

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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September 30, 2022

Start: 1:20 p.m.

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N. De La Rosa
Rita C. Joseph
Shekar Krishnan
Francisco P. Moya
Sandra Ung
Adrienne Adams, Speaker
Lincoln Restler
Jennifer Gutierrez
Gale A. Brewer

A P P E A R A N C E S

Manuel Castro, Commissioner of Mayor's Office of
Immigrant Affairs
Zach Iscol, Deputy Commissioner of Mayor's
Office of Immigrant Affairs
Jake Cooper, Deputy Commissioner of New York City
Emergency Management
Dr. Ted Long, Health and Hospitals
Molly Park, First Deputy Commissioner of
Department of Homeless Services
Melissa Ramos, Senior Executive Director of
Department of Education
Rishi Sood, Executive Director Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene
Senator Alessandra Biaggi
Jessica Franco Ramos
Francesca Perrone
Cassie Keith
Nilbia Coyote
Pedro Perez
Murad Awawdeh
Aracelis Lucero
Camille Mackler
Joshua Goldfein
Natalia Aristizabal Betancur
Yesenia Mata
Vianey Romero-Mendez
Jodi Ziesemer
Rex Chen
C. Mario Russell
Debra Presti
Ilze Caroline Thielmann
Siya Hegde
Anne Pillsbury
Patrick Boyle
Juan Diaz
Ariadna Phillips
Karim Walker
Adama Bah
Power Malu
Terry Lawson

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

Scott Hutchins
Charisma White
Dmitri Daniel Glinksi
David Miranda
Stephanie Rupp
Yajaira Saavedra
Eric Lee

1 COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon. This is
3 a microphone check on September 30, 2022, for the
4 Committee on Immigration located in Chambers,
5 recorded by Nazly Petuvi (phonetic).

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon. At this
7 time, can the Host please start the livestream?

8 Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to
9 today's New York City Council hearing of the
10 Committee on Immigration.

11 At this time, we ask that everybody
12 please silence all your electronic devices.

13 If you wish to testify today, you can
14 come up to the Sergeant's desk and fill out one of
15 these testimony slips.

16 Written testimony can be emailed to
17 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
18 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

19 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we
20 are ready to begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: [GAVEL] Good
22 afternoon, everyone. I'm Council Member Shahana
23 Hanif, Chair of the Immigration Committee. I would
24 like to thank everyone joining us for today's
25

2 oversight hearing on the resources and services for
3 newly arrived asylum seekers.

4 I want to thank our Speaker, Adrienne
5 Adams, my Council Colleagues, representatives from
6 the administration, and public for being here and
7 members of the public for participating remotely.

8 My Colleague, Council Member Restler,
9 repeated the lines of the poem, the New Colossus, at
10 our rally this morning, but I think they deserve
11 repeating. The most famous line is inscribed on the
12 Statue of Liberty, "give me your tired, your poor,
13 your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," but
14 the next line is perhaps even more powerful, "send
15 these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my
16 lamp beside the golden door." As the representatives
17 of New York City it is our job to make sure New York
18 City is a sanctuary to all people, and that is what
19 this hearing is about. New York City is home to
20 almost 3 million immigrants, 40 percent our city's
21 population. In fact, 60 percent of New Yorkers,
22 myself included, are immigrants or children of
23 immigrants. We pride ourselves on the diversity of
24 our city and value the contributions that the newest
25

2 immigrants arriving can make to the tapestry of New
3 York.

4 Now, as we see other states send asylum
5 seekers and migrants to our city without notice, it
6 is our responsibility to respond with swiftness and
7 empathy. Many of these migrants have travelled
8 through harrowing situations to finally arrive
9 somewhere they can seek refuge and build new lives.
10 We are here today for a few reasons.

11 First, it is important for us, the
12 Council and the public, to better understand the
13 resources and services that are available to asylum
14 seekers and migrants entering the city.

15 Additionally, it is essential that we
16 examine this administration's approach to providing
17 these services. While in many ways city agencies have
18 done admirable work in responding quickly to this
19 unprecedented crisis, it is clear that in other ways
20 we are failing to meet the basic needs of recent
21 arrivals. Every few days over the past two months we
22 have seen headlines about migrants who have not been
23 provided shelter, food, or other necessary resources
24 by the city. Fortunately, community-based
25 organizations, mutual aid workers have stepped in to

2 provide some of these necessary resources. We've also
3 read stories of migrants who are isolated without
4 sufficient mental health care or in-language
5 communication. The tragic suicide of an asylum seeker
6 in city shelter earlier this month illustrates the
7 consequences of lack of resources. Most recently,
8 this administration has announced it is placing
9 asylum seekers in tent camps called HERCs. This is
10 being done with seemingly little, if any, planning or
11 collaboration with elected officials, other community
12 representatives, impacted people, stakeholders, or
13 even their own agency personnel. We are in an
14 emergency, there is no doubt, but I want to make it
15 clear this is not how we address the thousands of
16 people coming to our city as asylum seekers. The
17 Orchard Beach location is in a flood zone in the
18 middle of hurricane season. It is outside as cold
19 weather approaches. It is in a transit desert. It is
20 being constructed by a contractor that built Trump's
21 xenophobic border wall. In this hearing, we will be
22 asking this administration why it is pursuing this
23 course of action.

24 The administration has also stated that
25 despite the right to shelter being law in New York

2 City, this will not apply at the Orchard Beach sites
3 and future HERRCs. This raises serious concerns about
4 the conditions in these facilities. I disagree
5 wholeheartedly with the administration circumventing
6 right to shelter, and we will be asking questions
7 regarding the consequences of this decision.

8 The migrants arriving in our city have
9 already run the gauntlet of crossing the border to
10 arrive in the U.S. and in New York City to access the
11 security we can provide. It is incumbent upon us as
12 elected representatives to examine how this
13 administration is or isn't complying with the law and
14 to ensure that migrants and asylum seekers have safe
15 places to stay, adequate nutrition, healthcare, and
16 legal representation while they endeavor to start
17 their lives and contribute to making our city a
18 vibrant and welcoming destination.

19 How much of the city, state, federal
20 funding the administration anticipates to receive is
21 used to providing housing, food, and legal services
22 to the migrants? What have been the conversations
23 between Mayor Adams and the State federal elected
24 officials to get the stuff done? We have many
25 questions of this administration on how it plans to

2 fulfil the city's obligations to these recently
3 arrived New Yorkers and look forward to hearing their
4 testimony today explaining their processes and plans.

5 I want to thank the Committee staff for
6 their work on this issue, a lot of work went into
7 getting to this afternoon's hearing, including
8 Jayasri Ganapathy, Senior Committee Counsel, Jean
9 Florentine Kabore, Finance Analyst, and Joonyang Ahn,
10 Community Liaison. I would also like to thank my
11 incredibly smart, brilliant staff, Chief of Staff
12 Nora Brickner, Legislative Director Alexander Liao,
13 Communications Director Michael Whitesides, and
14 everyone working in the background to make this
15 hybrid hearing run smoothly.

16 Now, I will turn it over to Speaker
17 Adrienne Adams to give opening remarks.

18 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you so much, Chair.
19 Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Adrienne Adams, Speaker
20 of the New York City Council and thank you all who've
21 joined us today. Thank you, Chair Hanif, once again
22 for convening this important hearing on the resources
23 and services for people who have recently arrived in
24 our city seeking asylum from other countries.

2 Over the past few months, it has been
3 reported that thousands of people have arrived in New
4 York City seeking asylum from their home countries to
5 escape desperate economic conditions, political
6 violence, and other crises. The scale of this
7 migration reflects a dire situation. New York was
8 already offering solace to people seeking asylum when
9 the Texas Governor began sending others to our city
10 in an act of political theater. That is disgraceful.
11 We have heard heartbreaking stories of people sent
12 here after being lied to with promises of jobs,
13 housing, and other resources despite no coordination
14 with New York City so let me be clear. It is
15 despicable for any governor or government official to
16 politically exploit vulnerable people for political
17 gain, moving human beings around as if this is all a
18 game. I assure you this is not a game. These are
19 human lives, families, and children. These political
20 stunts are dehumanizing and they're shameful. It does
21 not escape me that those who are sending vulnerable
22 people to other states without any real concern about
23 the impacts on these lives say they are people of
24 faith. I can tell you as a person of faith the
25 contradiction is glaring. The rhetoric employed by

2 some false claims that those arriving here in our
3 country seeking asylum are illegal as if this somehow
4 suggests they are deserving of mistreatment. I want
5 to make clear on the record once again which no one
6 who comes to this country to seek asylum is here
7 illegally. Under federal law and as a signatory to
8 international laws protecting refugees, this country
9 has an obligation to offer protection from those
10 fleeing persecution, and this legislative body will
11 strive to ensure that they receive the necessary
12 resources to pursue their claims while in our great
13 city. New York City has a responsibility to live up
14 to its values as a sanctuary city, and this Council
15 intends to help ensure we meet this moment with the
16 compassion and effectiveness necessary in providing
17 the appropriate support to those within our city.

18 we understand that addressing this crisis
19 is challenging and it's complex. It requires
20 significant coordination across city government and
21 support from our state and federal government
22 partners. Many of our city's non-profit organizations
23 have been working tirelessly to provide resources to
24 individuals and families, filling important gaps. Our
25 city agencies must effectively work together and with

2 all stakeholders to fulfil the comprehensive needs of
3 those seeking asylum here.

4 There are serious concerns that the
5 necessary planning steps to ensure adequate housing
6 and resources for those that need it are lacking,
7 leaving major gaps. Our goal is not to point fingers
8 but rather ensure our city's efforts are effective at
9 meeting the scale of this crisis and improved through
10 learning.

11 On September 22nd, the administration
12 announced in a press release and its intent to open
13 Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers
14 with the first one to be located in Orchard Beach.
15 Yet there are many questions about this plan that
16 remain unanswered which many have echoed since the
17 announcement. While additional information has slowly
18 trickled out, there remains many outstanding concerns
19 and questions including about their role, location,
20 and suitability. These centers are not replacements
21 for temporary shelter and, given the strain on our
22 shelter system, there needs to be a better
23 understanding of the city's plan to provide shelter.
24 Furthermore, shelter is just one aspect of support
25 that is needed so I'm very eager to hear what other

2 forms of assistance the city is providing to those
3 seeking asylum, how this is being done while budget
4 reduction measures are being pursued, and how our
5 city government is responding and intends to
6 successfully respond. It is also helpful to identify
7 challenges that the response effort is facing and can
8 be resolved through collaboration. The city's
9 resources are being pulled from all angles so it's
10 going to take careful planning, meticulous oversight,
11 and ongoing transparency to ensure that appropriate
12 services and resources are provided and that no one
13 slips through the cracks.

14 I hope that through hearings like this
15 one today we will highlight the real people that have
16 been impacted by this crisis and the supports they
17 need. We also hope to receive greater insight into
18 how the city is providing resources and how the
19 Council can continue to support and improve upon
20 these efforts. We will continue to conduct oversight
21 hearings on this issue to increase transparency and
22 awareness in order to ensure the city's response
23 lives up to our values and the great expectations we
24 have of New York City's government. I look forward to

2 hearing the testimony of the administration. Welcome
3 again.

4 Before you begin, I would like to also
5 give my thanks to the Committee staff for putting
6 this hearing together and all of the people who are
7 working in the background and in cyber-land.

8 I now turn it back over to Chair Hanif.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'll pass
10 it to Jayasri.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you,
12 Chair, and thank you, Speaker. Good afternoon and
13 welcome. My name is Jayasri Ganapathy. I am Counsel
14 to the Committee on Immigration.

15 I would first like to acknowledge the
16 Council Members who are present with us for the
17 record. I see Council Member De La Rosa and Krishnan
18 and Council Member Ung.

19 Before we begin testimony, I would like
20 to remind everyone that is joining us via Zoom that
21 you will be on mute until you are called on to
22 testify. I will be calling on public witnesses to
23 testify in panels of four after the conclusion of the
24 administration's testimony and the Council Members'

2 questions so please listen carefully for your name to
3 be called.

4 Council Members, you will be called on
5 for questions after the full panel has completed
6 testimony. We will be limiting Council Member
7 questions to three minutes. Please note for the
8 purposes of this hearing, we will be allowing a
9 second round of questioning.

10 For public witnesses, once your name is
11 called, if you are joining us via Zoom, a member of
12 our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms
13 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
14 timer so please listen for that.

15 For fairness of all testifying today, all
16 public testimony will be limited to three minutes per
17 person. When the Sergeant announces that your three
18 minutes are up, we ask that you please wrap up your
19 comments so we can move on to the next person.

20 If you do require interpretation
21 services, please let us know. We do have Spanish
22 language interpretation available for this hearing.

23 I will now swear in the administration. I
24 believe today we have with us the Mayor's Office of
25 Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Castro, we have from

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2 New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach
3 Iscol and Deputy Commissioner Jake Cooper. We also
4 have for question-and-answer support from Health and
5 Hospitals Dr. Ted Long, from Department of Homeless
6 Services Molly Park, First Deputy Commissioner, from
7 Department of Education we have Senior Executive
8 Director Melissa Ramos, and from the Department of
9 Health and Mental Hygiene we have Executive Director
10 Rishi Sood.

11 I will first read the oath then after
12 I'll call on each member from the administration to
13 respond.

14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
15 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
16 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
17 questions?

18 Commissioner Castro.

19 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Commissioner
21 Iscol.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Deputy
24 Commissioner Cooper.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COOPER: I do.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Dr. Long.

3 DR. LONG: I do.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Deputy
5 Commissioner Park.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Senior
8 Executive Director Ramos.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAMOS: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Executive
11 Director Sood.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOOD: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Commissioner
14 Castro, you may begin.

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Good afternoon,
16 Speaker Adrienne Adams, Chair Shahana Hanif, and
17 Members of the Immigration Committee. Thank you for
18 holding this hearing.

19 My name is Manuel Castro, and I am the
20 Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
21 Affairs. I am joined by Zach Iscol, Commissioner of
22 the New York City Office of Emergency Management as
23 well as my colleagues from Health and Hospitals,
24 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department

25

2 of Homeless Services, and the Department of Education
3 who will be available for questions and answers.

4 Our city with approximately 15,000 asylum
5 seekers arriving in a very short amount of time is
6 currently experiencing a complex humanitarian
7 emergency that has been exacerbated by the Governor
8 of Texas, Greg Abbott, and others who are looking to
9 use this situation for their own political gains.

10 In the beginning of the summer, asylum
11 seekers were arriving in New York City individually
12 and in small groups. Many arrived in the region
13 particularly in Washington, D.C.-bound buses
14 chartered by the States of Texas and Arizona. Not
15 finding support in Washington, D.C., asylum seekers,
16 many of them found their way to New York City. As of
17 August 5, my office along with other city agencies
18 began to welcome buses at the Port Authority Bus
19 Terminal. However, today we are now seeing an
20 incredibly high number of people arriving on buses
21 coming from the border. Between four and nine buses
22 arrive every day at Port Authority, and other buses
23 and asylum seekers arrive at other bus terminals,
24 shelter intake centers, and airports throughout the
25 city. Hundreds of people are arriving every day.

2 These individuals range from single adults to
3 families and children. Many have been in the U.S. for
4 only a couple of days before being bused from the
5 border to New York City, but, unlike previous groups
6 of migrants and asylum seekers, those arriving now
7 are less likely to have a friend, family member, or
8 sponsor contact with whom to reside. They are
9 arriving to New York City with little more than the
10 clothes on their back.

11 In response, New York City has launched a
12 multi-agency effort to address this unprecedented
13 humanitarian emergency. Unlike the Governors of Texas
14 and Arizona, we have welcomed asylum seekers with
15 humanity, showing them the respect they deserve. On
16 August 1, Mayor Eric Adams launched an emergency
17 procurement declaration to rapidly procure shelter
18 and other services for people seeking asylum in the
19 United States and arriving in New York City. In
20 addition to the supports provided at the shelters and
21 through the education system, we opened New York
22 City's first Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation
23 Center. The Center operated by Catholic Charities of
24 New York through a city contract is supporting
25 individuals and families who have arrived in New York

2 City on or after January 1, 2022. The Center serves
3 as a central place where newly arrived asylum seekers
4 receive free and confidential help to assess a
5 variety of important services and resources that will
6 help them integrate and thrive in New York City. The
7 Navigation Center provides families with access to
8 everything from healthcare to education to
9 immigration legal services orientation so that they
10 can build a life in New York City. These services are
11 also available across, as I said, our shelter system
12 and through our education center. The Center is
13 located at the American Red Cross Headquarters and is
14 open weekdays to provide individuals and families
15 with in-person free and confidential help. New York
16 City government agencies and community-based
17 organizations are on-site helping with case
18 management and connecting to critical services. The
19 Navigation Center is accessible by appointment
20 currently. Community-based organizations and city
21 shelter caseworkers are scheduling appointments for
22 asylum seekers. The City will provide asylum seekers
23 with information about the Navigation Center as they
24 arrive by bus as well as in shelters and through
25 community-based organizations in the five boroughs.

2 In the coming weeks, the City will release
3 information about the satellite sites where asylum
4 seekers can access similar or additional services
5 throughout the five boroughs.

6 Finally, it is critical and paramount
7 that our local government, the state, and the federal
8 government work together with our administration to
9 further confront the challenges of this complex
10 humanitarian emergency. However, in the interim we
11 will continue to advocate for the necessary tools to
12 support arriving asylum seekers. Such resources will
13 include opportunities to access federal government
14 assistance via FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter
15 Program, the Community Development Block Grants, and
16 the Emergency Solutions Grant. Lastly, we will
17 continue to urge U.S. DHS to provide asylum seekers
18 with expedited employment authorization. We just
19 can't do this alone.

20 I don't know when this humanitarian
21 emergency will end, but what I do is that in New York
22 City we have been and will continue to be a welcoming
23 city, a city of immigrants, and we'll continue to
24 come together to support those seeking refuge and
25 will be a beacon of hope for so many around the

2 world. We have, and under this administration will,
3 continue to welcome asylum seekers from every corner
4 in the world and ensure working with our Council
5 Members and our Colleagues in government that these
6 newly arrived immigrants will have the support they
7 need to thrive in our neighborhoods.

8 Lastly, I want to thank my entire team at
9 Immigrant Affairs for going above and beyond to help
10 those in need and to all the city employees who are
11 stepping up to remind the world what New York City is
12 all about. Unlike Governor Abbott and Governor
13 DeSantis, New York City will always stand on the
14 right side of history, and I think we've demonstrated
15 that so far.

16 I want to also thank the community-based
17 organizations that are here today, especially Team
18 TLC and the volunteers that have been working
19 tirelessly every morning to welcome asylum seekers
20 from the first day we began working with them at Port
21 Authority. I want to thank the New York Immigration
22 Coalition, the Hispanic Federation, Mixteca, and
23 other organizations that are here who have also been
24 collaborating with us at our Welcome Center at Port

2 Authority to make sure that asylum seekers receive
3 the welcome they deserve.

4 I also want to acknowledge Pedro who is
5 here today who will be testifying. He is an asylum
6 seeker who recently arrived in one of the buses that
7 we're welcoming at Port Authority. He's here with
8 Team TLC. I want to thank him for his courage and for
9 being here to give voice to asylum seekers who've
10 been through so much and just want to say in Spanish,
11 (speaking Spanish).

12 Lastly, as many of you know, I myself
13 crossed the U.S./Mexico border when I was five with
14 my mother, and I just want to express that it has
15 been the honor of my life to be able to welcome
16 asylum seekers as I wish my family would've been
17 welcomed here when we arrived those many decades ago.
18 You have my commitment to continue to support asylum
19 seekers and fight every single day for immigrant
20 communities in New York City. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Thank you. If
23 I may, Commissioner, it's also been one of the honors
24 of my life to be able to work alongside you in this
25 work so thank you.

2 Before I begin, I just want to take a
3 minute and recognize the loss yesterday of FDNY
4 Lieutenant Alison Russo-Elling and express my sincere
5 condolences and sorrow and grief for her family, her
6 loved ones, and the men and women of the FDNY EMS.
7 Thank you.

8 Good afternoon, Speaker Adams,
9 Chairperson Hanif, and Members of the Committee. I am
10 Zach Iscol, Commissioner of New York City Emergency
11 Management, and I am here to discuss the coordinating
12 role that New York City Emergency Management is
13 playing in the current surge in asylum seekers in New
14 York City.

15 First, I want to briefly explain our role
16 in city government and in emergency response. New
17 York City Emergency Management helps New Yorkers
18 before, during, and after emergencies through
19 preparedness, education, and response. The agency is
20 responsible for coordinating citywide emergency
21 planning and response for all types and sizes of
22 emergencies. It is staffed by more than 200 dedicated
23 professionals with diverse backgrounds and areas of
24 expertise, including individuals detailed from other
25 city agencies. As the coordinating agency for the

2 City of New York, Emergency Management functions as a
3 general facilitator when it comes to emergency
4 response. We ensure that resources are available for
5 our sister agencies to complete their core
6 competencies and serving New Yorkers in what can be
7 their worst days with compassion and cultural
8 competency.

