying housing
21 maintenance code violations. Again, we want to
22 encourage NYCHA to improve and continue to
23 communicate with their tenants. That is fundamental.
24 The CCC was, I think, an idea from a decade ago that
25 would centralize and optimize. I think there should
be a balance of localized communication, but NYCHA

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3 should always have and be held responsible for
4 communicating and talking with our residents.

5 Independent of that, the City of New York needs to
6 make sure that its Local Laws are also respected. A
7 lot of mention was-- Eva Trimble often mentions it's
8 a pride of honor that she's trying to put me out of
9 business, and that's the type of accountability that
10 we want to see, that outside oversight brings in and
11 sheds light on the process. Work order reform, as
12 was mentioned, was only brought about due to federal
13 oversight, and local oversight is even more
14 essential, and HUD supports that. HUD says that
15 local and state laws need to be respected. NYCHA is
16 a state agency, City Chartered like MTA. The City--
17 state public housing law also says that NYCHA needs
18 to be following city Local Laws. But who's applying
19 those local laws? Tenants can go to court and get
20 those [inaudible] but we want-- we should expand that
21 access, especially as this crisis is not going to go
22 away with this capital funding, and that's what the
23 Housing Maintenance Code says. The Housing
24 Maintenance Code says that even if the buildings are
25 so dilapidated and they need to be replaced-- if
families are still living there, we need to ensure

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3 that there's basic health and decency, even while we
4 try and make a plan to replace them.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so
6 much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'd now
8 like to welcome Victor Bach to testify. After that
9 I'll be calling on Karen Blondell [sp?]. Victor
10 Bach, you may begin when the Sergeant calls time.

11 VICTOR BACH: Thank you for this
12 opportunity. I'm Victor Bach with the Community
13 Service Society where I'm a Housing Policy Analyst.
14 Council Member Avilés made quite clear the fact that
15 despite Local Law 127, NYCHA residents continue to be
16 denied access to 311 and local code enforcement
17 services. NYCHA, like any landlord, is required to
18 comply with city health, housing, and building codes,
19 and I think it's time that NYCHA residents were
20 recognized as an integral part of the City and
21 entitled to the same services that any other tenant
22 is under the-- under public services provided by the
23 City. to the argument that the NYCHA call center
24 provides equivalent parallel services doesn't hold
25 water, given the enormous number of-- I know that
NYCHA's making progress that it's working against

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3 enormous financial constraints, but there's a-- it
4 has a huge number of condition deficiencies that do
5 not parallel conditions low income tenants face in
6 other kinds of situations. To make matters worse,
7 NYCHA has traditionally been exempted from having any
8 violations listed in the public databases maintained
9 by HPD and the Department of Buildings, databases to
10 which any private tenant can find information on
11 violations cited and the status as to whether or not
12 they've been cured. I think it's time for your
13 committees, I would urge you, to reconsider Local Law
14 127 and strengthen it. Apparently, despite its
15 passage, virtually nothing has changed, nothing has
16 changed. I'm not quite sure why it had to be hashed
17 [sic] at all. I needs to be strengthened to provide
18 full access to NYCHA residents to the full range of
19 311 and code enforcement services. In addition, I
20 would urge your committees to change the City's
21 administrative code and end NYCHA's exemption from
22 having its violations--

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time's
23 expired.

24 VICTOR BACH: publicly listed in HPD and
25 DOB databases. Otherwise, we will have no

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3 transparency or accountability, and what happens in
4 NYCHA will continue to stay in NYCHA. Thank you very
5 much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'd now
7 like to welcome Karen Blondel to testify. Karen
8 Blondel, you may begin when the Sergeant calls time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time will begin.