9 The recent influx of asylum seekers
10 seeking refuge in New York City is an incredibly
11 challenging task, and it's a great example of
12 collaboration amongst our city agencies. We are
13 facing a humanitarian crisis, and it has never been
14 clearer that we need to help and support them.
15 Emergency Management continues to coordinate between
16 the incoming buses of asylum seekers and providing
17 logistical support to the operations of the Asylum
18 Seeker Resource Navigation Center. The Center, which
19 opened on August 25th and is operated by Catholic
20 Charities of New York through city contract,
21 streamlines city and non-profit services into a one-
22 stop shop. It serves as a central place for newly
23 arrived asylum seekers to receive free and
24 confidential help, accessing important services and
25 resources that will help them integrate and thrive in

2 New York City. Emergency Management is also
3 coordinating with city agency partners at the Welcome
4 Center located at the Port Authority. Those arriving
5 can receive light medical care, water, PPE, and COVID
6 testing. EMS is also located there in the event that
7 someone needs emergency treatment. Individuals can
8 also receive information for shelter in the event
9 that they do not have friends, family, or a sponsor
10 to lean on.

11 Emergency Management is also coordinating
12 the opening of Humanitarian Emergency Response and
13 Relief Centers. The first, in Orchard Beach, will
14 serve adults and will likely open next week. These
15 Centers will be operated by Emergency Management and
16 Health and Hospitals completely outside of the DHS
17 shelter system. They will be the first touchpoint for
18 arriving asylum seekers by immediately offering
19 shelter, food, medical care, casework services, and a
20 range of settlement options including through
21 connections to families and friends inside and
22 outside of New York City in addition to, if needed,
23 direct referrals to alternative emergency support or
24 city shelters. All spaces will be safe, secure,
25 climate controlled, and are built to withstand

2 weather year-round. Emergency Management has an
3 emergency contract that will provide for wraparound
4 services such as food and water, clothes, diapers,
5 and other care products and other human service
6 needs. This is a true interagency effort, and we
7 continue to work with our partner agencies as well as
8 contracted partners and providers to provide
9 comprehensive on-site services and referrals.

10 We do not know when the influx of asylum
11 seekers will end or when it will slow down, but we
12 are here for the duration of this event. New York
13 City is a cultural mecca enriched by its diverse
14 population and a second home to those who make the
15 difficult decision to leave their home country in
16 search of opportunities. Emergency Management is
17 proud to assist in this humanitarian effort. It is
18 not only our responsibility as a city to help them
19 adjust and regain their livelihoods, but I believe
20 it's an incredibly important investment in the future
21 of New York City.

22 Thank you for this opportunity to testify
23 today.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I'd
3 like to acknowledge my Colleague, Council Member Jenn
4 Gutierrez for joining this afternoon.

5 Thank you so much and I've had the honor
6 of being at the Port Authority on several occasions
7 and having to see exactly how the welcoming is taking
8 place and seeing your leadership, Commissioner
9 Castro, on the ground very, very early hours of the
10 morning and inviting asylum seekers in with grace and
11 dignity and love. I've seen the work of TLC, I've
12 seen the work of the New York Immigration Coalition,
13 the South Bronx Mutual Aid, NICE, Mixteca, Masbia,
14 and so all of that is also informing the questions
15 I'll be asking, but I want to begin with Commissioner
16 Iscol and our right to shelter.

17 Again, the Mayor shared that right to
18 shelter protections will not apply to the HERRCs. I
19 recognize that these are extremely challenging
20 circumstances and in so many ways our city agencies
21 have stepped up to meet the moment. However, I want
22 to share that I wholeheartedly disagree with the
23 decision and that we should be doing everything we
24 can to provide asylum seekers with decent conditions
25 that meet bare minimum standards. The right to

2 shelter is a right that applies to everyone in New
3 York City. No amount of legal gymnastics can justify
4 what's happening here. The administration is carving
5 out asylum seekers from this basic right. Can you
6 share specifically which elements of right to shelter
7 protections under the Callahan consent decree will
8 not be in place in the HERRCs?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Let me start
10 by saying the city is 100 percent committed to
11 meeting our legal requirements under Callahan and
12 right to shelter, and the HERRCs are not a
13 replacement for right to shelter or the shelters nor
14 are we carving out a population from right to
15 shelter. In fact, what we have identified with this
16 population is there are distinct needs that need to
17 be met when they get off the buses, and right now we
18 are trying to meet that at the Port Authority
19 terminal, and that is not the best place to do it.
20 You've been there, you've seen the operation. The
21 teams there are doing great work, but the buses come
22 in, we immediately try to provide people, see if
23 there's people that have immediate medical needs, and
24 then we basically are putting people into one of
25 three groups. They're either meeting up with their

2 family members, they are getting reticketed somewhere
3 else, or they're going into our shelter system, and
4 we have about 45 minutes to an hour to do all of that
5 work, and that is simply not enough time. It's not
6 enough time to provide them the care and the concern,
7 in your words the grace and dignity and love that
8 they deserve, and so these HERRCs are really set up
9 not to replace the shelter system but to give us the
10 space and time to do that operation correctly, to
11 make sure that we are figuring out what the needs of
12 people are, to welcome them with a shower, a warm
13 meal, meet their immediate medical needs, and then
14 figure out what the next step is going to be for
15 them, whether that is the shelter system, whether
16 it's reticketing somewhere else, whether it's
17 reuniting them with a family member or a sponsor,
18 that's the purpose of that operation. By no means is
19 it there to replace or somehow prevent them from
20 entering the shelter system and anybody who wants to
21 go in the shelter system can still do so.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just to get back to
23 the original question, the right to shelter
24 protections are in place?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: For the single adult
3 HERRCs, will beds be at least three feet apart?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We are still
5 figuring out the exact spacing of the beds and also
6 of showers and those types of facilities as it's
7 being set up.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you repeat that
9 one more time?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes, we're
11 still figuring out some of the placements of where
12 beds and showers and those ratios right now.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So right now you're
14 unsure is they will be three feet apart?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Again, if
16 you're referring to Callahan, anybody who wants to
17 enter the shelter system is able to do so.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will beds be at least
19 30 inches in width?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can get you
21 those details on what the beds will actually look
22 like and the spacing.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm asking these
24 questions and I've got a couple more because a photo
25 was released sharing what this tent city would look

2 like, and, based off of that photograph, it does not
3 seem like we're meeting the right to shelter...

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I don't know
5 what the photograph is that (INAUDIBLE) The
6 facilities don't have beds put in yet so those are
7 not photos from the facility that we have set up.
8 Again, I'm happy to share more information about the
9 size of cots...

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I mean that would be
11 great the construction is in place and right now you
12 don't know if beds will be at least three feet apart,
13 you don't know if beds will be at least 30 inches in
14 width.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I don't have
16 that information on me, but I'm happy to get it to
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will basic clean
19 linens be provided, like pillows, pillowcases,
20 blankets, sheets?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will there be one
23 shower per every 15 residents?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: That's the
25 objective, correct, Dr. Long?

2 DR. LONG: Yes.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: That's the
4 objective.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will there be one
6 toilet per every 10 residents?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: It might be
8 16, but, again, I can get you those exact numbers.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: 16 residents? Will
10 residents be offered a way to store or lock their
11 personal belongings and valuables?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, could you share
14 a little bit more about where?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'm happy to
16 provide more of that information.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you have a sense
18 of...

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We were going
20 to be using lockers and other types of storage
21 facilities.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Inside the...

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes, inside
24 the facility.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How will you
3 accommodate migrants with disabilities including
4 physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities at these
5 sites?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I will turn
7 that over to Dr. Long from Health and Hospitals.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

9 DR. LONG: Just at the outset, I want to
10 thank you for convening us together. These questions
11 are really important for us to hear now so that we
12 can effectively plan all this together moving
13 forward.

14 As New York City Health and Hospitals is
15 going to be operating the new emergency humanitarian
16 centers, we take very seriously making sure that
17 everybody feels comfortable so per ADA standards
18 we're going to have an actual ADA coordinator so that
19 anybody with disabilities can have somebody that they
20 can talk to and we're making sure that all of the
21 facility requirements are going to meet ADA standards
22 but more than that to make sure that people that have
23 disabilities have somebody they can go to and discuss
24 what their needs are so we can make sure that
25 everybody's comfortable and all needs are met.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does that ADA
3 coordinator exist at the moment?

4 DR. LONG: They will exist prior to it
5 opening.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, so right now as
7 we welcoming asylum seekers, over 15,000, how have
8 those with disabilities received accommodations?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: The Department
10 of Homeless Services shelter system which has been
11 serving the bulk of the asylum seekers that have come
12 in thus far, there may be others who are with friends
13 and family who have never come into the shelter
14 system but the 15,000 refers to those who have come
15 to DHS. We have a range of accessible facilities
16 across our system, not every shelter certainly, but
17 as either a family or a single adult comes into the
18 system we will assess their needs. If there's an
19 obvious and apparent need, for example somebody in a
20 wheelchair, we will immediately place them in an
21 accessible facility. If they have needs that are less
22 obvious and apparent, for example they need a
23 refrigerator for medication, we will work with them
24 to document that and place them in a site that can
25 accommodate those needs.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Moving on to families,
3 will families with minor children be given private
4 dwellings?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're still in
6 the process of setting up additional HERRCs and
7 identifying locations, but the answer to that is yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you have a location
9 for...

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We do not at
11 this time.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: When will you have
13 that?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're working
15 on it as quickly as possible. We are still looking at
16 locations that provide the ability to house families
17 with young children with privacy and in non-
18 congregate settings.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just to have this on
20 the record, can you commit to not placing families
21 with minor children in congregate settings.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can tell you
23 that we do not want to place families in congregate
24 settings, yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You do not want to,
3 but you're making it sound like there's a possibility
4 that there might.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can tell you
6 this is an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and that
7 I can't tell you what is going to happen in two weeks
8 or three weeks or four weeks, but I can tell you this
9 administration is 100 percent committed to not
10 housing children in congregate settings, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How will adult
12 families with minor children be served at HERRCs?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: The details of
14 the family HERRCs are still being worked out.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will couples be able
16 to stay together?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just continuing on our
19 right to shelter, the administration has justified
20 circumventing right to shelter by saying placement in
21 the HERRCs is voluntary and that asylum seekers can
22 choose at any point to utilize the traditional
23 shelter system. I want to dig in here a little bit.
24 Isn't centralizing intake and wraparound services on
25

2 Orchard Beach effectively coercing people into
3 foregoing their right to shelter?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Not at all.

5 The purpose of the HERRCs is to figure out what
6 people's next move is, and I think we should be clear
7 to that somebody entering the shelter system is not
8 necessary a success if their goal is to get to Miami
9 or their goal is to get to San Antonio or their goal
10 is to link up with a family member, and the HERRCs
11 provide us that mechanism to do that. If somebody's
12 next destination is a shelter, we will get them to a
13 shelter immediately.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Of the asylum seekers,
15 who've arrived, how many have had another destination
16 to go to?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: It's 22
18 percent.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you give a
20 number?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: There's been
22 just over 15,000 that have entered the shelter
23 system. Subtract 78 percent and there you go.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What mechanisms are in
25 place to ensure that asylum seekers know that they

2 have the option to bypass the HERRCs system and
3 utilize a shelter system where they will have
4 superior conditions?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We are
6 providing a legal orientation to asylum seekers when
7 they enter the HERRCs. Dr. Long, anything that you'd
8 want to add to that?

9 DR. LONG: No.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: No? Okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you repeat that
12 one more time?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We are
14 providing a legal orientation to asylum seekers as
15 part of the intake process, and I think it might also
16 be helpful for Dr. Long to explain the intake process
17 and what we're doing actually when folks arrive. The
18 work that Health and Hospitals is doing is truly
19 remarkable in terms of the care that they're
20 providing and the compassion and the way that they
21 have set this up. They truly are world class. Dr.
22 Long.

23 DR. LONG: This is a crisis, and we at New
24 York Health and Hospitals raised our hand to want to
25 do our part to help.

2 I'll walk you through the experience of
3 an adult, not just single adults, but adults that
4 would be coming into one of our new Emergency
5 Humanitarian Centers. Right now, the buses are going
6 to Port Authority. You'll get on another bus to come
7 to one of our new Humanitarian Emergency Centers.
8 You'll get off the bus and you'll be greeted by a
9 comfort team. We know that you've come a long way to
10 see us here in New York City. We're going to offer
11 you food and water before we do anything else. Next,
12 we're going to get started on the mainstay of what we
13 do at the Humanitarian Center. We're going to start
14 with case management. Our goal is to figure out where
15 you want to go and do everything in our power to help
16 you to get there so we're going to start that on day
17 one and, as Commissioner Iscol said earlier, right
18 now that piece is being done in 45 minutes as you
19 know at Port Authority. What if you want to get
20 through to a relative and they don't pick up the
21 phone? Then you've lost the opportunity there. We
22 want to give a full 24 to 96 hours for us to do
23 everything in our power to, again, get you where you
24 want to be. Once you start that process, we're also
25 going to orient you to a variety of other things on-

2 site. I was just there myself this morning. Yes,
3 we're going to have cots in separate areas. There's
4 going to be one area for single men that are adults,
5 we're going to have one area for single women, and
6 we're going to have one area for couples or people
7 that are adults, maybe a mother and an adult child,
8 something like that. We're going to orient to where
9 you're just going to be staying, but, during the day,
10 we're going to have a dining hall that's going to
11 have three hot meals a day that's all going to be
12 with South American cuisines with multiple options
13 for people with (INAUDIBLE) dietary preferences.
14 We're going to have recreation rooms to make sure
15 that people can hopefully take an opportunity to get
16 a breath. They've come a very long way. We're going
17 to have iPads, we're going to have phones so that you
18 can try to reach out to family members, and the
19 purpose of this short-term stay, and I actually think
20 the Speaker said this very nicely, is we want to
21 provide compassion and effectiveness to achieve the
22 goal of the unique needs of people coming into our
23 city, individuals and families seeking asylum, and
24 one of their goals we know is to get to different
25 places, either inside or outside of our city. 45

2 minutes at Port Authority is not enough time. 96
3 hours with a strong focus and us doing everything in
4 our power to help them I think we stand a much better
5 chance of being able to make the difference that we
6 seek to make. We're also going to be providing some
7 other services, which I'm happy to talk about now or
8 later at the Humanitarian Centers as well including
9 medical care.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How many staff or
11 personnel will be there to administer this form or
12 process?

13 DR. LONG: We're going to have hundreds of
14 staff there but not just our staff. Last night, I
15 personally reached out to some of our most engaged,
16 and thank you for joining us today to our community-
17 based organizations, you are your communities, and we
18 want to make sure that this is not just our staff,
19 it's a combined effort. If we work together at all of
20 this, we're going to have a stronger response. If
21 you're at one of our Humanitarian Centers, it may be
22 a member of our staff that's talking to you, it may
23 be a doctor that's talking to you, or it may be a
24 community-based organization that's talking to you,
25 and I am proud to be a New York City resident knowing

2 that that's our approach. It's not just outsourced
3 staff. It's really New Yorkers that are stepping up
4 to take care of our own.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'll pass it to our
6 Speaker for her questions.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Chair. Thank
8 you all again for your testimony thus far. Dr. Long,
9 you really just hit on something that I was going for
10 first so you just hit on that. I was going to ask for
11 those, the majority that have never gone to Port
12 Authority to see what it looks like when an asylum
13 seeker steps one foot off of the bus, I was going to
14 ask you to take the room through the process and you
15 just did that so thank you.

16 Let's talk about Orchard Beach. Orchard
17 Beach is a remote part of the city. It's not serviced
18 well by public transportation so I think the vast
19 majority of us and probably of our New York City
20 wants to know why this location was chosen.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'm happy to
22 take that. Thank you, Speaker Adams, for your
23 question. My team has now looked at over 60 locations
24 across the city, and I want to start by saying there
25 is no perfect location to do this work. There simply

2 isn't. There are some that are filled with warehouses
3 filled with chemicals and equipment, asbestos. There
4 are places that have programming that we would have
5 to displace. There are places that have a whole host
6 of other issues and so our team has to go out and go
7 through a process of making sure that the spaces meet
8 these needs. Orchard Beach is only the first of
9 probably many other HERRCs that we might have to
10 establish. It's also the one that we could build the
11 quickest, and the intent is not to keep the HERRC in
12 Orchard Beach going for a long period of time, but,
13 again, we don't know how the needs are going to
14 develop. We are well-aware of many of the concerns of
15 Orchard Beach in terms of transportation. We are
16 working with the State to create transportation
17 options for people to get to the 6 train from Orchard
18 Beach. We have a request for them to provide bus
19 service from 5:40 a.m. to 12:40 a.m. so 20 hours
20 throughout the day to provide that option for people
21 to have transportation.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: Does it look like that
23 will be set up by next week when you're due to go
24 live?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes, and we
3 have other transportation options as well to
4 transport people to shelters and other places that
5 they might need to go through shuttles and other
6 services. In addition to that, I know there's a lot
7 of concern raised, and Council Member Hanif brought
8 this up about the flood zone. There are different
9 types of flooding that we have to prepare for. There
10 are coastal storms, there is flooding caused by
11 tides, and there is flooding caused by rainfall. When
12 you think about a coastal storm like a hurricane, you
13 generally have three to five, maybe six days in
14 advance to prepare, and, if we evacuating Zone 1,
15 Hurricane Evacuation Zone 1, we are evacuating about
16 500,000 people. If it's two zones, it's about a
17 million people and so the plan would be to take the
18 asylum seekers and put them into our coastal storm
19 shelters just like we would anybody else. The
20 buildings that are being constructed up there, I
21 don't like using the word tents because they can
22 sustain 90 miles per hour winds. They actually drill
23 down a few feet in order to place them in the ground.
24 These are very sturdy structures, but they can remove

2 the panels, they can remove the tops, and they can
3 withstand significant weather events.

4 In terms of tidal flooding, King tides
5 coupled with a nor'easter, we are setting up what are
6 called tiger dams which are flood mitigation efforts
7 to protect that site in the case that that would
8 happen.

9 In terms of rainfall, flooding from
10 rainfall, the entire city is in a flood zone when it
11 comes to rainfall. We learned that last year during
12 the tragedy of Ida, and so for those types of events
13 we will have to deal with rainfall no matter what
14 site we use if it's outdoors.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah, I appreciate your
16 response. This, though, is different in that we are
17 actually accepting hundreds and thousands of
18 individuals here so we are responsible for them
19 whereas you and I have a choice of going home,
20 knowing that I live in Southeast Queens in a flood
21 zone by the way, but that's my choice to be there so
22 we are actually bringing people into our house and
23 possibly suscepting them to hazard.

24 Did the administration consider any other
25 locations prior to Orchard Beach?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: As I said, we
3 have looked at over 60 locations, and we are
4 continuing to look at other locations, and it's our
5 hope that at some point in time we displace Orchard
6 Beach to another location. As I have said, we need
7 help in finding locations. We are looking for places
8 with over 150,000 square feet. That's essentially the
9 size of three football fields. If there are places in
10 any of your districts that come to mind, we would
11 love your help in identifying places where we could
12 do this work.

13 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Now we know that we
14 have heard from our Bronx Borough President with
15 regard to this location. Her concerns are our
16 concerns as well. Were there any conversations that
17 were held with elected officials in the Bronx or with
18 any community organizations with the Bronx prior to
19 choosing Orchard Beach?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We spoke to
21 them the day of.

22 SPEAKER ADAMS: So there really wasn't any
23 preliminary discussion, let's have a talk about this,
24 let's have a session about this?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Not for
3 Orchard Beach, but we will make sure we do that in
4 the future for other locations.

5 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. That would be my
6 strong suggestion. I think you told us this already,
7 but let's just hear it again. Are asylum seekers
8 required to be processed at the Orchard Beach
9 location?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: They are not.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: They are not? Okay. How is
12 this communicated to them? Has it been made clear to
13 them that they have other options or how will this be
14 communicated to them as far as the process is
15 concerned and what (INAUDIBLE)

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: For the
17 intake?

18 DR. LONG: Yeah, as part of the case
19 management that we're doing we will make sure that
20 that is clear. Again, our goal in doing this if you
21 want to get, I don't know why you'd want to be
22 anywhere other than New York City, but if you do want
23 to be somewhere other than New York City we want to
24 make sure that we're helping you to get there. Molly
25 can share more about this, but we're seeing a lot of

2 individuals and families seeking asylum that are
3 coming into our city that really are trying to get to
4 families in other places, and it's really hard to
5 navigate, and it's certainly, as you know Chair
6 Hanif, we can't do all that at Port Authority. We
7 have to have the right space and the right technology
8 to be able to effectively get you where you want to
9 go. Maybe you can share some examples of why this is
10 so important.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. These are
12 all anecdotal, but we again and again see cases where
13 families have been separated so sometimes these are a
14 father separated from wife and child. They end up on
15 separate buses, sometimes end up in separate cities
16 where there's a lot of family reunification that
17 needs to happen or people who were intending to go to
18 places other than New York City, and, because of the
19 way the bussing process happened from the border,
20 they arrived here even though they would've liked to
21 get off some place in between or, as was mentioned,
22 be in Miami or elsewhere so we try and do that work
23 as well of connecting people either to their families
24 from whom they've separated or to the locations where
25 they would like to go. That's something that we do at

2 shelter intake when we can, but, much like the
3 situation at the Port Authority, our intake centers
4 were not designed for what we are seeing. We've had a
5 30 percent increase in the shelter census in six
6 months. Typical intake at, say, 30th Street for
7 single adult men is 60 people a night. We're getting
8 300, 400, 500 people coming through there in a single
9 day so our ability to do that, at the moment, case
10 management is also very limited so I think having
11 this moment to pause and help individuals identify
12 what their right next step is is going to be really
13 useful for the individuals but also for the homeless
14 shelter system.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: I believe you mentioned 22
16 percent is the number of those that are going
17 elsewhere other than New York, correct?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah. I think
19 one of the things that you're seeing, especially the
20 buses coming out of El Paso, you have to understand
21 we don't control the buses, we don't control where
22 the buses go, we don't control where they drop people
23 off, we don't know if we're going to be able to get
24 the charter companies to go to Orchard Beach or if
25 we're going to have to transport people from Port

2 Authority to Orchard Beach or if it's going to be a
3 mixture. A lot of people are getting on those buses
4 from El Paso because it is the only way out of El
5 Paso and so we even had somebody, correct me if I'm
6 wrong, Commissioner Castro, that left El Paso to New
7 York to get to San Antonio because it is just easier
8 to get anywhere from New York than it is from El
9 Paso. We believe that there's probably a lot more
10 people than 22 percent that are looking to get to
11 other locations.

12 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yeah. When a person or
13 persons, when a family decides that New York is not
14 my destination of choice, I'd rather be in
15 Connecticut, I'd rather be in Massachusetts, we then
16 put them on another bus and send them off to that
17 location?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: There's a
19 variety of processes. Commissioner Castro, do you
20 want to talk about how that's currently done at Port
21 Authority?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I have to say and
23 acknowledge Team TLC who's here today who's been
24 doing this work since before this situation started.
25 We've learned a tremendous amount from working with

2 them at Port Authority. They've been really
3 instrumental in being able to reticket people to
4 different destinations, and, frankly, this is a way
5 to relieve the resource-heavy process of having to
6 reticket someone. I should mention that the largest
7 population of Venezuelans live in Florida, for
8 instance, and so the majority of people arriving are
9 from Venezuela who want to be close to family and
10 friends so to reticket folks to Florida it would take
11 a bus or even a flight, and we don't the expense and
12 the brunt of that to be on the non-profits. Instead,
13 we want to be able to pay for that and coordinate
14 that effort and allow non-profits to provide other
15 types of support to these individuals.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: Understood. Thank you very
17 much. I'm going to ask one more question. Before I
18 do, I just want to acknowledge that we're being
19 watched by former Immigration Chair Carlos Menchaca
20 who I served with for many years in this Council. Hi,
21 Carlos. He is in El Paso with his family right now
22 too, and he's very interested in this hearing as
23 well.

24 We know that we have a maximum of 96
25 hours that we're dealing with for the asylum seekers

2 at the Orchard Beach location so how are we going to
3 track this, how are we tracking the maximum hours
4 that individuals will be retained at Orchard Beach?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'll turn this
6 over to Dr. Long in one second to answer that, but I
7 just want to be clear the goal is 96 hours. This is
8 an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. There are some
9 estimates in terms of the tens of thousands of asylum
10 seekers who could come here, and so I just want to
11 make sure that we're setting that expectation. Dr.
12 Long.

13 DR. LONG: Yeah, I think as Commissioner
14 Iscol said, if it looks like it's going to take 100
15 hours, 110 hours, 120, whatever it is to get you
16 where you need to go, the whole reason we're doing
17 this is to help you and get you where you need to go
18 and we're going to get to know you while you're there
19 so there's not a hard and fast at 96 hours that
20 triggers something to happen. It's good to set a
21 goal, though, and our goal is instead of, again,
22 having the concentrated amount of time, which I want
23 to say you've done God's work at Port Authority, I
24 think we've done everything possible there to help
25 people but we want to do more built on the great work

2 that our non-for-profits have done so far at Port
3 Authority, and we want to give ourselves 96 hours to
4 do that work. If it looks like it's going to take
5 longer though, we're not going to shy away from doing
6 what we need to do to do the right thing for
7 individuals and families that will be staying with us
8 at our humanitarian centers.

9 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you very much. I do
10 have another meeting to go to. I appreciate your
11 testimony here today. I would like for my Colleagues,
12 and I'm going to be watching after my meeting, for my
13 Colleagues to, and I know they will, to touch on this
14 stress of the system because that would've been my
15 next line. If I had the opportunity to do another
16 round, I would go into the stress on our current
17 system, but I do thank you for your testimony today.
18 Thank you, Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much,
20 Speaker, for your excellent questions.

21 I want to pick up on the reticketing.
22 Commissioner Castro, I know you gave a shoutout to
23 TLC. Is TLC effectively covering the costs or do your
24 agency have funding to cover the cost of the tickets?

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Team TLC and
3 sometimes other non-profits cover the cost of
4 reticketing. DHS has resources to also reticket as
5 Molly mentioned. We really want to centralize things,
6 however, and take resources that we now have
7 available to be able to reticket at the humanitarian
8 center.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So as of this week,
10 has MOIA reticketed any?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: No, the City does
12 not reticket. Initially, it was very difficult for us
13 to reticket individuals because we did not want to be
14 caught in the same type of loop that Texas and others
15 were, sending folks out to other locations, but we
16 figured out how to do that, and, as Dr. Long said, we
17 want to make sure to have the time to support
18 families to get to their next destination. That's
19 something that's really difficult to do at the Port
20 Authority with a short amount of time we have there.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Has DHS covered any
22 costs of tickets?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes, DHS has a
24 program, a longstanding program actually, that
25 facilitates people's move to friends or family

2 elsewhere in the country. Early on as the emergency
3 started to build, we made some changes to that
4 program. We used to require some forms of
5 documentation that weren't possible for the asylum
6 seekers so we have streamlined the documentation
7 requirements, and we have used that. We do do it, but
8 it is challenging it is challenging even in the
9 immediacy of DHS intake, which is, while not 45
10 minutes, still a high volume and very focused process
11 so it is something that happens more at the shelter
12 system so after people have already made it further
13 into the process so I think the HERRCs present an
14 opportunity to connect people with that reticketing
15 earlier in their experience with New York City.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: As of this week, how
17 many people's tickets have DHS paid for?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I'm going to
19 have to follow up with you on that number.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Commissioner Castro,
21 for the gracious work that TLC has done to purchase
22 tickets, do you know how much money has gone into
23 reticketing?

24 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: From Team TLC, I
25 believe it's tens of thousands. We'll have to connect

2 with Team TLC. Again, they've done a tremendous
3 amount of work with little resources, mostly with
4 volunteers so we're working with Grannies Respond who
5 is their physical sponsor, 60,000 dollars I'm told
6 that it's cost Team TLC to be able to...

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's a lot of money.

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Does the City plan to
10 reimburse them?

11 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We're working with
12 Grannies Respond to get up to speed to be able to
13 contract with the City. As you know, it's an involved
14 process. Team TLC does not have a 501(c)(3) and so
15 they'll need to use Grannies Respond who is their
16 national umbrella group to be able to engage with
17 city contracting processes.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. Okay.

19 Commissioner Iscol, I just want to come back to the
20 right to shelter stuff again, and some of what you've
21 outlined during our earlier conversation contradicts
22 right to shelter and so I just want to ask on the
23 record, yes or no, will the facility meet the right
24 to shelter requirements?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: The facility
3 is not a homeless shelter. The facility is a
4 humanitarian emergency response and relief center..

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can you plainly say
6 yes or no?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Our homeless
8 shelters run by DHS meet all of the requirements of
9 Callahan because they are homeless shelters. These
10 are not homeless shelters. They don't fall under
11 Callahan, but where we meet the requirement of
12 Callahan is anybody who wants to go to a homeless
13 shelter is more than welcome to do so but these are
14 emergency relief and response centers to meet the
15 needs of this humanitarian crisis.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. So they won't
17 meet the need for right to shelter.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: They are
19 humanitarian emergency response and relief centers.
20 They are not homeless shelters.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What mechanisms are in
22 place could you share to ensure that asylum seekers
23 know that they have the option to bypass the HERRCs
24 system and utilize the shelter system?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: The whole
3 purpose of the HERRCs is to figure out where people
4 are going next. One of those destinations is the
5 homeless shelter system so, by nature, the entire
6 mission is organized around figuring out where they
7 are going to go next, whether it's a homeless
8 shelter, whether it's a family, whether it's
9 reticketing to another place, that's the whole
10 purpose of the organization that we're setting up.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you just add
12 some clarity to the mechanism?

13 DR. LONG: Yeah. As part of case
14 management, when we're asking you if there's any
15 friends or family that you'd want to stay with inside
16 of the city, outside of the city, we're also going to
17 talk to you about shelters because if you tell us on
18 day one that the place where you want to be is within
19 our excellent shelter system in New York City you
20 don't need to wait four days. The 96 hours, what I
21 said earlier we want to make sure we give ourselves
22 plenty of time to do everything we can to help you to
23 reach those family members, if we can find out where
24 you want to go in one day, whether it's to a family
25 member or it's into our shelter system, we'll get you

2 there that day, we'll get you there the following
3 day. You don't need to stay in the humanitarian
4 centers for any amount of time so that's going to be
5 a key part of our discussion with all the individuals
6 and families that are coming into our city because
7 our goal is to get you where you want to be.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood. If a
9 person at a HERRC decides they want to leave the
10 HERRC, how are they logistically being transferred to
11 the DHS system?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: By shuttle
13 vans.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: By vans?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Who are they
17 communicating with, like give us a picture of what
18 it's looking like on the ground.

19 DR. LONG: I'll start and then actually
20 this is a good example because what I'm going to say
21 is we do a warm handoff to DHS. Once we identify that
22 where somebody wants to be is within our shelter
23 system, the mechanism will be in a van but we'll have
24 a warm handoff in coordination with our DHS shelter
25 system so that when they're going to the intake

2 center they'll know they're coming, that sort of
3 thing, and Molly can share more about how the warm
4 handoff is going to work.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: DHS is standing
6 up a centralized intake site for asylum seekers. What
7 has been happening thus far is that families are
8 going to our traditional family intake site in the
9 Bronx, single adult men go to 30th Street, so on,
10 what we are doing is consolidating all of that for
11 the asylum seekers so we will have one location, we
12 will have staff that are specialized in working with
13 the asylee population. We will build relationships
14 between the on-the-ground staff at the HERRC and at
15 the sanctuary intake site so that we are able to plan
16 for who is coming in, do the very basic shelter
17 intake, we streamlined that because we are getting
18 information, facilitate those family reunifications
19 that I mentioned because right now those are
20 happening on a very retailed basis, they are
21 challenging, a lot of families are here without
22 phones so we are sort of patching that together so
23 the information shared will help us do that and then
24 be able to make a placement within the DHS shelter
25 system.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm assuming that this
3 mechanism, like there's this warm handoff, this is
4 language accessible, there are folks who are speaking
5 in the languages comfortable by our asylum seekers.
6 Could you share a little bit more about how staff is
7 going to be trained to provide compassionate care?

8 DR. LONG: I'll speak on the humanitarian
9 center side and then I'll turn to Molly to speak more
10 on the DHS side. Language access is crucially
11 important, and I say this as a primary care doctor
12 myself. One of the things that makes me proud to work
13 in New York City Health and Hospitals is I have
14 patients that speak tens of languages where I
15 practice in the Bronx, our Language Line for Health
16 and Hospitals has over 250 languages and dialects
17 that it offers interpretation for. We're going to be
18 offering 240 languages and dialects through our
19 interpreter service that we're going to have at the
20 humanitarian centers, but that's only a piece of it.
21 We are looking to again work with our community-based
22 organization partners who also speak the languages of
23 their communities, of the people coming to seek
24 asylum. We're setting the goal of having 85 percent
25 of our vendor staff that we are bringing on to be

2 bilingual and we're going to have interpreters on
3 site, we're going to have sign language capability as
4 well. We really want to make sure that there's
5 barriers to people feeling comfortable and being able
6 to have, to use the Speaker's words again, an
7 effective experience to let us help them get where
8 they need to go. In terms of making sure that we're
9 meeting them where they are too, just to say a couple
10 words about mental health because it goes hand in
11 hand, when you come through the front door we want to
12 be able to speak with you in your preferred language
13 but we also want to be able to identify everything
14 that you've been through so we're also not only
15 making sure that our staff are bilingual with
16 interpretation services but also we're training our
17 staff in mental health first aid so that we can
18 identify, and again this is what we do on the
19 healthcare side, we want to be able to identify who
20 is not just in a mental health crisis but who is
21 suffering from a mental health issue that we can
22 begin to address there and bridge them into wherever
23 they need to be so we're going to be training our
24 staff in mental health first aid, we're going to be
25 training our staff in trauma-informed care, we're

2 even doing a special training this next week starting
3 at the Navigation Center, (INAUDIBLE) New York City,
4 we're proud to take care of people that have survived
5 torture at Bellevue and Libertas Clinic at Elmhurst,
6 we've offered this care for years. The leaders of
7 those clinics are going to specifically come to train
8 our staff to make sure that we can offer that sort of
9 training in compassionate care wherever we are, which
10 includes our Centers. Finally, we are going to make
11 sure that when you come through the front door as
12 we're speaking to you in your preferred language, as
13 we're seeing what you need from a mental health
14 perspective, that we are going to be able to connect
15 you with NYC Well as well which is something we have
16 uniquely in New York City where we can actually have
17 you speak with a mental health professional almost
18 instantly, either on your phone and we'll be
19 providing wi-fi or we'll have iPads and phones there
20 as well.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you. DHS
22 places a similar premium on language accessibility.
23 Many of our DHS staff and provider staff are
24 bilingual but, recognizing the really unprecedented
25 nature, we've done an 8.2 million dollar emergency

2 solicitation for enhanced interpretation services and
3 are deploying interpreters to critical sites to make
4 sure that we are meeting people's language access
5 needs. We do use the Language Line as well to be able
6 to serve specialized dialects or if there isn't
7 somebody available at the point in time, recognizing
8 that we're a high volume and 24/7 operation so really
9 a premium there.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'll come back to some
11 more questions around mental health services, but on
12 the language access services, 8.2 million dollars.
13 Could you share how that's being allocated, how it's
14 going to get spent?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: We're actually
16 really trying to be as nimble as possible. Actually,
17 the landscape of the universe of people we are
18 serving now looks different than it did even when we
19 put the solicitation out a few weeks ago. I think the
20 last time that we testified here, we were saying 100
21 asylum seekers a day coming in the system. It's now
22 more like 300 to 500 people a day so we are
23 identifying the sites with the highest demand, which
24 certainly is intake, but also the shelters that have
25 the highest population of asylees, so we are

2 deploying the interpretation services as needed but,
3 again, really trying to be nimble.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: For the providers,
5 let's say like the people doing the interpreting,
6 these are paid folks?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Can the
9 administration guarantee that nobody will be held at
10 a HERRC overnight when they made it clear that they
11 prefer to utilize the shelter system?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: That's the
13 intent, yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We'll hold you to
15 that. Can you guarantee that nobody will be referred
16 to the HERRC from a shelter intake or other DSS/DHS
17 facility?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I think there
19 could be unique circumstances where somebody is in a
20 DHS shelter and needs to be reticketed, but that's
21 not the intent. Again, I think one of the things that
22 I just want to emphasize here is this is an
23 unprecedented humanitarian crisis..

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Totally.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: And that
3 there's a lot that we don't know and there's a lot
4 that we're going to learn and there are going to be
5 things that we have to adjust on the fly based on a
6 lot of things that are outside of our control, but
7 the intent is that this is a one-way street from the
8 HERRC to the shelter system and not from the shelter
9 system back to the HERRC.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What will you do to
11 prevent that where somebody at a DHS facility is
12 being taken...

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I mean it
14 would have to be something wildly outside of our
15 control where that occurs. This is not something that
16 we are intending to do, and DHS has a lot of their
17 own capabilities to do some of this work on their
18 own.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. I want to give
20 an opportunity to my Colleagues for some questions.
21 Council Member Gutierrez.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you,
23 Chair Hanif. Several questions so I'm just going to
24 try to read them through. My first question is how
25 soon after a new neighbor arrives and you realize you

2 need to connect them to legal services, what is that
3 gap between the time they get to Port Authority, or
4 in this instance, Orchard Beach, how many hours
5 between their arrival are they connected to
6 specifically immigration legal services?

7 DR. LONG: When they get to our
8 humanitarian center, we're going to be providing them
9 legal information from the outset. If there are
10 identified needs or if they wish to speak with a
11 lawyer, we do have legal services that we provide at
12 our Navigation Center, and, to be clear, our
13 Navigation Center both for individuals and families
14 staying at our humanitarian centers or for
15 individuals and families in our DHS shelters, the
16 Navigation Center will still continue to exist and
17 provide all of the services it currently does.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: The services
19 are not necessarily brought to them after you give
20 them the information? It's then up to that person to
21 then locate where these services are?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: If they wish
23 to speak with one of the lawyers at the Navigation
24 Center, as Commissioner Castro said earlier, there is
25 an appointment-based system for getting them into the

2 Navigation Center and same is true for anybody in a
3 DHS shelter as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Can I assume
5 that the appointments are being facilitated by some
6 of the staff at these Centers? I don't want to assume
7 they have internet connection or a phone nonetheless.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes, your
9 assumption is very safe. That will be provided by our
10 staff. In addition to that, we will have wi-fi.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Perfect. This
12 is for Commissioner Castro. Has the City been
13 thinking long-term on the realities of eligibility
14 for some of these folks? I've worked in immigration
15 before. Asylum is incredibly difficult to secure. I
16 know that you are making strides in trying to
17 expedite, just even being able to have some of these
18 folks secure working papers, but in those instances,
19 not everyone is necessarily coming from Venezuela and
20 I know people have very different reasons for
21 migrating, have you all thought about what is the
22 long-term plan for some of these folks, how can we
23 keep them safe, how can we continue to connect them
24 to resources in those instances where they don't
25 qualify?

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes and thank you so
3 much for that question because it's a really
4 important issue for us. We've been thinking about
5 this before asylum seekers started to arrive in the
6 city. As you probably know, the federal government
7 does not provide legal representation for immigrants
8 arriving to our country and so they are left to rely
9 on themselves and local governments who do provided
10 resources. New York City happens to be the city
11 government that provides the most resources when it
12 comes to immigration legal services, and there will
13 be several touchpoints at which asylum seekers will
14 be able to connect with legal support, but the
15 reality is that with tens of thousands of asylum
16 seekers arriving who will need legal assistance, we
17 might not even have enough lawyers to be able to work
18 with each of them in their particular cases. As you
19 mentioned, asylum-seeking cases can take years and
20 are incredibly difficult to work on, but we're
21 committed to meeting the most immediate needs of
22 asylum seekers as they arrive which is an orientation
23 of what the asylum-seeking process is and how to go
24 about applying for work permits and connecting with

2 legal services in our city available to all
3 immigrants here.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Can I ask you,
5 Commissioner, just a specific question about folks?
6 Specific that are arriving from Venezuela who have no
7 consulate here that may have lost documentation along
8 the way, what is the best way or what is a pathway
9 for folks to retain some of the identification
10 documents that they're going to need to even begin an
11 asylum case? What are some of the things that we can
12 do in our districts, but what are some of the ways
13 that we can also help you in doing that job? It's
14 specifically for folks from Venezuela. It's
15 incredibly difficult for them to retain some of these
16 documents.

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, and we thank
18 City Council Members, Council Member Brewer, for
19 their advocacy with our federal government to support
20 asylum seekers, be able to get expedited work permits
21 for instance. It'll take a whole lot of advocacy at
22 the federal level to make sure that asylum seekers
23 from Venezuela for instance or other countries where
24 there are not enough resources here to get their
25 documentation, but at the border they do get

2 documents that they can use to travel with in the
3 country and to support them in their immigration
4 processes. One of the first things we did, because we
5 realized people's documents were being taken at the
6 border, is work with ID NYC to accept those documents
7 as points to be able to process their ID NYC.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Thank you. I
9 have one question for Commissioner Iscol. With the
10 announcement from the administration for PEGs and you
11 mentioned earlier that the idea is to flush the tent
12 situation at Orchard with hundreds of employees.
13 Where do you see that trade-off happening? For
14 example, in my District my emergency shelter has had
15 a really difficult time employing folks and employing
16 folks that either speak another language or can
17 provide these services so where is the pathway for
18 your agency there to be able to take in hundreds of
19 new staff members to be able to serve folks and how
20 do you see the trade-off happening with proposed cuts
21 that this administration is pushing every agency to
22 make?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes. These are
24 being done largely under contracts with some
25 additional support from the National Guard, from

2 Health and Hospitals, from community-based
3 organizations, but I think if your question is
4 specifically about the funding for this, is that what
5 I'm understanding?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: I'm curious
7 about the funding and what the plan is to employ
8 hundreds of people at one time to be able to do these
9 services.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: That is
11 largely being done through the contractors that are
12 providing most of the services there. They're doing
13 the hiring. We have a staffing contract. We have a
14 building and maintenance contract, but also in terms
15 of the funding there's a lot of conversations that
16 have been taking place at the state and the federal
17 government around funding.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: The cost, can
19 you share what you all are anticipating for these
20 contracts?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're still
22 sort of analyzing the cost but happy to get something
23 to you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIERREZ: Okay. My last
25 question, Chair, I promise. I have a keen curiosity

2 in connectivity in some of the centers. I also, when
3 you say Language Line, we had a whole joint hearing
4 here at the City Council about some of the shortfalls
5 of Language Line so I'm curious, and I heard
6 firsthand from a lot of medical professionals saying
7 that they have to use their own cell phones because
8 there are bad spots in the hospitals that they're
9 serving patients in so I'm curious if you have all
10 kind of figured out connectivity in Orchard Beach,
11 for example, or any of these new locations that
12 you're looking at, kind of where is the priority
13 level there? If the only thing you are using is
14 Language Line, which is not perfect, what is that
15 process for you all to ensure that there are no weak
16 spots, that we will not have people who just cannot
17 be connected to Language Line because there is poor
18 connectivity in these temporary locations?