10 KAREN BLONDEL: Thank you. This has
11 been-- thank you first to Alexa Avilés and to the
12 rest of the City Council for having this hearing
13 today. it was very informative for me to understand
14 more about the residents whose-- used to be public
15 housing residents who are now RAD and also
16 subsequently in the future what happens to those in
17 the Preservation Trust in regards to being able to
18 call 311 and how that works. So I really appreciate
19 that information. In my opinion-- not just my
20 opinion but in the opinion of the Mayor. The Mayor
21 said that NYCHA's been a ship or almost like an
22 airplane with no cockpit, and that h was going to
23 design a dashboard just for these types of record and
24 put things to be initiated on a city level. So I'm
25 hoping that all this conversation actually leads to
that happening for NYCHA residents on the city level,

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3 but I'm also going to say that I did sit in with the
4 work order reform meeting yesterday, and I thought in
5 general it went well and that it's worth a try. My
6 only concern is that we don't have enough trades, and
7 what normally happens is places like Red Hook don't
8 get the expert journeymen that they deserve,
9 especially in a development that's over 70 years old.
10 So sometimes it compounds the problem when we have
11 apprentice or new people coming in and not the right
12 oversight in regards to their training and, you know,
13 getting use the job. So that's a concern of mine in
14 regards to why I would like for the ticket, 707, be
15 given a chance to do a better job. There has been a
16 transformational plan in place in NYCHA. That plan--
17 NYCHA's like a Titanic, you cannot just turn the
18 NYCHA ship around overnight, but I think that with
19 the help from our community residents and our elected
20 officials and the NYCHA transformational plan, we
21 have been doing a lot better at discussing these
22 things and be a more transparent around where the
23 glitches are for residents, whether they're in
24 Section 9, which is standard public housing or
25 Section 8 RAD conversations. So I really thank you
and appreciate that. But I still feel like New York

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3 City Housing Authority is so huge in New York City
4 that it does deserve a separate customer service line
5 that is just better equipped with handling the work
6 orders and call backs to the tenants, because it's so
7 huge in New York city. So I'm going to yield my time
8 and thank you for having me today.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Thank you so much,
10 Ms. Blondel. I'd like a follow-up question. I hear
11 you in terms of the sentiment of needing a separate
12 specialized system given I guess the scale and scope
13 of work and the specificity. What is your experience
14 in terms of-- obviously we know there's a giant
15 backlog. Are-- what's your experience with the call
16 center now in terms of what do you hear residents
17 experiencing in terms of language access and follow-
18 up calls and elements like that, that would maybe put
19 residents at ease if they knew the process that was
20 coming. It always feels like they don't know. So I
21 was curious if you could tell a little bit about
22 that.

23 KAREN BLONDEL: Yeah, so I agree with
24 that, and that is because Council Member, the
25 transformation of NYCHA is very recent, and to be
quite honest I did work on it with a lot of different

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3 Departments, and I can give you an example. I asked
4 them at one point could they start stuffing the
5 envelope, the billing envelope with flyers and
6 notices about different things to help us stay
7 informed, and I must admit that it was so new to me
8 and with the pandemic and everything else. For quite
9 some time, I was not opening it up to look at that
10 because I was doing my rent payments electronically.
11 So then I had to say, wow, I asked for this upgrade,
12 and here's another glitch. And there's one more
13 glitch, and that is that a lot of people are not
14 going to tell you whether it's a language barrier or
15 literacy barrier that they're not able to read,
16 Council Member. And you know, so that's another
17 issues especially now with COVID brain fog as another
18 exasperating aspect of why people can't concentrate
19 on all these different elements in regards to just
20 wanting to live in a safe, decent place. So that's
21 one example of something that was new, but I would
22 also push a little further and ask them to stay up
23 with the times, and maybe put a QR code that actually
24 speaks each person's language based on the pressing
25 of number one, two, or three the phone so that I
don't have to just wait to get this in the mail to

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3 read it, but I actually get an alert from NYCHA that
4 actually audios the message to me as opposed to just
5 assuming that people can read. Or speak English.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVILÉS: Yeah, thank you so
7 much for that, and thank you for highlighting the
8 element of literacy. I think that's one we did not
9 talk very much about and is a barrier for much of our
10 community. I appreciate that. Thank you for your
11 testimony and your work.

12 KAREN BLONDEL: thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
14 The last two panelists who had registered were Noelle
15 Hidalgo and Judith Goldiner [sp?]. I don't see
16 Noelle or Judith on the Zoom. Are Noelle and Judith
17 here in person? Looks like the answer is no. So, if
18 you're on the Zoom and we missed you, please use the
19 Zoom raise hand function now. If you're in person
20 and we missed you, please raise your hand. Seeing no
21 hands, I'll turn it over to Chair Ung to close us
22 out.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you for
24 participating in today's hearing. I'm closing the
25 hearing now.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date August 23, 2022