19 DR. LONG: I want to start with saying I
20 think you bring up a really important point that
21 Language Line serves a purpose, but having an in-
22 person interpreter for many people is a preferred
23 option so we are going to have in-person interpreters
24 at our Humanitarian Center. For those that speak
25 different languages that we don't have in-person

2 interpreters for or bilingual staff for because,
3 again, that's a very important emphasis for us as
4 well, New York City Health and Hospitals have used
5 Language Line for many years. I have a patient that I
6 see in the Bronx. She speaks an uncommon dialect.
7 She's from Africa. She always smiles when she sees me
8 because then she says as soon as I get Language Line
9 up and running that we're the only people she can
10 talk to so we have a lot of experience using Language
11 Line. For anybody who would prefer to have an in-
12 person interpreter or a bilingual staff member, that
13 will be an option, but we are going to be sure we set
14 up Language Line as we've seen it succeed in our 11
15 hospitals and 57 community health centers for many
16 years at New York City Health and Hospitals.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much.

18 I'll now pass it to Council Member De La Rosa
19 followed by Council Member Brewer. You have three
20 minutes, but there will be a second round.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you. Let
22 me just say as the Civil Service and Labor Chair, we
23 just had a hearing on the municipal workforce and we
24 understand how stretched most of the agencies have
25 more than 5 percent vacancy rates, and I'm concerned

2 about how we continue to do and manage through this
3 crisis with proposed PEGs so do you see the proposed
4 PEGs as a barrier to you being able to serve our new
5 neighbors?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: No.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Are you sure?

8 I know you're not supposed to ask us for more money,
9 but are you sure you're going to be able to carry out
10 the services...

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We at
12 Emergency Management don't get to pick the
13 emergencies. We have to respond to them, and we have
14 to meet the need and we will.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: All right. We
16 look forward to having that conversation because from
17 the conversation we had last week at the Civil
18 Service and Labor Committee, it seems like we are at
19 a crisis point with the municipal workforce and I can
20 probably guarantee you that most of your staff
21 members in your agencies have been working
22 indescribable hours, even though they won't say that
23 on the record.

24 I also have a question as far as the
25 intake process. There are obstacles that exist with

2 the DHS intake process for documentation. One of the
3 things we've been hearing from our providers about is
4 that, for example, if people want to be considered a
5 couple and go to a family shelter they have to be
6 married or in a domestic partnership, and it is
7 incredibly difficult for these people to have their
8 partners, they come from another country here, they
9 have no documents to go through the process of being
10 in a domestic partnership in order to qualify. Is
11 there any exceptions to the rules that can be made
12 for some of the traditional intake processes? For
13 example, there's also a question about whether these
14 people can provide a list of where they've lived
15 before. That's a common question in the intake
16 process. Are any of those things being taken away in
17 this scenario?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Thank you for
19 that question. For families, both families with
20 children and adult families, what traditionally
21 happens is somebody comes into intake, they are given
22 a conditional placement and then there is an
23 eligibility review. What we have been doing for the
24 families who are asylum seekers is people are
25 remaining in that conditional status for right now,

2 understanding that they cannot provide all of that
3 same documentation and that the eligibility process
4 doesn't apply. As we are standing up this separate
5 intake site that I referenced earlier, we will have a
6 streamlined and somewhat different intake,
7 recognizing again to your point that we cannot
8 request all of the same documentation and housing
9 history for people who are coming from out of the
10 country.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: So if they are
12 not in a domestic partnership, are they being
13 required to be in a domestic partnership and does
14 that include LGBTQ+ couples?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Right now,
16 people are staying in these conditional placements so
17 they are in shelter. We are neither finding them
18 eligible nor ineligible, and we are working with
19 them. In many cases, actually people are getting
20 domestic partnerships.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: I know. The
22 non-profits are helping them through those processes,
23 but they should be exempt from having to do that in
24 order to get shelter.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: For this
3 standalone asylum intake site, we are going to have
4 streamlined rules with lower documentation
5 requirements, yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Okay. If you
7 could update us on when that comes to fruition
8 because they're here now, and they have had to go
9 through this process.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Nobody is being
11 found ineligible for lack of documentation right now,
12 but we are launching that streamlined intake site as
13 of today. We are starting small so people are still
14 going through traditional intake sites, but we should
15 be fully up and running there by mid-October.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Final
17 question. Following up Chair Hanif's line of
18 questioning, is there a script that staff are being
19 trained when a person is taken to the Orchard Beach
20 site? Is there a script that staff is being trained
21 on to inform people that they can reject staying in
22 the HERRC, and do you have what that script looks
23 like?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Yes, and just
25 to be really on it because this is an important

2 point, if you want to go into our excellent DHS
3 shelter system, we...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: They're not
5 excellent.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We want to get
7 you where you want to go, and if it's that day you
8 tell us where you want to go then there's no reason
9 for you to stay in the HERRC any longer than you wish
10 to so the answer to your question is will staff be
11 trained to let people know what their options are and
12 that they could select to go into one of our DHS
13 shelters as quickly as they wish to, the answer is
14 yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Council Member Brewer.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you and
17 thank you for all your hard work. I'm always focused,
18 as you know, on the working paper so I guess I know
19 that the Mayor has tried, the Governor has tried,
20 supposedly our delegation has tried, I want to get an
21 update and then I want to understand, I think it's
22 great that people can get the municipal ID, what does
23 that get you, and then since I'm like a broken record
24 on this topic people say well, Gale, why don't you
25 use the paid internship because sometimes you don't

2 need working papers, they have parole status, they
3 can work, paid internship might give them the ability
4 to be able to work. I don't know about paid
5 internships. I'm just trying everything to get these
6 amazingly talented individuals working, and I can't
7 take any more calls of people asking me, I have jobs,
8 so can you help me with the ID? Does that get you
9 anything while we're waiting for the feds? Do we need
10 an act of Congress to get the working papers?
11 Somebody said the Ukrainians got an act of Congress.
12 We need an act of Congress now. It's very mysterious.
13 Go ahead.

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We're fully in
15 agreement with, Council Member, and our team at
16 Federal Legislative Affairs is in D.C. working with
17 the White House..

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (INAUDIBLE)
19 working hard. I know.

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: As you know, we're
21 working with a Congressional delegation to see what
22 options we have. Unfortunately, asylum seekers cannot
23 use ID NYC as work papers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's what I
25 thought.

2 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: What I could say is
3 that we have a tremendous group of non-profit
4 organizations that work with asylum seekers and other
5 immigrants with informal sector work like day
6 laborers and domestic workers, and asylum seekers are
7 going to these agencies like NICE and Mixteca and
8 others, and they've received assistance there to get
9 health and safety training and so on to be able to
10 connect with work.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know that. I'm
12 just trying to get to the next step. What's with this
13 paid internship? Does anybody know anything about
14 that or was that just Jose Ortiz, Jr.?

15 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: We have an upcoming
16 meeting with Jose Monday...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My understanding
18 is paid internship you can get without the working
19 papers so Jose needs to get on that.

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes. We have an
21 interagency meeting with Jose on Monday to discuss
22 our options.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'll call him this
24 weekend and tell him. Next, is the faith-based. I'm
25 focused on these churches, synagogues, and mosques.

2 They all have space, nobody goes to church anymore in
3 case you don't know, and so there's just tons of
4 space. The Catholics, the Episcopalians, they've all got
5 space, but they need showers so you have to bring the
6 truck from Brooklyn with the showers. They have
7 kitchens and they have bathrooms so I'm trying to
8 figure out, St. John has got space, St. Gregory has
9 got space, I got all the saints, they all got space.
10 What are we doing to get that space?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Council Member
12 Brewer...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know. We've had
14 this conversation but for everybody else.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: One of the
16 things that I love talking about is that you always
17 have a lot of work for us to do. I always get a list
18 of items to do when I have the opportunity to chat
19 with you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh god, I saw him
21 last night at an event and I started up.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: She did, and
23 we are going to start looking at those spaces and
24 we'll see if we can make them work...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, a list
3 apparently has been sent from a couple of different
4 faith-based organizations so I'll make sure you get
5 both of them. They want to help their community and
6 then you'd have all your problems really addressed.

7 Next is storage at the Port Authority.
8 Ruth Messinger calls me every minute about some
9 storage room. Do I need to call Rick Cotton to get
10 the storage room?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We have a
12 storage room at Port Authority now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You do? So how
14 come she called me like five minutes ago and asks me
15 about, could you please tell her that you have a
16 storage room?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I will put it
18 on my Gale Brewer to-do list.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Okay.
20 LGBTQ, when I spoke yesterday to, I mean Covenant
21 House is trying, when I spoke to the city they said
22 there were a couple of other places but there are a
23 lot of young people who need support. What are we
24 doing with that community to support them? It's a
25 very special community, young, LGBTQ or anybody, but

2 they're very special and it's hard. Any suggestions
3 for that community?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'll say that our
5 team at Health and Hospitals has been doing a
6 tremendous job at checking off things on our wish
7 list for the humanitarian centers, one of which is
8 really providing assistance to LGBTQ communities in a
9 way that provides extensive case management to
10 connect them to appropriate shelters and services.
11 This is why we want to move to this humanitarian
12 center strategy that allows us to provide more
13 resources.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but what are
15 we doing now with the LGBTQ?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I can chime in.
17 I think this is an example of the interagency
18 partnership that has been going on because the teams
19 that have been meeting individuals at the Port
20 Authority are really proactive about flagging people
21 with a variety of particular needs but including
22 LGBTQ individuals and then DHS works to make sure
23 that we are getting an appropriate placement. As you
24 know, we have some LGBTQ-specific shelters. We are
25 using those as appropriate.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think they're
3 all full, Molly. They're all full.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Sometimes there
5 are vacancies. We are using those vacancies where
6 appropriate if people have particular safety needs,
7 making sure that we're accommodating with a single or
8 a double room.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'll let you know
10 out there in the buzz world, it's a big issue. People
11 are asking me why isn't more being done. Just so
12 you're aware of it. That is such a special community.
13 You don't want them to get bullied, you don't want
14 them to get hurt, and you need to pay particular
15 attention to them.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Appreciate that
17 feedback. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Finally, the
19 Mexican food is too spicy. They want Venezuelan food.
20 I'm not kidding. Are you aware of that?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I know you're
22 not kidding. Do you want to speak to the menu and
23 also some of the work we're doing at the HERRC for
24 the LGBTQ community?

2 DR. LONG: To go with the latter question
3 first. We have designed a menu which, and you can
4 give us feedback once the humanitarian center
5 actually opens if you're getting feedback that it's
6 still spicy, but we've designed it to be a South
7 American diet with, again, multiple options, three
8 hot meals a day in a dining hall so you can reconnect
9 with people around you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's happening
11 now?

12 DR. LONG: No...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It will happen?

14 DR. LONG: Yeah, so when we open the
15 humanitarian center...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I will let you
17 know when the complaints have stopped. Just finally,
18 I know this whole issue you can't tell people that
19 there's a shelter coming to their neighborhood, blah,
20 blah, blah, I got it. Guess what happens? People find
21 out, elected officials don't know, there's drama.
22 Everybody wants to help. I wish they helped New
23 Yorkers. That's another whole story, but they do want
24 to help asylum so it would be helpful because if you
25 could tell the community they're coming, this is the

2 shelter, it's from the asylum, can you help. It's a
3 suggestion. I mean if you put New Yorkers in your
4 neighborhood, they all start screaming, but everybody
5 loves the asylum so help because then...

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: We have opened
7 39 emergency sites since the middle of June. We are
8 doing what we can to give advanced notice. I will say
9 we are moving extremely quickly...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But we move fast
11 too.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely. I
13 am well aware that some of those notifications have
14 happened day of. It is not an attempt to hide
15 information. It is because we are moving as fast as
16 we possibly can to keep up with the demand.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Molly, the
18 agencies are afraid, they get afraid to call us
19 because they're going to get in trouble with their
20 contract if they call elected officials so you just
21 have to send them a note, everybody, it's okay to
22 call your elected officials, it's okay to call the
23 Community Board, shoes, clothes, pampers, diapers,
24 all that stuff.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I cannot stress
3 enough though that we are moving just unbelievably
4 quickly...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Tell the agencies
6 it's okay to call. Thank you.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: A memo to that
9 effect. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much,
11 Council Member Brewer. Just to pick up on what
12 Council Member De La Rosa asked about the script.
13 I'm grateful to hear that there will be one. Can you
14 commit to sharing that script with the Council?

15 DR. LONG: The trainings will have
16 elements, they'll be an introductory script and then
17 case management, as you well know, goes in different
18 directions so we train our case managers as we do
19 with our social workers to listen first and then see
20 where the conversation goes. I'd be happy to commit
21 to sharing with you the relevant sort of introductory
22 parts of the script. I just want to make the point to
23 set expectations that this is not a one-size-fits-
24 all. Case management is really hard, and that's why
25 we're setting up these centers.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No, I understand that,
3 and sharing even just the preliminary would be great
4 for us.

5 DR. LONG: The introductory parts.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Introductory, yes. I'd
7 now like to go into learning a little bit more about
8 the vendor selection for the creation of the HERRC on
9 Orchard Beach. We had received information that the
10 vendor selected to construct and operate is SLSCO. Is
11 this true?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: SLS is one of
13 two contractors that are working up there. They're
14 not the one doing the construction and maintenance of
15 the facility. They're doing a lot of the wraparound
16 services and augmenting and working the H and H team.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Who was contracted to
18 do the construction?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: A company
20 called Garner.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Garner, and is this a
22 unionized vendor or are unions consulted?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can find out
24 and circle back with you.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you just clarify
3 a little bit more what SLSCO is going to be doing
4 exactly?

5 DR. LONG: SLS is going to be helping us
6 to run the facility's management of the site. I'll
7 give some specific examples. Once again, you've come
8 through. We've offered you initial comfort care. You
9 started your case management work. We're going to
10 have showers available for you. We're going to be
11 providing towels. We're going to have everything in
12 the showers you need. That needs to be maintained,
13 cleaned. There's a body of work there. We're going to
14 have a variety of services like we're going to have
15 laundry service which includes a fluff and fold, just
16 because you've come a long way, I don't want to
17 diminish the importance of having clean clothes that
18 you feel comfortable in so that's going to be
19 something that we're offering there too, and then a
20 variety of other services that are included in the
21 operation of the center itself. Everything we do
22 requires staff to do it, and the vendor, SLS, is
23 focused on the staffing piece of providing the staff
24 for a lot of the services like the ones I mentioned.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'm asking
3 specifically about SLS because this company received
4 over 2 billion dollars to construct former President
5 Trump's border wall, and it's pretty explicit on
6 their website. This isn't like something they're
7 hiding. Under projects, you can see that they've got
8 several border walls that they've worked on. We
9 should be working to build trust with asylum seekers,
10 and the agreement to contract this particular company
11 raises a lot of problems.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: SLS has also
13 done a ton of work with us throughout COVID. They are
14 one of the city's emergency contract providers for
15 COVID. They ran many of our vaccination sites. They
16 helped build a number of our COVID field hospitals.
17 Their audit that the Comptroller did was a fantastic
18 audit, and so it's one of the reasons that we were
19 comfortable working with them for an emergency. As
20 you know, with emergency contracts, it's a different
21 contracting system than it is when you are going
22 through the normal contract and procurement system,
23 which because we are dealing with an unprecedented
24 humanitarian crisis, we simply do not have time to go
25 through the normal procurement process so we worked

2 with a vendor that we have been working with over the
3 last couple of years through COVID and that has
4 performed well under those contracts.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Did you all know that
6 this company had created walls across the southern..

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I was not
8 aware of that until I saw the report yesterday.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Will this revelation
10 end our relationship with this company?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: It will not.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Why are we working
13 with a company that has profited from xenophobic
14 policies?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: As I said,
16 this is also a company that the City has worked with
17 throughout COVID setting up vaccination sites,
18 running COVID field hospitals, and we have done
19 tremendous work with them in the past, and it's one
20 of the reasons we are comfortable working with that
21 company in this emergency as well where we have to
22 circumvent some of the procurement policies and
23 procedures that are usually in place for contracts.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I get that but,
3 Commissioner, does it not raise a problem to you that
4 this company has literally built...

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'm not happy
6 about it, but I will also tell you as I said this is
7 an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. There's a lot
8 of things I'm not happy about, but that's the nature
9 of dealing with an emergency.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: On the construction
11 front, I know you're not sure if unionized labor was
12 contacted, but I'd be hopeful that...

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Again, I just
14 want to emphasize again that this is an emergency and
15 that there's a lot of things that we would normally
16 do if this was a normal process or we had time, but
17 this is an unprecedent humanitarian crisis that we
18 are dealing with.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I get that, but I'm
20 not quite understanding why we won't use unionized
21 labor. Are you telling me there's issues...

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I will circle
23 back with you about Garner and SLS.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. I want to go
25 into understanding just some of the budgetary

2 questions that I think many of my Colleagues and I
3 have. How much total funding is anticipated to
4 support the newly arrived asylum seekers?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're still
6 scoping that out and happy to get back to you with
7 some of the numbers.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you have just a
9 ballpark number?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I think there
11 are some things that have already been doing through
12 MOIA that you could speak to, right, with some of the
13 legal services, Navigation Center?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: To operate the
15 Navigation Center, we've invested 6.75 million. We've
16 also issued an RFP for 5 million to expand legal
17 services. That's more than any other city has done so
18 I'm very proud of what we've been able to do and more
19 is coming. We're going to continue to invest in
20 services, and I think our OMB office will share a
21 more detailed explanation of how much this will cost
22 and we look forward to the federal and state
23 governments to support in this process.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. Any of the
25 other agencies expenditure already or anticipated?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I really don't
3 have total figures given how rapidly we are
4 expanding. I mentioned we have opened 39 emergency
5 sites since June. Those are largely in commercial
6 hotels. Commercial hotels are an expensive place to
7 provide shelter simply because we are paying nightly
8 hotel rates as well as paying for security, for food,
9 for social services so this has been a very
10 significant increase. It will result in what I would
11 anticipate to be a very significant increase in the
12 DHS budget in order to meet our legal and law mandate
13 to provide shelter.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: You're unable to share
15 any kind of specific numbers right now?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: It has been a
17 very rapidly moving target given how quickly we have
18 been adding sites so no, I don't have a cumulative
19 target at this point, but we are working with the
20 Office of Management and Budget, recognizing that
21 this is a very significant hit to the DHS budget.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can we receive just
23 how much has been spent by agency up to date
24 following this hearing?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could I get a yes or a
3 no from the other reps here?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Yes.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAMOS: Yes.

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOOD: Yes.

7 DR. LONG: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I know
10 you're still scoping, but will this funding be
11 included in the November plan? Are there discussions
12 for the upcoming...

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: Discussions
14 are ongoing.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Can you list all
16 relevant state funding that the City has received up
17 to date?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I cannot, but
19 what I can tell you is that we've had very active
20 conversations with our federal partners and our state
21 partners. They have expressed a willingness to help,
22 especially with finances, and we are going to hold
23 them at their word.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: For NYCEM, zero at
25 this...

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'd have to
3 get you a number. I don't know.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Any of the other
5 agencies?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: So far, as far as I
7 know, the City has covered all expenses related to
8 this humanitarian crisis. We're still awaiting word
9 from the federal and state governments.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Families with
11 children shelter is traditionally claimed a portion
12 of that comes from the State, but the extent to which
13 we are going to be able to claim is going to depend
14 on individuals' immigration status so that is
15 something that we're going to have to work through at
16 a very detailed level with our State partners.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: What I've been
18 told is we have gotten bus resources at the Port
19 Authority, MTA buses, to help transit people to
20 shelter system but that is it so far from the State.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How much is that?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I don't know
23 what the MTA costs are, but it's generally two buses
24 a day. There are times where they give us more buses
25 based on the number of buses we're receiving from El

2 Paso or from Texas and based on also the time so
3 there have been some times where we've gotten buses
4 overnight where the MTA has had to step up and
5 provide two additional buses.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Can the agency
7 speak to any State funding that is pending?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I'm sorry. We
9 also have a commitment for the National Guard as well
10 that the State will be providing at least for the
11 first 30 days.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you know the dollar
13 amount for that?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I don't, but I
15 can get that for you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. Thank you. For
17 any State funding that's pending, I know National
18 Guard, are there any agencies anticipating funding
19 coming in?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We hope.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, this is just to
22 better understand how coordination has occurred, is
23 occurring, and then because when I've talked about
24 this and when I've heard Commissioners talk about
25 this issue, we've talked about this coordinated

2 effort and so just trying to understand if any
3 monetary support has been provided thus far.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I think we can
5 for all the agencies that there's really active
6 conversations going on with our State partners.
7 Exactly what form that looks like is still to be
8 determined.

9 DR. LONG: I'll list three concrete ways
10 that the State has helped us so far and we have had
11 very productive and supportive conversations by the
12 State, but the reason I think you're hearing a little
13 bit of silence on the humanitarian center side is it
14 hasn't opened yet so as we continue conversation as
15 it actually opens then I think we'll be in a better
16 position to answer your question.

17 Three concrete examples though are the
18 buses that Commissioner Iscol is referring to, the
19 National Guard, and even trailers on our sites that
20 have a monetary value as well so the State's done a
21 lot to support us so far but, as the center actually
22 opens, that's where we're going to be able to better
23 analyze the costs and better answer your question.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I would also
25 add we're not in a State budget season right now so I

2 think a lot of that will play out later in the year
3 as the State is doing its next budget. It's just the
4 wrong point in the season to be able to put specific
5 numbers on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Can you talk
7 about any relevant federal funding across other
8 agencies?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: The federal
10 government has the Emergency Food and Shelter Program
11 that is run by FEMA. There hopefully will be a
12 supplemental to provide additional funding for that.
13 I believe Congressman Espaillat has been working on
14 that, but that is the primary mechanism for fundings
15 these types of operations.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just to clarify, have
17 we received that?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I believe we
19 have received some funds in August. It's distributed
20 quarterly, and it's based on reimbursements. It's not
21 based on forward expenses or projections. I can get
22 you the exact number of what we have received to
23 date, and I think the next disbursement is at the end
24 of October.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. Great. That
3 would be helpful to have. Any of the other agencies
4 anticipating federal dollars or have you rejected
5 federal dollars?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can safely
7 tell you we have not rejected any federal dollars.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: I was just
9 going to add that the FEMA funds referenced were a
10 multi-agency request so it reflected the spending
11 from all of the agencies that had incurred cost but
12 through June 30th because it is done on this
13 quarterly basis so that was relatively early on in
14 the emergence of the emergency so the numbers to date
15 are going to be relatively small.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay. What's the cost
17 associated with the current Navigation Center?

18 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: As I said, 6.75
19 million to operate. That's through a contract with
20 Catholic Charities. (INAUDIBLE) we will be granting
21 to other non-profits across New York City to serve as
22 satellite Navigation Centers, and we've entered into
23 an agreement with the Red Cross to lease the space
24 through 16 months.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So 6.7 million to
3 Catholic Charities. How are they utilizing that?

4 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: They're operating
5 the Navigation Center by coordinating staffing and
6 intake at the Navigation Center and convening many of
7 our city agencies to be on site to provide support as
8 well. They're going to be re-granting to a number of
9 different non-profits which they will announce soon.
10 That was included in their contract with us that they
11 would do so that we are also expanding out to the
12 five boroughs to make sure that people connect to the
13 Navigation Center.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Is there a timeline
15 for them to use the 6.7 million dollars by?

16 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Through this Fiscal
17 Year.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Through this Fiscal
19 Year. Okay. What's the anticipated costs for future
20 HERRCs?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: It depends on
22 the location and the requirement so those are all
23 things that we have to spec out and it's part of the
24 assessment we have to make based on the locations

2 that we're looking at or the resource that we're
3 looking at.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What's it costing to
5 build out the one on Orchard Beach?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I can get you
7 the exact number.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Different sources
9 estimated that it typically costs 135 dollars per day
10 to house a single adult in a shelter, 190 dollars per
11 day to house a family. What's the estimated cost per
12 migrant in terms of staying at the centers and using
13 services?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: I don't think
15 it's apples to apples, and you have to remember that
16 we're also seeing more numbers of people throughout
17 that month and hopefully part of this process is that
18 you are helping relocate people with families,
19 friends, sponsors, or getting them to further
20 destinations, and so it's apples to oranges, not
21 apples to apples, but as we start to understand the
22 cost better, and part of the reason for that is
23 there's a lot we don't know so next week when we open
24 we're going to start scaling our operations, we will
25 figure out that there are some things that we need to

2 continue operating there, there are some things that
3 are no longer needed there, there are some things
4 that are needed but may be better served at the
5 Navigation Center or elsewhere and so as we continue
6 to build and learn we'll have a better sense of what
7 those per person costs are over the first 24 hours or
8 96 hours and potentially also what some of the
9 savings might be because we're helping people get to
10 another destination.

11 DR. LONG: Just to add on there, I think
12 one of the things that's different in terms of the
13 unique needs of individuals and families coming into
14 our city to seek asylum is they have different
15 healthcare needs. Healthcare is a human right, and
16 that is true. We make sure that they feel that is
17 true at all of our sites so as we are thinking about
18 their healthcare needs, we are going to be tailoring
19 the services in a way that makes sense for the issues
20 that they're presenting it so that makes it a little
21 bit hard to compare to your statistic because we're
22 going to be tailoring our healthcare needs, which we
23 are doing now so we'll know more as we move forward.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. I'll go into
3 some questions about health. Are asylum seekers being
4 screened for COVID-19 and monkeypox upon arrival?

5 DR. LONG: Just to back up for a second,
6 this is one of the reasons why we're excited to raise
7 our hand in New York City Health and Hospitals to
8 help the people coming into our city seeking asylum
9 is we know that there are going to be a lot of
10 healthcare issues and we feel very proud and
11 confident to be able to help them. When you come
12 through into the center initially, we screen you for
13 communicable diseases. That includes things like
14 COVID, I also would say at New York City Health and
15 Hospitals we've run New York City Test and Trace, now
16 Treat Corps, for the last two and a half years, we've
17 done millions of tests in thousands of locations, and
18 we have unique models for instantly getting you
19 access to Paxlovid if you have a positive COVID test
20 and you're positive. All of that will be true there.
21 Everybody is going to get a COVID test when they walk
22 into the center for the first time. Anybody that is
23 positive will go into an appropriate isolation part
24 of the facility and anybody that's positive that's
25 eligible will get Paxlovid 100 percent of the time.

2 Now, other communicable districts, for
3 example, that we screen for are tuberculosis.
4 Communicable diseases like MPV or monkeypox along
5 with other ones, we elicit through asking you what
6 your symptoms are so there's no test for somebody
7 that doesn't have a rash for MPV for example so it's
8 a little bit of a different process there, but we
9 have a communicable disease medical screening process
10 that everybody will go through including, again,
11 COVID testing everybody.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Where are they
13 receiving those vaccines?

14 DR. LONG: I'm sorry. The vaccines for?

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: For, if they are for
16 COVID or any of the other sort of screenings that
17 you're conducting.

18 DR. LONG: If somebody is screened and
19 tests positive for COVID, they'll get treated for
20 COVID instantly if they're eligible. We'll have
21 clinicians on site, actually we'll have clinical
22 teams on site 24/7 around the clock because of the
23 people in the isolation part of the centers. We want
24 to make sure everybody's safe at all times. Anybody
25 that, again, is positive for COVID and is eligible

2 for treatment will get Paxlovid. Anybody that wishes
3 to have a COVID vaccine, we currently offer an array
4 of vaccines at our Navigation Center, and we're going
5 to assess in this adult-only population what the need
6 for vaccines are. One of the main reasons we've seen
7 individuals and families needing vaccines coming into
8 New York City is actually MMR. We take for granted
9 hopefully everybody in this room has had an MMR
10 vaccine. If you haven't, let me know. We'll get it
11 for you today because everybody should have the MMR
12 vaccine, but people coming from Venezuela, we've
13 actually been giving out a fair amount of MMR but
14 that's a requirement in order to get into our DOE
15 schools so we see the need for that among children
16 especially, but, of course, we will not have children
17 at our first center so we want to make sure that
18 we're tailoring the vaccines that we would have there
19 to the needs of the population.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOOD: Chair, if I
21 could just add to build on what Dr. Long said about
22 what's going on at the Navigation Center, there are
23 certainly an array of medical services and vaccines
24 being provided there, but what we are doing is
25 connecting all individuals, adults and children, to

2 primary care appointments. A lot of these vaccines
3 including some that Dr. Long started mentioned are
4 multi-dose vaccines and so the goal is for people to
5 be connected into healthcare services and primary
6 care on an ongoing basis so that they can receive
7 whether it's COVID, influenza, MMR, or other vaccines
8 with a healthcare provider who's going to be their
9 healthcare provider in the future.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great. The Navigation
11 Center has sort of clinical setup for care and then
12 the HERRC will also similarly have a clinic set up?

13 DR. LONG: Correct. I can go into a little
14 more detail for you. Right now, we have clinical
15 teams at Port Authority, but those clinical teams are
16 doing medical triage. They're determining if you need
17 to go to the emergency department or not, but we've
18 seen several emergencies and we're very thankful that
19 we've had teams there that can immediately get people
20 where they need to be. We're also doing COVID testing
21 at Port Authority.

22 At our Navigation Center, we're doing
23 comprehensive assessments for children and families.
24 We're doing three days of a variety of medications
25 ranging from if you have an infection in your feet,

2 which we're seeing too often because of the travel
3 over, we'll start you on antibiotics right there, or
4 if you are out of your hypertension or diabetes
5 medications, we can actually hand you several days as
6 we connect you with a next-day primary care
7 appointment of whatever medications you're on. We're
8 seeing the need for that as well. We're also offering
9 comprehensive vaccines ranging from COVID to flu to
10 MMR to tetanus, you name it, at the Navigation Center
11 today, and we're seeing which ones, like I said
12 earlier, we're seeing a lot of need for MMR among
13 children so we're doing that so that we can get the
14 children coming into our city into our DOE schools as
15 fast as possible.

16 At our Humanitarian Center, there's a
17 medical screening process that happens when you come
18 in that determines who needs to go into isolation and
19 who doesn't and who needs to get treated immediately
20 for COVID then we do a comprehensive assessment and
21 we going to have the same ability to do three days of
22 a variety of medications including antibiotics,
23 including chronic disease medications, and a variety
24 of other services.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Is COVID testing
3 happening at Port Authority?

4 DR. LONG: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you share how
6 it's happening? I've been there a couple times, but I
7 saw the medical triage team and I spoke to some of
8 those folks and they described exactly what you
9 shared, but how's the COVID testing happening?

10 DR. LONG: For people that are coming in
11 with symptoms. We're seeing about one out of five
12 people coming into Port Authority has a cough or
13 related symptoms so we are performing rapid antigen
14 tests at Port Authority so that we can know
15 immediately if individuals have COVID then we can
16 take the appropriate action, which now would include
17 through your New York City Test and Treat Corps
18 connecting you instantly to treatment in a variety of
19 ways.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: If I can chime
21 in, for those who come to DHS shelter system and this
22 is true for asylum seekers and/or anybody else, for
23 those coming into the single adult system we're doing
24 rapid PCR testing. That is across the board whether
25 or not you are symptomatic.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. I want to know
3 if for folks who are receiving any sort of care and
4 then continued care for anybody coming in with an
5 autoimmune disease, issues that require specialized
6 attention, are we making sure that these folks have
7 health insurance under the NYC Care? Walk me through
8 that process.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOOD: Thanks so much
10 for that question, Chair. It's a very important one,
11 and we're working really closely with Health and
12 Hospitals certainly but also a lot of other partners
13 in the city including Metro Plus and our own health
14 insurance enrollers at the Health Department who are
15 stationed at the Navigation Center doing health
16 insurance enrollment. Certainly not everyone
17 qualifies for health insurance, but what we do know
18 is that we're lucky to live not just in New York City
19 but in New York State where health insurance
20 eligibility does include individuals who are largely
21 in this population what's called Permanently Residing
22 Under the Color of Law or PRUCOL, and the fact that
23 many of these asylum seekers have been paroled into
24 the country makes them eligible for health insurance
25 so we are doing everything we can to enroll them into

2 health insurance. Sometimes it takes a few weeks for
3 that eligibility to go into effect and for the health
4 insurance to sort of become permanent, but, in the
5 meantime, we're doing the direct connections to care
6 and, as Dr. Long mentioned, a lot of times that's
7 next day primary care appointments. For the
8 individuals who are not eligible for health
9 insurance, certainly they are being enrolled into NYC
10 Care and getting a provider at Health and Hospitals.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really great.
12 We've talked in recent days about the young mother,
13 the woman who died to suicide. What proactive
14 resources are being provided to asylum seekers from
15 the point of arrival to the shelter system, to the
16 HERRC around their mental health protections, rights,
17 services available?

18 DR. LONG: I'd love to start with that
19 because as we've been working hard to design the new
20 Humanitarian Center, the devastating event that
21 you're referring to has been on the front of all of
22 our minds, and mental health needs to be a
23 cornerstone of everything that we do. People have
24 gone through many times hell to get here, but now
25 that they're here we want to make sure we take the

2 best care of them. I'm going to restate a couple of
3 the things I shared earlier but then happy to go into
4 more detail as well.

5 When you come into our center, we want to
6 make sure that the staff that are immediately seeing
7 you have mental health training. That's done best
8 with something called mental health first aid. That
9 enables our staff to identify again not just who's in
10 crisis but who could have mental health issues and
11 have brief interventions. We also want to make sure
12 that our staff are trained in trauma-informed care in
13 a special training as well from our Survivors of
14 Torture Clinic so that we can make sure that whatever
15 people are going through we can identify it quickly
16 and get them connected to, based on whatever their
17 condition is, wherever they need to go which could be
18 one of our Survivors of Torture Clinics, again at
19 Bellevue Hospital and at Elmhurst Hospital. The other
20 thing which we wanted to make sure was available at
21 the new center for everybody coming through the doors
22 as well is if we've identified that you're depressed
23 or you have anxiety, if you have a phone, we are
24 going to give you a brochure about how to use our
25 free wi-fi service to connect to NYC Well, and Rishi

2 can share more about that in a moment. We also
3 provide phones and iPads if that's a better way for
4 you to connect with NYC Well which is a unique New
5 York City program to give you instant access to be
6 able to talk to a mental health professional that can
7 help you to work through however you're feeling in
8 that very moment. You don't have to wait for an
9 appointment. In addition to that, as Rishi was saying
10 earlier too, if we're identifying problems, mental
11 health and other, we've built pathways within our
12 system to give you expedited access to care as well.
13 We've reserved templates for people to come into our
14 clinics so that we can connect them to primary care
15 first and that's your doorway to getting connected to
16 everything else that you would need. I think it's
17 just important to state that with the trainings that
18 I was referencing, if we're not doing the trainings
19 we're not going to identify the problems and we're
20 not going to be able to help and that's why it's so
21 important to us.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are you able to share
23 how many folks are receiving either therapy or mental
24 health care through NYC Well or counseling?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOOD: I don't have
3 numbers on that right now, Chair, but we can
4 certainly follow up on that. I do want to just
5 highlight that this is a very, very significant issue
6 in terms of the number of people, unsurprisingly
7 given the journey and the trauma that they have gone
8 through, and so that's why we are providing
9 psychological first aid and emotional support at the
10 Navigation Center itself, not just actually to the
11 asylum seekers but also to the staff working there.
12 The staff working at the Navigation Center, the city
13 staff, the other staff are doing really, really hard
14 work, and they also need psychological first aid and
15 mental health support so I agree with everything Dr.
16 Long highlighted and I just want to reiterate that
17 all of us at the Health Department are deeply
18 saddened by the loss and thank you for bringing that
19 up because to us it's a reminder of the obligation
20 that we have, not just at the Health Department but
21 across the city, to do everything we can in our power
22 to protect not just the physical health but also the
23 mental health of all of the asylum seekers.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Sure. I can
25 speak to the process at DHS. Families with children,

2 at the PATH Intake Center, there is a healthcare
3 provider there who's doing an initial assessment
4 within the families with children system. There are
5 case workers and social workers at all of our
6 standard shelters. For single adults, they come in.
7 At intake, there's some initial medical triage but
8 then individuals go through a three-week assessment
9 process that includes comprehensive medical
10 screenings including both physical and behavioral
11 health needs and for individuals in the single adult
12 system who present with particular mental health
13 needs they may be referred to a mental health shelter
14 across the board. Whether we are talking about single
15 adults or families with children, there's a real
16 emphasis with our shelter providers on making sure
17 that they are doing referrals to care in the
18 community. We want people to be connected to medical
19 professionals that they can work with over a long
20 period of time and for everybody in shelter the goal
21 is permanent housing so we don't want the medical
22 care necessarily to be shelter-based because we want
23 people to be able to maintain continuity of care when
24 they exit. I will say with the 39 emergency sites
25 that I've referenced a couple of times, we have stood

2 those up very quickly. We are rolling on staffing so
3 there is basic staffing there, and we will be getting
4 to the level of staffing that (INAUDIBLE) but that is
5 a work in progress.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'll pass
7 it to Council Member De La Rosa.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you so
9 much, Chair. I actually do have a question about the
10 hotels that have been turned into emergency shelters.
11 At what point do the operators that have been chosen
12 by the City come in to those shelters?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: We are working
14 with the not-for-profits that have been selected as
15 providers to take over operations as quickly as
16 possible. We think they are the best equipped to do
17 it, but we also want to make sure that they have
18 sufficient staff to be able to do it so it depends a
19 little bit on the organization. Some of the not-for-
20 profits are very large organizations with really
21 robust staffing operations (INAUDIBLE) the ability to
22 redeploy from elsewhere in their organization,
23 they're taking over very quickly. Some of the smaller
24 organizations, they need a little bit more ramp up
25 time. What we are doing in the interim is staffing

2 with a combination of DHS and HRA staff working
3 overtime, really doing everything we can and some
4 temp staff as well. We are moving very quickly as
5 I've said a number of times, but the goal is to have
6 the providers take over. The sites that we opened
7 early on, the providers have been taking over, and
8 we've been rolling the temp staff and the redeployed
9 agency folks to the new facilities.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: At what point,
11 if the operator is unable to fulfil the commitments
12 of a contract or is just overwhelmed with how many
13 shelters are popping up across the city, at what
14 point are the agencies, the administration,
15 reconsidering the contracts?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: We haven't
17 gotten to that point yet. What we are doing, as I
18 said, is really bridging with the agency and the temp
19 staff until they can get there. If we got to a point
20 where a not-for-profit raised their hand and said I
21 can't do it or we say it's been going on too long,
22 you're not going to be able to do it, then we would
23 look to assign the contract to somebody else.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Right now, is
25 there an acceptable time period where DHS or any

2 other agency is willing to step in for that operator
3 until they can get staffing squared away?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: We really
5 haven't put a hard and fast line on it because,
6 again, we're working with providers that are massive,
7 thousands of people, organizations and some that are
8 very small, and we want to have that full range of
9 providers there. It is such a tremendous need that we
10 are really looking for all of our providers to step
11 up, and we have gotten a tremendous response. We
12 really are so grateful to our provider community.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Yes, I agree
14 with you that our non-profit providers have been
15 stepping up. Because of that, my next question is is
16 there a plan to reimburse some of the non-profits
17 that haven't been chosen to operate or have contracts
18 with the City that have been putting forth staff to
19 feed people, to transport people, to offer
20 interpretation services, and have just been stepping
21 up because they understand the unique needs of this
22 community?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Our ability to
24 make payments depends on contracts, but, if there are
25 particular organizations, happy to dig in with you.

2 We certainly don't want to leave anybody carrying the
3 water for the City.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you. My
5 last question is around the Department of Education
6 and funding for the new matriculated students who
7 have been entering our districts. I know that there
8 is a policy that after a certain date in October, I
9 can't remember if the date is 15th or 30th...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 31.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: 31. There you
12 go, Gale. 31, schools are no longer reimbursed. With
13 the uptick in newly arrived students, is that policy
14 being reconsidered and, if not, how are we paying
15 schools to provide adequate services, meals,
16 wraparound services to these new students.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAMOS: Thank you for
18 your question, Council Member De La Rosa. I will go
19 back and have an extensive conversation with our
20 Budget team, but you are correct. It is October 31st,
21 and so as students trickle into our schools, trickle
22 is an understatement at this point, the schools are
23 being funded for the increase in enrollment. We also
24 have an escalation system in process so that way
25 schools that have 15 or more students in a given

2 grade or they have an additional need for an English
3 as a new language teacher or a bilingual teach, we're
4 escalating those concerns. To your point about
5 October 31st quickly approaching, we will have
6 conversations with the Budget team around what are
7 our possibilities, and I also know that we are
8 starting our conversations with the State in terms of
9 additional funding, but we will get back to you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Yeah, if you
11 could get back to the Council on that and then also
12 around if a child is then moved, if they move from
13 one shelter to another type of shelter and that
14 switch happens after this deadline, what occurs?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAMOS: That's an
16 excellent question. To be clear, because of McKinney-
17 Vento, they have the right to stay in their school
18 should they choose. If a transfer occurs, then I can
19 get back to you on exactly what happens with funding.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. The
21 latest Mayor's Management Report shows that in Fiscal
22 Year '22 placements from shelter into permanent
23 housing are down and average length of stay in
24 shelters is up relative to Fiscal Year '21. This
25 dynamic is exacerbating the bed shortage. We need

2 more people into permanent housing. I also want to
3 note that the average shelter cost for a family with
4 children is 180 dollars per day. A CityFHEPS rental
5 assistance voucher for that same family costs 72
6 dollars per day so this is an economic imperative as
7 well as a moral one. Will the administration lift or
8 revise the 90-day rule that requires people to stay
9 in a shelter for 90 days before becoming eligible for
10 CityFHEPS?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: It's something
12 that we are having active conversations with a
13 variety of partners about. There are some real
14 reasons why that is in place, but we understand the
15 concern and it is something that we're looking at. A
16 couple of notes on the statistics that you mentioned.
17 For FY-22, the population in shelter, the shelter
18 census was down, certainly not where we are right
19 now, but at the end of the Fiscal Year we actually
20 were at a relatively low census so part of the reason
21 that the number of placements was done is because the
22 number of people to place was down. I am the biggest
23 cheerleader you will find for permanent housing.
24 Permanent housing is a huge priority for the agency,
25 but I think there are some complicated ways for

2 interpreting that data that I just wanted to put out.
3 Similar on the length of stay, but I know that's not
4 the topic of this hearing but happy to follow up.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Sure. Thank you. I'm
6 grateful to know that this is being reconsidered or
7 that active conversations are being had about this
8 sort of prohibitive 90-day rule while I understand
9 the challenges as well.

10 Are asylum seekers and other non-citizens
11 eligible for CityFHEPS?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Generally, no.
13 However, there's a lot of nuance to that answer. It
14 really depends on where you are in the asylum process
15 and a lot of very specific nuances around a given
16 family's status so we are working right now to make
17 guidance that is as transparent as possible for the
18 shelter staff to inform when a household might be
19 eligible but also recognizing that this is something
20 that we are going to need to collaborate with others
21 to be able to provide legal assistance given how
22 often the answer is frankly it depends. In general,
23 it is not legal for the City to spend ongoing funds
24 on those who are undocumented. Again, asylum, that's
25 where you get to the it depends answer, but it would

2 require State legislation for us to be able to
3 provide CityFHEPS to those who are undocumented.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I know that non-
5 citizens are eligible for a number of city benefits
6 and then State law authorizing CityFHEPS doesn't
7 include any immigration restrictions?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: The caveat that
9 I am not an immigration attorney here, but we are not
10 legally allowed to provide CityFHEPS to those who are
11 undocumented. Again, there are some exceptions around
12 particular asylee statuses, which is why there
13 actually really does need to be a lot of case-by-case
14 analysis done, but in most cases in order to be able
15 to pay ongoing rental assistance, even using city tax
16 levy dollars, it requires State legislation.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Can the administration
18 commit to endorsing the legislation that would make
19 this change at the State level?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: It's been on
21 our legislative agenda for several years.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great, so I'll take
23 that as a yes.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PARK: Absolutely.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I want to
3 now go into understanding how legal services are
4 being addressed. Commissioner Castro, could you
5 describe the scope of legal services envisioned in
6 the Request for Proposals and are legal service
7 providers being asked to scale back or limit the
8 scope of their services at this time?

9 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: In the 5 million
10 Request for Proposals that I mentioned earlier, we
11 asked for those agencies proposing to work with us on
12 figuring out how to provide the most assistance to as
13 many asylum seekers as possible. As you know, over
14 15,000 asylum seekers have arrived, and they'll
15 require some level of legal assistance or orientation
16 as mentioned. In fact, this is a good segue because
17 asylum seekers currently are seeking asylum. They're
18 not currently asylees. They'll have to engage in that
19 process which can be quite a difficult process, and
20 so we're looking for legal providers to be able to do
21 that, both at the Navigation Center and elsewhere and
22 so the RFP is looking for those kinds of proposals.
23 We just began the process. Human Resources
24 Administration is pulling together a team to evaluate
25

2 the applications that were received to then select a
3 provider for that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I've heard that at
5 20,000, when we reach that amount which we're very
6 close to doing so, this comes to only 250 dollars per
7 migrant if we keep to the 5 million and that the
8 minimum needed for adequate representation is
9 probably four times this amount, and I've talked to
10 several providers who have shared just how arduous
11 the process of the asylum application is and needing
12 sort of long-term legal support system to get that
13 done. How is the 5 million determined?

14 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: The reality is that
15 it's going to take perhaps hundreds of millions of
16 dollars to be able to provide full legal
17 representation to all the asylum seekers that have
18 arrived and will continue to arrive and immigrant
19 communities who are already in New York. As I
20 mentioned earlier, the problem is that the federal
21 government does not provide legal representation for
22 immigrants arriving into the country, leaving that up
23 to the individuals to figure out legal
24 representation. In localities like New York City,
25 we've invested historic numbers, and we're at a

2 historic amount of money invested in legal services
3 in the city. We're looking for the State to also
4 supplement this and our federal partners to work with
5 us to figure out a solution to this issue because
6 people will need support and, as you mentioned, it's
7 an incredibly arduous process. We want people to get
8 at the very least access to their work permits and
9 for that they'll need assistance.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So far, how many bids
11 were submitted?

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'll have to get back
13 to you on that. HRA is administering this contract,
14 and they're managing the entire process including the
15 administration of the bids and selection of that.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you know about any
17 protest letters or no bid responses that were
18 submitted, or is that also something that you'll have
19 to have HRA...

20 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: That's being managed
21 by HRA. In fact, I'm not even on the selection
22 committee.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Interesting. Okay.
24 That's quite interesting. The work described in the
25 Request for Proposals requires collaboration across

2 multiple providers. Will MOIA consider amending the
3 Request for Proposals to allow for multiple providers
4 to collaborate to meet the requirements of the
5 Request for Proposals?

6 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I'll have to get
7 back to you on that, but my understanding is that the
8 way that this was crafted by HRA and (INAUDIBLE) it
9 allows people to submit applications, proposals with
10 multiple agencies. As we did with the Request for
11 Proposals on the Navigation Center, we're looking to
12 work with one provider who can work with then many
13 folks who they then re-grant to.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What is the long-term
15 plan for providing representation to these
16 individuals?

17 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Again, because we're
18 dealing with an unprecedented moment, a humanitarian
19 challenge, and the numbers continue to grow, we'll
20 continue to look and adjust. The reality is that
21 about a month and a half ago, two months ago we were
22 talking about one or two buses every other day and
23 now we're talking about upwards of nine buses per day
24 so we'll continue to look at the resources available
25 and what we can do for people.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. Have you
3 contacted the bar associations, law schools, large
4 private law firms for additional support?

5 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: Yes, in fact, we're
6 looking at every possible way to provide support to
7 asylum seekers. I've personally met with a number of
8 legal service providers that work with volunteers
9 including the bar, including a group called VOLS,
10 Volunteers of Legal Services, who've used very
11 innovative ways to scale up their services. Reality
12 though is that we're talking about thousands of
13 people and possibly tens of thousands of people by
14 the end of the year, and it's a challenge. We're
15 committed to working through this with our non-profit
16 partners.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Can you
18 confirm that the administration won't be pulling from
19 other funding streams like Adult Literacy or any
20 other initiatives to fund these emergency
21 procurements?

22 COMMISSIONER CASTRO: I don't believe that
23 that's what we're doing. I'll have to get back to
24 you. I'll have to speak with OMB about this, but as
25

2 far as my discussions we are not considering any of
3 that.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, that would be
5 quite devastating to some of the other initiatives
6 that we are fully funding or trying to baseline fund.
7 I'm just going to do a final run-through of any other
8 questions I should ask as I have you here, but I know
9 there are many, many folks from the public who are
10 also here to testify, but I just want to share this
11 was extremely informative. Thank you for your work,
12 your continued work, and for being here to respond to
13 the many questions that we wanted to know more about
14 and have a little bit of a clearer understanding
15 exactly how the administration is building out
16 infrastructure.

17 One final run-through before I open up.
18 Council Member Brewer, do you have any final
19 questions?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Maybe you asked
21 this because I was downstairs. Cruise ships, are we
22 doing cruise ships? Did that get asked? Something
23 about Staten Island and a cruise ship.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ISCOL: We're looking
25 into it.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you for the
4 commitments you've made to some of the followup
5 questions I had and some of the numbers that I've
6 asked for. We'll be following up as soon as possible
7 for all of that.

8 With that, thank you all so much. Looking
9 forward to staying engaged and in partnership.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: We will be
11 calling a panel of public witnesses next, but please
12 give us a few moments as we shift over.

13 Thank you, everyone, for your patience. I
14 will now be calling our first panel for public
15 testimony. We'll start with New York State Senator
16 Alessandra Biaggi followed by Jessica Franco Ramos
17 and then Frankie Miranda. Senator Biaggi, you can go
18 ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

19 SENATOR BIAGGI: Thanks very much. Can you
20 hear me all right?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Yes, we can
22 hear you.

23 SENATOR BIAGGI: Okay. I wasn't sure about
24 that. Thank you so much. Let me know when it's my
25 time to begin.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

3 SENATOR BIAGGI: Thank you very much. Good
4 afternoon, Chairwoman and Members of the Committee on
5 Immigration. I want to just say thank you very much
6 for giving me the opportunity to testify today and
7 also for holding honestly such a thoughtful hearing.
8 I think those questions that you all asked in the
9 previous session were incredible, and I learned a lot
10 and I hope that for those who are at home and for
11 those who are watching and members of the press that
12 they also learned a lot.

13 For those who don't know, my name is
14 Alessandra Biaggi, and I have the honor of serving as
15 the State Senator for the 34th State Senate District,
16 which includes Orchard Beach, and I'm testifying
17 today to express my deep concern for the migrants who
18 will be sent to the planned Humanitarian Emergency
19 Response and Relief Center in Orchard Beach's parking
20 lot. It really is my sincere hope that Mayor Eric
21 Adams and his administration will be thoughtful and
22 change course and also pursue alternative temporary
23 shelter options, many of which we've heard today as
24 suggestions. My office and I have been in close
25 contact with organizers on the ground, with mutual

2 aid groups on the ground since August helping
3 migrants acclimate once they arrive in New York City.
4 Many mutual aid organizations and migrants have
5 expressed alarm regarding the lack of resources
6 available upon their arrival to Port Authority.
7 Yesterday, as just one quick anecdote, I was able to
8 hear from one of the migrants who came to New York
9 City from Venezuela, and I think it was one of the
10 most gut-wrenching stories I've heard in a very long
11 time about his experience. Many asylum seekers are
12 arriving without knowledge of how to access resources
13 in this country and this city, including food,
14 clothing, phone service, and accessible
15 transportation. We did hear, yes, earlier about the
16 efforts to make these kinds of services available,
17 but it's not happening at 100 percent effective rate.
18 Our government is not providing the basic necessities
19 that they need to be able to start a life here in New
20 York or really to reach their final destination and
21 so we've got to do better. We have had heard
22 firsthand the dangerous experiences that migrants are
23 having in our city shelter system, which we
24 understand, of course, is overwhelmed, but the
25 proposed relief center at Orchard Beach feels like

2 and seems like after hearing a little more today an
3 insufficient and inappropriate solution. Mutual aid
4 groups and others have raised important concerns
5 about the planned facility including the lack of
6 running water and adequate bathroom facilities. We
7 did hear, of course, about having different showers
8 and different trailers set up, but, for the number of
9 people who will be there, we do not believe that this
10 is a sufficient amount. Also, insufficient
11 temperature control, unsafe closeness of beds..

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

13 SENATOR BIAGGI: Okay. Thank you. I will
14 have my testimony fully given to the Committee so you
15 can read it, but let me just end by saying that in
16 the midst of this humanitarian crisis, I really do
17 encourage the City to make systemic changes to an
18 overburdened shelter system because we have to do
19 better in New York City. That is our mandate as New
20 Yorkers. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you,
22 Senator Biaggi. Next, we are calling Jessica Franco
23 Ramos followed by Frankie Miranda and then Cassie
24 Keith. If you're in-person, you can come up to the
25

2 dais and have a seat when you hear your name called.
3 You just push the button on the mic.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Do you have any
5 (INAUDIBLE)

6 JESSICA FRANCO RAMOS: No, not at the
7 moment, but I'm happy to email it later.

8 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is
9 Jessica Franco Ramos. I'm Director of Community
10 Affairs and Special Events for State Senator Salazar.
11 She covers all of Senate District 18. Thank you for
12 inviting me to give my testimony at this hearing on
13 behalf of the asylum seekers and on behalf of New
14 York State Senator Julia Salazar.

15 I want to thank Councilwoman Hanif and
16 the entire City Council for its concerns about the
17 lives of our newest members of New York City. It was
18 not that long ago where in my own journey to this
19 country I traveled by foot across the U.S. border in
20 pursuit of freedom and a better way of life for
21 myself and my siblings and for my future family. In
22 my 2,550-mile walk, I was fueled by hope and the
23 knowledge that those on the other side of the border
24 would understand how much more we had in common in
25 our ambitions and dreams for a better future. My

2 journey, one filled with fear, pain, and ambition and
3 much determination, would not be in vain.

4 On September 22nd, a group of asylum
5 seekers were physically assaulted at a shelter site
6 in Brooklyn North over at 193 Cook Street, which is
7 in Senator Salazar's District, District 18. Fearing
8 for their lives, the four families that were
9 physically assaulted fled in the middle of the night.
10 Some went to a shelter in Queens and two families
11 walked over to the PATH Assessment Shelter in the
12 Bronx. I'm going to repeat. They walked. There was no
13 train, there was no bus. They're very new and so they
14 don't know how to do mass transportation. The Office
15 of State Senator Salazar and I personally have been
16 in contact with the families. Currently, they are in
17 stable condition and in semi-permanent housing. The
18 next steps are making sure that their children are
19 attending schools located in proximity to their new
20 communities and for the families to learn their
21 rights as asylum seekers and the protections they're
22 entitled to now that they're here in New York City.

23 These attacks are traumatizing and
24 unforgiveable, a sign of complete failure and
25 neglect. A full and independent investigation must

2 take place for this shelter over at 193 Cook Street
3 by the provider of Acacia. To leave this incident
4 without a full investigation and understanding of
5 what took place is to guarantee that it would happen
6 again. Many families have shared that they have faced
7 xenophobic discrimination based on their immigration
8 status, that they've been made fun and threatened
9 that ICE will be called if they complained, they've
10 been served moldy food, and many times have not been
11 provided equitable translation. As New Yorkers,
12 immigrants contribute unimaginable time and expense
13 to make the city great. For this reason, we expect
14 and deserve more from our government and the
15 institutions that represent them. This is a city
16 built by and for immigrants. It is interwoven...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

18 JESSICA FRANCO RAMOS: Culture and
19 tapestry of New York City. Thank you for your time.
20 Please do a full investigation. Thank you.

21 FRANCESCA PERRONE: Good afternoon. My
22 name is Francesca Perrone. I'm a Policy Analyst at
23 the Hispanic Federation, and I'm presenting this
24 testimony on behalf of our President and CEO, Frankie
25 Miranda.

2 Thank you, Chair Hanif and all other
3 Members of the Committee on Immigration, for allowing
4 me to present this testimony on behalf of the
5 Hispanic Federation, a non-profit organization that's
6 seeking to empower and advance the Hispanic
7 community. As the largest Latino umbrella
8 organization in the nation, the Federation
9 collaborates with a network of 500 non-profits in 41
10 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.
11 More than 174 of our members and partners are here in
12 New York City.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you speak
14 directly into the mic?

15 FRANCESCA PERRONE: Yes, sorry. I'm here
16 today to discuss how we can continue to support
17 asylum seekers and migrants in New York City. In
18 order to complete my testimony in the allotted time,
19 I'm going to shorten our submitted written testimony
20 and be as direct as possible. The individuals
21 arriving at our border are abiding by U.S. and
22 international laws and have every right to make their
23 claim for asylum. Many are escaping unimaginable
24 horrors, including civil strife, environmental
25 disasters, extreme poverty, and physical violence and

2 so much more. They deserve to be treated with
3 respect, dignity, and compassion when they arrive in
4 our country. Sadly, we have shameless politicians
5 such as Governor Abbott and Governor DeSantis that
6 choose to exploit the most vulnerable among us,
7 including children, pregnant mothers, and families
8 all fleeing persecution. They are trying to
9 fearmonger and trying to score cheap political
10 points. Here in New York, we stand ready to do what
11 we have always done, which is to bring communities
12 and institutions together to welcome and help those
13 most in need. This summer, the staff at the Hispanic
14 Federation has traveled to Port Authority on many
15 mornings to joint the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
16 Affairs to welcome those being bused from Texas. At
17 Port Authority, non-profit organizations and city
18 staff are the first people to welcome individuals and
19 offer resources such as personal hygiene products and
20 clothing. We've seen firsthand the importance of
21 culturally and linguistically relevant assistance.
22 This group has been able to connect these individuals
23 with essential resources including health insurance,
24 shelter, food, and legal services.

2 The City Council and Mayor's Office must
3 lead by expanding resources and partnership with
4 these trusted community-based organizations to
5 deliver culturally and linguistically competent care.
6 Migrants deserve the right to receive information in
7 their native language, and these community-based
8 organizations have proven their ability to
9 efficiently connect with high-need individuals and
10 provide services. We encourage city government to
11 minimize duplication of efforts by partnering with
12 the Hispanic Federation and our network to ensure
13 that incoming migrants continue to receive timely,
14 high-quality care. We hope city government can
15 provide additional investments for these
16 organizations to meet the influx of asylum seekers
17 and help them achieve the quality of life that they
18 have fought so hard to obtain.

19 Additionally, while New York City must
20 remain committed to providing services to those who
21 are seeking asylum, we must be mindful of the wants
22 and needs of our migrants. There are many asylum
23 seekers who wish to reside in other states and to be
24 reunited with family or loved ones.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to present
3 this testimony. We look forward to working you to
4 provide support for migrants, and we will continue to
5 advocate to ensure that their needs are being met
6 with dignity and respect.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Is there
8 anybody else on this panel?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
10 We'll now move to Cassie Keith who is joining us via
11 Zoom. Cassie, you can proceed when the Sergeant calls
12 time.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

14 CASSIE KEITH: My name is Cassie Keith.
15 Thank you for taking my testimony today about the
16 ongoing migrant crisis. As you know, there is
17 currently a tremendous drain on the shelter system,
18 but, despite the (INAUDIBLE) from City Hall, this
19 issue existed long before the arrival of migrants out
20 of state. People have been entering shelter for years
21 due to eviction process, clearly by uncontrolled rate
22 hikes, and many like me have been stuck in the
23 shelter for many years because they are undocumented.
24 Unfortunately, over the coming months, many who have
25 arrived recently will become undocumented, and when

2 that happens there is no pathway out of the shelter
3 system. The Mayor has requested the right to work
4 permits for migrants who are coming in. This is
5 (INAUDIBLE) when you search for a job with your
6 address as a shelter, many employers won't give you a
7 chance. I have lost many job opportunities because of
8 the prejudice people have towards the homeless. These
9 asylum seekers must stay away from criminal
10 (INAUDIBLE) This is difficult because we have fully
11 criminalized the homeless and being in a shelter
12 means being subjected to violence. People will attack
13 and, when they defend themselves, they will be
14 arrested and risk deportation. More security will not
15 solve this. I have never seen staff attack with them,
16 but they (INAUDIBLE) If you shout, they will make it
17 worse, even the people who attacked me in the shelter
18 system. The Mayor plans to open up (INAUDIBLE) to
19 deal with the influx, but those in the shelter know
20 they will not be temporary or (INAUDIBLE) new
21 arrival. In the shelter next to me, we have people,
22 men and women, sleeping on lawn chairs. This has been
23 true since long before the asylum seekers came in.
24 It's asylum seekers today, but anyone getting evicted
25 over the coming months now runs the risk of being

2 placed in one of these tents. There are two pathways
3 ahead of us. On the one hand, this challenge is to
4 live up to the promises we already made as a City. We
5 can use this opportunity to open the pathways for
6 folks who have been in the shelter a long time to get
7 a permanent (INAUDIBLE). On the other hand, this will
8 present an end of the right to shelter as we know it.
9 If you (INAUDIBLE) there is an aging and vulnerable
10 population of undocumented people living in the
11 shelter. They have no pathway to permanent housing.
12 We need people to understand that once people become
13 undocumented they are not eligible for programs that
14 can get them out like CityFHEPS. They will join me
15 and thousands like me who are getting older and
16 sicker and won't have the time to get out. I ask the
17 City Council to do everything in its power to open
18 CityFHEPS to undocumented New Yorkers and create the
19 desperately needed shelter capacity by moving people
20 out who would've been stuck in the shelter for years.
21 Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
23 Next, we will hear from Nilbia Coyote. Nilbia, you
24 can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

2 NILBIA COYOTE: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Nilbia Coyote. I'm the ED at New Immigrant Community
4 Empowerment, NICE, one of the largest CBOs in Jackson
5 Heights Queens. I will deliver this testimony on
6 behalf of (INAUDIBLE) asylum seekers that are not
7 members of NICE but who do not want to reveal their
8 identity or participate in this hearing out of fear.
9 NICE's mission is to organize new immigrants, day
10 laborers, and families in New York to be build their
11 collective power. To achieve this, we combine the
12 strength of workforce development training and
13 education on workers' rights, advocacy, and programs
14 tailored to immigrant workers. We have always
15 supported recently arrived immigrants and asylum
16 seekers, and we have become a safe haven for all.
17 However, in recent months there has been an
18 exponential growth in the demand for our services,
19 mostly our workforce development services. Why does
20 that matter for asylum seekers? Because the reality
21 is that the new companeros and companeras are in dire
22 need of a stable situation, dignified housing, food,
23 clothing for the winter, and to plan for the future.
24 To do that, they need a steady job and safe income.
25 Without (INAUDIBLE) work papers and information on

2 how to stay safe and protect themselves, our asylum

3 seekers are at great risk of workplace safety

4 violations, injury, and even death as thousands of

5 other undocumented New Yorkers are already. This is

6 why hundreds of asylum seekers are coming to our

7 centers and offices every week. Just last night, we

8 had over 350 new people coming to our orientation.

9 What is for sure is that asylum seekers are now

10 joining the ranks of the very vulnerable workforce of

11 new immigrants, day laborers, and undocumented

12 workers looking for trabajitos or small jobs in the

13 construction industry to make some money, and that's

14 how eventually at the paradas or corners and worker

15 centers like ours they found out about the OSHA card,

16 worker rights, and what they need to do to work in

17 (INAUDIBLE) market of the construction industry.

18 Currently, our OSHA and assisted trainings, skills

19 development trainings, and wage theft clinics are

20 filled out by asylum seekers and new immigrants. At

21 NICE, we're concentrating our efforts on workforce

22 development for asylum seekers because the long-term

23 economic integration is often an invisible barrier no

24 one is talking about. New immigrants are already

25 being exploited by wage theft and unscrupulous

2 employers who have used their desperation. We cannot
3 let that happen. In the coming year, NICE has the
4 ability to train new immigrants and asylum seekers
5 and give them the tools they need to thrive
6 regardless of their immigration status, but we can
7 only do this with the continued support of the City
8 and other governments. We, nevertheless, ask the City
9 Council Members and the administration to continue
10 the conversation on these other needs of asylum
11 seekers and thousands of immigrant workers in the
12 city. Along with legal services, food, housing,
13 dignified jobs, and worker rights are fundamental to
14 the integration and contribution of new immigrants to
15 our city. Lastly, we ask to continue fighting for the
16 thousands of immigrants who have been filing for
17 legal status and immigration reform for years in New
18 York City.

19 Thank you so much. We appreciate your
20 time.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I have a question for
22 Senator Biaggi if she's still on.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Senator
24 Biaggi, are you still available?

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: We can come back to
3 her. Go ahead.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
5 much for all the work you're doing and NICE is doing.
6 My question is, because I'm very concerned, as you
7 heard, I want working papers, I want the federal
8 government to do what they're supposed to do, etc.,
9 but in the interim how are you able to get people
10 jobs, is there something else the City could be doing
11 to be of assistance, the Municipal ID doesn't help,
12 does this working internship mean anything when
13 people don't have working papers? I know you're the
14 expert. Thank you.

15 NILBIA COYOTE: Thank you for the
16 question. We actually need a lot of support and
17 resources. One of the dire needs of these newcomers
18 are the lack of ID numbers. This is not a legal
19 practice, but this is a practice that a lot of
20 companies in the construction industry allow workers
21 to have so they can get jobs. Another situation is
22 that once asylum seekers are graduating for OSHA-
23 assisted training, we need the federal and the local
24 governments to accelerate the process to get those
25 cards. Otherwise, people are not allowed to work on

2 the construction sites, and the issuance of those
3 cards can take one to two months. That's a long time.
4 We have been noticing that people need to work. They
5 need to work right away. I would say ID numbers,
6 collaboration of federal government and local
7 government for these workers to have their OSHA
8 (INAUDIBLE) cards and obviously opportunities of jobs
9 in the construction industry will be much
10 appreciated, working with either employers,
11 subcontractors, and probably even unions to be able
12 to get jobs for more and more immigrant workers in
13 the city.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: While I have Nilbia
16 on, could you hare how many asylum seekers NICE has
17 been supporting and how much more funding is required
18 to meet the organizational need to continue
19 supporting asylum seekers?

20 NILBIA COYOTE: Thank you, Councilwoman
21 Hanif. I did mention this, but we have seen new waves
22 of new immigrants coming to our city for the last
23 three years. This is nothing new as probably my
24 companera Yesenia will share from La Colmena.
25 However, we have seen a lot of new (INAUDIBLE) in the

2 last month, but for the last two years we have been
3 referring over 500 individuals to the shelter system.
4 Additionally, right now, we have been probably
5 receiving over 150 individuals per day at our center.
6 Half of them are what we call new immigrants. As the
7 members of the administration were explaining, we
8 don't have accurate information to say that all of
9 them are asylum seekers because many people arrive
10 and they haven't started the process. That's why we
11 call them newly arrived immigrants because we don't
12 have that specific information. If you make a
13 calculation of over 100 people per day, it's like
14 almost more than 500 people per week. We hold monthly
15 orientations for new members of NICE, and we have
16 seen since July an increase of individuals. In July,
17 we had over 100 people in our orientation. In August,
18 we had almost 150 people, and last night we had 350
19 individuals arriving to our orientation. We had to
20 turn away 100 people and we had to provide two
21 orientations. Each one of them to 125. 90 percent of
22 these individuals are newly arrived immigrants to the
23 city. Just to give you another indicator, we are
24 holding OSHA classes this month of September. I was
25 in one of these classes last Wednesday, and we have a

2 maximum amount of 40 people per class. This is what
3 is legally accepted by OSHA, and 21 of these students
4 are newly arrived immigrants. They come from
5 Venezuela, from Cuba, from Columbia, from Ecuador,
6 and I would say 80 percent of them are in their track
7 of asylum process.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, Nilbia.
9 That's really, really helpful to know. For the folks
10 who you've had to turn away, where have they gone?

11 NILBIA COYOTE: They're going to have to
12 come back for another orientation from NICE. The
13 situation is that obviously all these people need to
14 work and, for us at least, we need to have a process
15 because we do have a demand for OSHA (INAUDIBLE)
16 classes so we ask them to come to these orientations.
17 What we are trying to do because we are working with
18 the City is to ramp up our trainings since we know
19 that the construction industry is one of the places
20 where people are going to be looking for work.
21 They're already, las paradass, the corners, that how
22 we know, and nobody's going to hire you without the
23 OSHA (INAUDIBLE) training so we ask them to come
24 back. If they cannot come back, we refer them to our
25 sister organizations such as La Colmena who is going

2 to be talking also today and other trustworthy places
3 where they can get their certifications, but it is
4 important to mention that OSHA (INAUDIBLE) cards are
5 one of the biggest frauds and abuses among the
6 immigrant community so obviously that makes this
7 population very vulnerable to scams and frauds
8 everywhere in the city.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Right, right. Thank
10 you so much. Appreciate that and appreciate your
11 continued work here.

12 To Senator Biaggi, thank you so much
13 first of all for testifying and being on today. As an
14 elected in the area, were you engaged in any
15 conversation about the selection of Orchard Beach as
16 a HERRC?

17 SENATOR BIAGGI: Unfortunately, I was not
18 and, had I been, I probably would have mentioned that
19 Orchard Beach is considered not just a low-lying
20 coastal area but it's in the middle of a hurricane
21 evacuation zone 1 which is the highest risk category
22 for flooding in all of New York City Emergency
23 Management's zones.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Now that we've caused
25 some noise around this and have repeatedly talked

2 about the flood-prone area, etc., what are the
3 conversations the administration is engaging in with
4 you and other local electeds at this time?

5 SENATOR BIAGGI: I will say that I think
6 this is an area where they are, at least in my
7 experience, trying to communicate as much and as
8 frequently as possible so I was able to communicate
9 and have a conversation with Commissioner Iscol
10 actually this morning. My team has been included on a
11 lot of the calls that they're doing with elected
12 officials. There was one yesterday, but what I will
13 just say is that these conversations are helpful,
14 they are important because nothing can be done
15 without communication, but an important theme that I
16 think is resonating throughout these conversations is
17 the theme of what feels like impossibility, and what
18 I mean by this is that there is almost a sense of
19 determination to erect these tents in Orchard Beach
20 and in other places, and I think there's a little bit
21 of a blind spot, if not a lot of bit of a blind spot,
22 around the impact that this is having on the migrants
23 and so from the conversations that I've had in
24 addition to the administration but also with some of
25 the migrants, we know that they're calling these

2 tents hieleras, and I apologize if I did not
3 pronounce that 100 percent properly, but that term
4 refers to the detention facilities on the borders and
5 so the simple fact that these tents remind them of
6 the trauma that they have just encountered entering
7 our country really feels outrageous and it cannot be
8 the standard that we set for lots of different
9 reasons, we don't want this to be the precedent, and
10 I think that it is imperative that we find
11 alternative locations that are true brick and mortar
12 that will provide safety for the long-term if it is
13 that someone has to stay beyond 96 hours because we
14 know the reality is that that probably is a
15 likelihood. I'll stop there because I'm sure you have
16 other questions but I just wanted to give you some
17 additional background.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No, thank you so much
19 for that. What is your hope moving forward?

20 SENATOR BIAGGI: My number one hope is
21 that as government officials and as government
22 partners from city, state, and federal that we trust
23 each other, number one, to be able to communicate
24 what is going on because I think one of the worst
25 things that can happen is that we find out when

2 either something has already been decided or we find
3 out in the press. I think it's something that doesn't
4 set the tone of the relationship that we are aiming
5 to have so that's number one. Open communication and
6 decision-making that includes us before the decision
7 is actually final. That's number one. Number two, we
8 have got to find alternative locations. I know that
9 this is a situation that is happening in New York
10 City because these are migrants that are coming
11 through Port Authority, but this is not a New York
12 City sole problem. This is a New York State issue
13 that we have to deal with collectively, and so that
14 means that when we're looking for alternative centers
15 we should be looking beyond New York City to places
16 like Westchester County. I know that there are
17 campuses, I know that there are empty facilities,
18 there's the Westchester County Center, I'm sure
19 there's lots of different events being held there
20 just like there are events being held at Javits, but
21 here's the thing, in New York we have done the
22 impossible in so many situations and times when
23 people counted us out, and this is one of those
24 situations where we can't get this wrong because
25 people's lives are at stake so communication,

2 alternative location, and then at the end of the day
3 I think that really what we have the possibility to
4 do here is to actually set the standard of what it
5 looks like to succeed because at the end of the day
6 we all want to make sure that every single human
7 being, because I want to just remind those who might
8 dehumanize the migrants that these are human beings
9 who are coming here to New York, that every single
10 human being that sets forth into New York State is
11 treated with the same amount of dignity that we would
12 treat anybody else. That is the standard that we set
13 as New Yorkers, and we cannot just write people off
14 simply because the way in which they've gotten here
15 or their immigration status. I think that we have to
16 move beyond that, and we have to do it urgently and,
17 honestly in a situation like this where we have an
18 administration, I think there are a lot of staff
19 members working very hard, but at the end of the day,
20 our Mayor sets the tone and the tone right now is not
21 a good one and so we've got as elected officials to
22 really continue to call out the needs and the desires
23 that we think are important and those things include
24 not putting people in tents because at the end of the
25 day you can call it whatever you want to call it,

2 that's what they are, and if they're going to trigger
3 more trauma it's our responsibility to prevent that
4 from happening so those are my hopes. Thank you for
5 asking those questions. I think they're incredibly
6 important, and I have faith that we can do this. I
7 know we can. We pulled the impossible off during
8 COVID. We can do anything in this city, but we have
9 to want to, and I think that right now my question is
10 whether or not this Mayor actually wants to do that.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. No
12 more questions for this panel.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
14 Next, we will call Pedro Perez, Murad Awawdeh,
15 Aracelis Lucero, and Camille Mackler. You can come up
16 to the dais and just flagging for anyone who might
17 need language interpretation services, we do have
18 those available. Just reach out to the Sergeants and
19 they can help you out.

20 Pedro, you can go ahead whenever you're
21 ready.

22 PEDRO PEREZ: Good afternoon, everyone. My
23 name is Pedro Perez, and I'm proudly from Venezuela.
24 Myself as a migrant, I know firsthand what is going
25 on really in the whole situation with the shelters,

2 and I want to bring to the table what's really
3 happening about the LGBT community. As a member of
4 that, I have seen by my own eyes and have listened
5 from many members of the community that are suffering
6 all types of harassment, sexual harassment and
7 general, and I heard and I learned a lot and there's
8 some blind spots about this whole situation. We are
9 not being able to choose where we want to be. That's
10 my case. (INAUDIBLE) they're trying to get to a
11 shelter of the LGBT community that I won't be able,
12 and I don't know why because I have testified in
13 front of them what is happening and they won't listen
14 to me so I think we should point this out because
15 this is very, very delicate point because people are
16 getting deep depression by going through this, and I
17 do believe that great mental health is a great
18 society so whenever the worst conditions are being in
19 the shelters, the worse is going to be the results of
20 the mental health of every member of that shelter, no
21 matter what are your sexual orientation or situation
22 right now. I think we should point this out and take
23 into account of the community's or the people that
24 are going through this. I want to thank you all for
25 letting me expose this point, and I really want you

2 to take this into account and I'm sure we all make a
3 difference and that's all I want to say. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you,
6 Pedro. Next, we will move on to Murad Awawdeh.

7 MURAD AWAWDEH: Good morning, almost
8 evening to everyone. Congrats on your marathon
9 hearing, Chairperson. I want to just point out that
10 there's no one here from the administration and no
11 one actually listening to the stories that you're
12 about to hear. The fact of the matter is that we sat
13 through over three hours of testimony, I don't even
14 know how much time that was, but, yes, of hearing a
15 lot of dodging of questions, humanitarian, we've
16 never seen a humanitarian urgent moment like this,
17 and I think hearing from folks on the ground is
18 critically important at this point.

19 My name is Murad Awawdeh. I'm the
20 Executive Director of the New York Immigration
21 Coalition. We're an umbrella advocacy and policy
22 organization that works across the state with over
23 200 members serving immigrant communities. Thank you
24 to the Immigration Chair Hanif and the Members of the
25 City Council for convening this important hearing and

2 allowing us an opportunity to testify. New York is
3 facing a pivotal moment in its long history of
4 welcoming newcomers. Since May, we've been responding
5 to the humanitarian crisis with the sudden arrival of
6 more than 15,000 immigrants to our city. This crisis
7 is caused by both our broken immigration system and
8 the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, using human
9 beings as political pawns by busing them and their
10 families directly to New York City. Even before the
11 first buses started to arrive, organizations like
12 ours, Catholic Charities, and many others started
13 receiving notices to appear for folks which are
14 immigration notices, and people started arriving to
15 our offices. We did not receive as many as Catholic
16 Charities, but folks started to come seeking support.
17 By early August, the buses started coming directly to
18 Port Authority. That does not mean that the buses
19 were not coming before, and I want to give a huge
20 shoutout to Team TLC New York City, to Artists-
21 Athletes-Activist, and the amazing volunteers who've
22 held it down, welcoming buses at Port Authority, not
23 at Port Authority, welcoming people at airports which
24 is happening. Adama Bah, (INAUDIBLE), and everyone
25 else who's really stepping up in this moment to make

2 sure that our folks are welcomed with dignity and
3 with respect.

4 This moment calls for a robust
5 coordinated response from the federal government down
6 to the local one. We need to step up in a different
7 way than we have been, and, while the City has been
8 taking steps to ensure that asylum seekers are
9 welcomed, just welcoming people is not enough, and
10 I'll be wrapping up shortly. I want to highlight some
11 really top priorities that we want the City to take
12 and are demanding in this moment through our
13 Welcoming New York campaign which is allocating 10
14 million dollars for emergency immigration legal
15 services, an additional 10 million for community-
16 based organizations that provide wraparound services,
17 organizing mobile vaccine clinics at shelters,
18 expanding the eligibility of CityFHEPS, and providing
19 rental assistance to individuals regardless of
20 immigration status, filling the vacant units within
21 the CHIP program, the Community Housing Improvement
22 Program, apartments across the city, and providing
23 500,000 dollars in emergency funding to immediately
24 place additional interpreters at enrollment centers
25 and pop-up sites for the next two months, place

2 newcomer youth in schools where staff have training
3 in supporting newcomers and English-language
4 learners, bilingual mental health supports where they
5 are also readily available, and providing robust
6 wraparound services for our youngest newest New
7 Yorkers, and we want to ensure that asylum-seeking
8 families and their children have access to continuous
9 education, social, and language-based support
10 services throughout the academic year. We have an
11 opportunity to help New York respond in a way that
12 provides a path forward not just for the city but for
13 the country. In order to meet the overwhelming and
14 unmet needs of asylum seekers, New York must act
15 swiftly and strategically.

16 Once again, thank you for the opportunity
17 to testify, and we look forward to working with you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
19 You can go ahead, Aracelis.

20 ARACELIS LUCERO: Hello. Thank you to
21 Immigration Chair Shahana Hanif. I had thank you also
22 to all the remaining administrators, but they're not
23 here. My name is Aracelis Lucero. I am the Executive
24 Director of Masa, a community-based organization in
25 South Bronx who for the last decades has a history of

2 working with immigrants, especially recently arrived
3 immigrants, providing them with critical services
4 around education and wraparound family support
5 services as well as advocacy and leadership
6 opportunities for youth and parents in the areas of
7 education and immigration. Masa is a member of the
8 New York Immigration Coalition, the New York City
9 Coalition for Educational Justice, the Language
10 Access Collaborative under the New York Immigration
11 Coalition, and also the Education Collaborative under
12 the New York Immigration Coalition.

13 As the asylum crisis has unfolded, we
14 didn't have to wait for too long to start seeing more
15 people continuing to trickling into our centers
16 requesting services and help. Due to capacity
17 concerns, we have not been publicizing much of the
18 support that we can give. However, daily, about three
19 to five families or groups of people from shelters,
20 schools, or referrals come to Masa looking for basic
21 help like jobs, food, cash, basic necessities like
22 hygiene supplies, clothing, ESL classes, health
23 resources, especially mental health resources for
24 young children, and earlier on enrollment support.
25 We've also been seeing families just come for even

2 laundry money. When we asked what kind of support
3 they are getting from the shelters, they seem lost
4 and confused and simply say that the person that has
5 been helping them no longer has resources for them or
6 simply don't know how to answer. Most recently, many
7 have walked in looking for winter coats and clothing
8 and food. As a response, we are reinstating our food
9 pantry program that we ended in late June and
10 starting a winter clothing drive as we know of very
11 few places providing clothing. Every person or family
12 that comes through our door has a minimum of three to
13 five things that they need help with, which are
14 trying our best to do, and we expect more to be
15 coming through because of word of mouth and
16 especially as the winter months approach.

17 Today, I'd like to share some
18 recommendations that Masa along with other fierce
19 advocates and coalition members have been advocating
20 for for years and which quite frankly if they had
21 been funded would have made the city more equipped
22 today to handle situations like these, especially in
23 times of crisis and especially in support of
24 immigrant communities. The first that I'd like to
25 address is language access. I truly disagree with

2 some of the things that were said here on the
3 language line. It is our community members'
4 experience that even with Local Law 30 many times
5 even information in Spanish isn't available or
6 interpretation is not available in key places like
7 schools, hospitals, clinics, and with large social
8 service providers. Furthermore, many people refuse to
9 use the language line or are not happy with it
10 because often they say things are lost in translation
11 or the wrong variant of their language is being used.
12 This is especially important for asylum seekers where
13 their stories really cannot be lost in translation in
14 order to create credible cases for them. For this
15 reason, the Language Access Collaborative comprised
16 of Masa, the New York Immigration Coalition, Asian
17 American Federation, and African Communities Together
18 have been advocating for the creation of language
19 worker co-operatives for languages of limited
20 diffusion in order to meet the need. We need
21 culturally competent and well-trained community
22 members that are more equipped to be trusting
23 relationships with those who will need it more.
24 Historically, marginalized communities and those
25 recently arrived who are struggling to navigate

2 complex and large New York City systems don't get
3 that type of support.

4 The other area that I'd like to address
5 is education. We've seen how English-language
6 learners have severely underperformed through really
7 no fault of their own because schools have been ill-
8 equipped to support them. One group that has been
9 forgotten are our older newcomer or under-credited
10 (INAUDIBLE) who have very little school options that
11 will provide the level of support needed for them to
12 succeed. Most of the schools that do provide the
13 support are actually in Manhattan and very few in the
14 boroughs which is concerning. For the past three
15 years, the New York Immigration Coalition Education
16 Collaborative has asked the City Council to fund 2.1
17 million to support the creation of 400 additional
18 seats to support these youth. We know more has to be
19 done as only 60 percent of English-language learner
20 students are graduating compared to 81 percent for
21 the general population. We already know that
22 thousands of school-age youth are already in our
23 system. The last count I believe was 4,600.
24 Furthermore, parent engagement of limited English
25 proficient parents is also poor, and our fear that

2 without a proper engagement strategy to involve
3 parents, student performance and their
4 social/emotional well-being will suffer.

5 Last but not least, I'd like to flag that
6 as part of the New York City Coalition for
7 Educational Justice, not only did this parent-powered
8 group advocate for a culture-responsive education
9 definition and anti-bias training but the creation of
10 a culturally responsive curriculum which under the
11 prior administration was named the Mosaic curriculum.
12 I would recommend that the City Council ask the New
13 York City Department of Education how this new
14 curriculum would specifically support English-
15 language learners and ensure that they're feeling
16 welcome and see themselves and their families, not
17 just in chapters or in monthly celebrations and Taco
18 Tuesdays, but as meaningful, whole, and contributing
19 members of their school communities every single day.

20 For years, we've been advocating for
21 resources to address systemic barriers and systems of
22 oppression that continue to keep black and brown
23 communities marginalized. We cannot continue to just
24 meet the status quo but instead realize that when we
25 are doing our best by the most marginalized

2 communities than it serves to uplift all of us, and
3 we are a greater city for that. Thank you for your
4 time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
6 Camille, you can go ahead.

7 CAMILLE MACKLER: Thank you. I speak fast.
8 I'm Camille Mackler, the Executive Director of
9 Immigrant ARC. We are a coalition of over 80
10 organizations that provide immigration legal services
11 throughout New York State. I am here to speak
12 specifically about the legal needs and how the
13 administration has absolutely failed to meet them.
14 Sadly, our immigration system is designed to make
15 anyone who tries to go through it fail, and it is a
16 system that at this point requires a lawyer or
17 requires legal assistance to navigate and to be
18 successful. There are numerous statistics all in my
19 testimony of the impact of having legal
20 representation. At this time, legal service providers
21 have for years now been pivoting every single year to
22 meet the latest demand, the latest crisis. We know
23 how to do rapid response, and we are stunned that our
24 expertise has been dismissed by the administration in
25 favor of creating programs that limit the level of

2 services that people receive to the bare minimum and
3 do not engage in our ability to shape a legal service
4 delivery system that would meaningfully help people
5 protect their rights and assert their right to apply
6 for asylum. There have been many stakeholder
7 engagements. It does not appear that any of the
8 feedback that we gave was incorporated into it. The
9 latest procurement does not allow for meaningful
10 legal service delivery. It also seems premised on an
11 assumption that lawyers can simply walk away from the
12 cases that they currently represent. Lawyers have
13 been scrambling, legal services I should say, it's
14 not just lawyers, have been scrambling to meet this
15 need, but at the end of the day an attorney has an
16 ethical obligation to represent his current clients
17 but also how can we walk away from those who are
18 already receiving our services, and no attorney wants
19 to say no to somebody who needs their help and no
20 attorney wants to know that somebody is going through
21 the process without their assistance but they need
22 resources to do that and there are ways to do it, and
23 for some reason they don't seem to have been listened
24 to.

2 We also applaud the initiative to go to
3 the State and the Feds. With the State, if the City
4 would like the support of the State, we would ask
5 that they come out in support of the Access to
6 Representation Act, which is a bill that would create
7 a right to counsel for anybody facing deportation in
8 New York's immigration courts. At the federal level,
9 money from the Feds would be great of course. It is
10 long past time that the federal government should be
11 providing an attorney or a legal representation to
12 anyone going through the immigration system, but they
13 could also be helping us advocate for extensions of
14 parole because right now these individuals are in the
15 country with at most 60 days to figure it all out and
16 get their applications filed, and the reality is they
17 can't even file their case until they get to court
18 and that's going to take four to six months. An
19 extension for two years would allow these individuals
20 to come to the United States, to apply for work
21 authorization, to orient themselves to their new
22 communities, and to get the services that they need
23 without the fear of deportation hanging over their
24 heads. We echo the ask of the New York Immigration
25 Coalition for 10 million dollars. I would also say

2 that our current funding structures are such that
3 they've responded to crisis after crisis and are
4 siloed in the way that they can deliver services so
5 when we think of funding we need to think of the
6 short-term rapid response funding that is needed in
7 any emergency situation but also long-term funding to
8 create sustainable resources that will go on for the
9 years that it takes to get an immigration case
10 through. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much.

12 Aracelis, I'd love to get to know a little bit more
13 about the language access needs. We're having a
14 hearing on October 19th on a package of bills that
15 would advance, strengthen language access in our
16 city. One of the bills in that package is mine for
17 the creation of the Office of Interpretation and
18 Translation under the Mayor's Office of Immigrant
19 Affairs. In this budget cycle, we put in the
20 investment for the worker co-operatives for language
21 services, which has not been ruled out yet. We're
22 waiting to determine what that's going to look like,
23 but, of course, it's not going to happen without the
24 Coalition that had been pushing for many, many years
25 to move towards a worker co-operative model to

2 provide language services. If you could just talk a
3 little bit more about why it's so critical to not
4 outsource or do it through Language Line and rather
5 focus on in-community talent and skills, paid folks
6 to really do language access right.

7 ARACELIS LUCERO: There's several
8 components. I think it really also depends on the
9 community members that we're serving. There's
10 different levels of literacy. There's also culturally
11 a lot of like oral tradition communities that are
12 coming over that feel the safest with, like there may
13 be something with a woman or experiencing something
14 that they only feel comfortable talking to another
15 woman or somebody that looks like them. We've had
16 several instances, and this is not new, this is like
17 years and years and why we've been advocating, and
18 really it was also in response to when the city put
19 in money for (INAUDIBLE), this is years ago, because
20 what we were realizing is a lot of legal service
21 providers were reaching out to community-based
22 organizations for culturally responsive support and
23 translation to have these interviews with asylum
24 seekers, with people who are going through their
25 immigration case because it wasn't always the case

2 that they were being 100 percent truthful or felt
3 comfortable and so with immigration, with health
4 especially I have a personal experience with my dad,
5 unfortunately he passed away, where he wasn't
6 comfortable with language line and I went to help
7 support him. I really do think that that made a
8 difference with him being comfortable telling the
9 doctor what was happening in his situation.
10 Unfortunately, he passed away of a massive heart
11 attack a week after I was able to accompany him to
12 Lincoln Hospital, and so it is critically important
13 because for the lives of the families that are coming
14 here it is truly a life-or-death situation. We cannot
15 miss a beat. We cannot miss a step, and I am telling
16 you that there are things that we hear in our office
17 that we ask them why didn't they say something or
18 this would be an important thing for their case to
19 share, and it's because there was no trust. We've
20 also partnered for a very long time with
21 organizations like UnLocal where Masa staff would
22 step in to provide interpretation or we already had
23 built trust with the community and so we would sit
24 with the lawyer and sit with the community member who
25 we already had heard their case several times but we

2 weren't lawyers to help them to help support that
3 process in documenting their cases and making sure
4 that we were able to collect all of the things that
5 they needed in order to have a strong case whenever
6 they would present in court. There's many, many
7 instances, people will take their children, and
8 you're retraumatizing children. Again, the language
9 line, every single system, we help the Education, the
10 Health and Hospitals, the legal system. Every single
11 time we talk to community members and we work
12 specifically with a large indigenous-speaking
13 community who has a lot of oral traditions. They're
14 not going to be comfortable. Also, whenever they
15 don't know their rights, whenever they don't know who
16 to really trust, that's another problem so they're
17 not going to completely be transparent about what
18 their issue is.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much for
20 that. Pedro, thank you so much for just lifting up
21 how critical it is to have resources and services and
22 a very hands-on approach to folks who are part of the
23 LGBTQ community. Could you share, are you right now
24 placed in a shelter that is meeting your needs?

2 PEDRO PEREZ: Yes, I'm currently staying
3 in Brooklyn. My shelter is located in Brooklyn, and
4 basically what we have to do to slide in that jungle,
5 just expressing words, is to stay quiet, try to be
6 invisible, try to not show up so much, and just in
7 the first time you have the opportunity to just leave
8 and be out there as much time as possible because the
9 more time you spend inside, the more probable it is
10 that you're going to suffer any type of harassment.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So you're not in a
12 queer-friendly shelter right now?

13 PEDRO PEREZ: No.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: How long have you
15 tried to get transferred out?

16 PEDRO PEREZ: Today is the fourth day.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Fourth day? For the
18 last four days you've been trying to get transferred
19 out?

20 PEDRO PEREZ: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What have they said to
22 you?

23 PEDRO PEREZ: Okay, so Ivan said that in
24 the shelter that I want to be transferred to, they
25 say basically that I'm too old to get in, I'm 22

2 years old, and I've heard also that that shelter
3 allows from 18 to 25 so there's clearly something
4 that is missing, somebody's not doing their job
5 because it's not just me. There's a few people that
6 are experiencing the same thing. Yeah, basically
7 that.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Outside of the
9 shelter, have they at least connected you to
10 resources or communities where you can receive the
11 friendship or be in community with other LGBTQ folks
12 in our city?

13 PEDRO PEREZ: In my case, what I do when I
14 go out of the shelter is hang around with Team TLC
15 and have some volunteer, that's what we're doing
16 today, and basically yeah, there is a few people of
17 the community and we just hang out, just being away
18 from the places we do not want to be. My point is
19 that we should figure out a way how to spot the LGBT
20 community and bring in to a safe environment where
21 they can be truly who they are and dress like they
22 want to dress, do whatever they want to do, act like
23 they want to act, and not being hurt physically and
24 mentally for that.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Absolutely. Thank you
3 for that. No more questions for the panel, but if
4 Murad, Camille, if you have anything to add, would
5 appreciate.

6 MURAD AWAWDEH: Just to echo and piggyback
7 of off this brother's comments on his experience,
8 there's actually specifically a queer couple who was
9 thrown out of the shelter last night and then there
10 was a rapid response moment where folks from Artists-
11 Athletes-Activists were trying to triage the
12 situation and pretty much were told they do not meet
13 eligibility. What is the eligibility that they do not
14 meet, we do not know. We've been asking those
15 questions, and it's not a unique situation. Sometimes
16 people are placed in temporary shelter and then for
17 some reason are told, these are folks who are
18 actually recertifying, filing in, signing in, being
19 in in-time and are still having issues with
20 navigating the shelter system. I think that, yes, the
21 system is overwhelmed, but there's a way to do this
22 where we're actually treating people with respect,
23 giving them the shelter that they need, but I do
24 think that there's an enormous amount of additional
25 issues that you're going to hear in this hearing from

2 other folks who have been supporting that work,
3 specifically about the shelter and how people are
4 being treated in it.

5 CAMILLE MACKLER: I'm going to defer to my
6 Colleagues who are going to be testifying next on
7 legal services.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Awesome. Thank you
9 all.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
11 We'll next be calling Joshua Goldfein, Natalia
12 Aristizabal Betancur, Yesenia Mata, and Lorena
13 Kourousias. Apologize if I butchered anyone's name
14 and thank you all for bearing with us. We have quite
15 a few witnesses signed up. Joshua, you can go ahead
16 whenever you're ready.

17 JOSHUA GOLDFEIN: Thank you. I just want
18 say again thank you to the Chair and the Committee
19 for this hearing. Today, we got some answers to
20 questions that we've been waiting for for a long
21 time. The concerns about whether the new facilities
22 are compliant with Callahan and other rules around
23 the right to shelter are important not just because
24 these are technical requirements but because they are
25 commonsense rules that ensure that people are safe

2 and secure, and, if people do not feel safe and
3 secure in these new facilities, they will leave them
4 and all of this effort will have been for naught so
5 we want to make sure that people feel comfortable in
6 the places that we're sending them and it seems like,
7 at a minimum, the City should be using the standards
8 that already exist so that people don't feel like
9 they're getting something less than what they would
10 get in another system.

11 It was also very important to hear the
12 City say that they do not intend to place children in
13 congregate settings and to have them on the record
14 about that. Notably, they did not say they would not
15 do that. They said they did not intend to do that,
16 they don't want to do that. We appreciate that that
17 is their view, but, of course, we have to make sure
18 that as this plays out that that does not happen. We
19 have seen time and time again we have litigated for
20 decades to prevent the harm of children being placed
21 in congregate settings.

22 I also want to thank the Committee and
23 the Chair for asking the questions about housing
24 subsidies and streamlining the ability of people to
25 move out of the shelter system. We see that the stay

2 of many people at these new sites will be very short.
3 Given the relatively low rate of what they call
4 diversion, of getting people connected to some other
5 place, seems like the majority of people will be
6 coming into the shelter system and so the shelter
7 system has to be ready for them, has to add new beds
8 to make room for them if they don't move people out.
9 It might be a lot easier to move people out of the
10 existing shelter system into permanent housing,
11 better for everyone, also create new space for the
12 migrants and save the City money.

13 Finally, I just wanted to note that in
14 the answers to the questions about legal services
15 that the City pointed to the Navigation Center as a
16 place where people could obtain an appointment to
17 receive assistance with their asylum application.
18 They're currently scheduling only 25 appointments per
19 day, hoping to ramp up to 100 appointments per day
20 per family, one family would get one appointment, so
21 if you can do the math there, given the numbers they
22 are talking about, it's clear that that will not be
23 sufficient to provide legal services to all the
24 people who need it, especially given the testimony of
25 the previous panels about how crucial it is to have a

2 lawyer for your case so we're setting people up for
3 failure if we don't provide them with that
4 assistance. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
6 Next, we have Natalia. Natalia, you can go when the
7 Sergeant calls time.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

9 NATALIA ARISTIZABEL BETANCUR: Thank you
10 very much. My name is Natalia Aristizabal Betancur,
11 and I am the Deputy Director at Make the Road New
12 York. I'm going to be summarizing our testimony that
13 we will submit in full.

14 On behalf of our 25,000 members and
15 staff, we thank the Committee for the opportunity to
16 testify today. We believe that New York must continue
17 to serve as a welcoming city for immigrants, and that
18 includes ensuring that individuals can access and
19 participate in our society regardless of their
20 immigration status. To prevent further harm to the
21 people who have walked miles to get to the U.S. and
22 then bused to the City, we must develop community-
23 based infrastructure and services that will allow
24 them to rebuild their lives here.

2 Make the Road New York (MRNY) is the
3 largest grassroots immigrant organization in New York
4 City, with a membership of over 25,000 low-income New
5 Yorkers. We have 25 plus years of experience serving
6 New York's communities of color, immigrant and
7 working class families. Across all our 5 sites, we
8 provide essential health, legal, education and
9 survival services, while also continuing to organize
10 our communities to innovate policies that will
11 improve their lives. We submit this testimony to
12 highlight how our organization has responded to the
13 critical needs presented by the migrants being
14 relocated to our city from Texas, and to underscore
15 to the Committee the critical importance of using all
16 resources available to meet their specific needs in
17 this challenging and often confusing moment. Based on
18 our long history and deep experience working with and
19 alongside immigrant populations, we offer our insight
20 to underscore that the City must immediately step up
21 its efforts to provide resources in a number of key
22 areas to minimize the extended trauma these newly
23 arrived families have endured; to ensure they have
24 what is needed to stabilize their lives, and to

2 provide opportunities which will allow them to fully
3 integrate into our rich, diverse NYC community.

4 Over the course of the last two months,
5 we started arriving at Port Authority, and then when
6 the new facility was created, we have been there. We
7 have provided Metrocards, phones, and cash assistance
8 to folks who have recently arrived.

9 Additionally, we have held orientation
10 sessions in our Jackson Heights and Bushwick offices
11 to make sure that these folks have connections in the
12 city and give them a little bit of one-on-one of New
13 York City and services and to feed them and to help
14 them navigate their lives.

15 I'm going to be highlighting three main
16 pieces around immigration: services, housing, and food
17 and transportation. Obviously, we're concerned about
18 the ways in which they were brought to New York City,
19 and we have concerns for the care and health and
20 personal circumstances. Some of them shared that they
21 were offered free rides to New York even though that
22 they had Immigration appointments at places like
23 (INAUDIBLE). Making matters worse, many of them were
24 dismayed to hear that they now needed to file motions
25 and other paperwork to transfer their immigration cases

2 to New York to avoid dire legal consequences such as
3 starting deportation proceedings or having to face all
4 of this without legal representation. The City decided
5 to incorporate triage services as part of the
6 Navigation Center that it opened a few weeks ago, but
7 the City must develop a community-informed long-term
8 plan to ensure that these individuals have legal
9 assistance they desperately need. These individuals
10 need as much information as possible about their
11 immigration proceedings, because Texas is not
12 explaining what happens to them if they fail to
13 attend their hearings or appointments with
14 immigration authorities in another state. Likewise,
15 this Committee is well-aware of how important it is
16 to ensure immigrants do not fall prey to notaries.
17 People have been asking me personally because I've
18 been helping folks where do they buy a social because
19 they've been offered or that they don't have the
20 money to buy a social. This is actually a very
21 important piece that immigrants need to know that
22 that's not how the process goes. This population is
23 particularly vulnerable to unscrupulous practices. As
24 the last person just shared, the legal appointments
25 are very little and currently actually today the

2 website was down so even though we were trying to
3 help people get appointments, we weren't able to.

4 The City needs to develop a better long-
5 term plan. First, accessing the Navigation Center and
6 the City's legal services must be simpler.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

8 NATALIA ARISTIZABAL BETANCUR: People have
9 not been able to do appointments on their own, and
10 they have to do it through community members.

11 I guess I'm going to submit this
12 testimony so that folks can see the full part, but
13 we're also very concerned about the housing. We think
14 that people should be able to go right away and
15 qualify for permanent housing and not just be held in
16 shelters.

17 Very quickly, food is very important. A
18 lot of the people that we see on a daily basis, like
19 today for example we had 40 people at our office
20 while these hearings were happening and they were
21 telling us that that was the first warm meal they
22 were getting in a really long time.

23 I'll leave there and submit my full
24 testimony.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

3 Next, we will hear from Yesenia Mata. You can go
4 ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

6 YESENIA MATA: Good afternoon and thank
7 you to Chairwoman of the Immigration Committee
8 Councilwoman Hanif and the entire team for holding
9 this important hearing.

10 At La Colmena, we are helping asylum
11 seekers from Venezuela and other parts of South
12 America with essential services and, most
13 importantly, a community. Supporting new immigrants
14 with these types of services is not anything new for
15 La Colmena as NICE has mentioned as every day we
16 enroll immigrant workers to our construction site
17 safety and OSHA classes, carpentry classes, and
18 provide worker know-your-rights training for free.
19 These types of services allow new immigrants to join
20 the workforce and feel confident about it plus
21 provide them with the support they may need if they
22 become victims of wage theft. What is different now,
23 however, is the amount of asylum seekers coming to
24 our center in need of these services, and, due to the
25 training the La Colmena staff has we have been able

2 to respond and keep up. Many come to our centers
3 saying (speaking foreign language) meaning I heard
4 this is where I can get help to get prepared for
5 work. Many are traveling from across New York City to
6 Staten Island and, because our center is very
7 accessible as we are near the Staten Island Ferry, it
8 just makes it easier for many to come to Staten
9 Island. Additionally, because we have been at Port
10 Authority and at the Navigation Center, we understand
11 the needs of asylum seekers as we are culturally
12 competent and understand the role that La Colmena
13 plays when it comes to workforce development. To say
14 all of this, La Colmena could not have responded so
15 adequately if it wasn't for the amazing organizations
16 that testified here today. It has definitely been a
17 team effort as we all provide unique services and
18 resources. At La Colmena, we remain committed to
19 supporting all workers regardless of their
20 immigration status to ensure they can join the
21 workforce with dignity and respect. Thank you for
22 your time.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
24 Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I don't have any
3 questions for this panel.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: We will call
5 Lorena. Go ahead.

6 VIANEY ROMERO: Hi. Good afternoon. Thank
7 you for this opportunity for listening to me. I'm
8 actually Vianey Romero, Director of Programs at
9 Mixteca on behalf of Lorena Kourousias. I will be
10 presenting and testifying today.

11 I'm here to speak on the importance of
12 providing services with dignity and compassion and
13 love to new asylum seekers and migrants. As an
14 immigrant myself, I know the challenges (INAUDIBLE)
15 of navigating many systems newly arrived to the
16 United States. I arrived to the United States at the
17 age of three (INAUDIBLE) factors forced my parents
18 and I to leave our country and my well-being and
19 safety were their number one priority. I am glad and
20 proud of being part of Mixteca and working alongside
21 with many Colleagues, and, as my Colleague from La
22 Colmena has mentioned, it has truly been a team
23 effort to work together and provide services to many
24 new asylum seekers and migrants. At Mixteca, we
25 provide resources and services with dignity and

2 empathy and heart. We have been present at Port
3 Authority and welcomed new asylum seekers and
4 migrants, and I will never forget that the first
5 family I helped was a mom with her three-year-old
6 son. It reminded me of when I first arrived with my
7 mom at the age of three and how I wished someone had
8 been there for my mom and myself, providing me with
9 support and validating us as humans rather than a
10 number and a burden to society. I'm beyond proud of
11 being part of this team who we provide currently with
12 direct services from emergency need of food to
13 navigating school systems and workforce development
14 like OSHA training, ESL classes, and skill building,
15 serving three family shelters in our area. We're the
16 only Latinx organization in the area. At Mixteca, we
17 feel, we listen, and we connect, we provide with
18 dignity and we love (INAUDIBLE) resources to not just
19 the new asylum seekers and migrants but to our
20 community members that are still struggling and
21 surviving after the effects of COVID-19. Mixteca is a
22 home away from home to many, and this crisis has been
23 a struggle for all of us, for many non-profit
24 organizations that with little to no resources at all
25 have been a struggle for us to provide our services

2 to our community members and new community members.
3 Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. No
6 questions for this panel.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you so
8 much. Next, we will be calling Jodi Ziesemer followed
9 by Rex Chen then Ligia Guallpa and C. Mario Russell I
10 believe with Debra Presti. If you're in-person, you
11 can come up to the dais. Jodi, you can go ahead when
12 the Sergeant calls time.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

14 JODI ZIESEMER: Great. Thank you so much
15 for this opportunity to testify today.

16 My name is Jodi Ziesemer, and I am the
17 Director of the Immigrant Protection Unit at the New
18 York Legal Assistance Group. I just want to give a
19 little bit of context before we start with talking
20 about legal services and the need there.

21 The current crisis stems from federal
22 policies that closed our borders to most asylum
23 seekers over the last three years while failing to
24 put in place strategies or resources to safely,
25 effectively, and humanely anticipate the influx of

2 vulnerable migrants who cannot be subjected to rapid
3 expulsion. This has created confusion and chaos at
4 the border and really inconsistent treatment of
5 asylum-seeking families. Because this population has
6 no set destination or addresses when they arrive in
7 the U.S., ICE and CBP do not know where to file court
8 documents, they have no addresses, where to send
9 followup paperwork, and they cannot effectively
10 direct people to the resources they will need to
11 navigate the removal process. Instead of confronting
12 these barriers, ICE and CBP have employed a variety
13 of deceitful and legally prejudicial policies such as
14 fabricating addresses on charging documents, sending
15 cases to far-flung jurisdictions, and supplying
16 nonsensical or contradictory information and
17 instructions. Funneling people to a small handful of
18 sanctuary cities has also overburdened the systems in
19 those cities, such as New York. Our ICE Enforcement
20 and Removal Office, for example, is overwhelmed and
21 people cannot even get access to the building, let
22 alone the office where they are located to attend
23 appointments.

24 I will also just mention that the federal
25 government has elected to surveil and monitor these

2 migrants, often putting them on ankle monitors, on
3 phone surveillance, GPS systems, and other
4 enforcement mechanisms and has subjected all of them
5 to removal proceedings instead of other options that
6 they have at their discretion such as parole, which
7 they have employed for Afghans and Ukrainians and
8 other vulnerable populations.

9 The legal need really is twofold and must
10 be addressed with two distinct programs and funding
11 structures. The first is the need for information,
12 individual engagement to provide guidance on the
13 posture and next steps of the immigration process,
14 and assistance in changing addresses and venue to New
15 York City. Because of the deep confusion and
16 inconsistencies and the nuances in individual cases,
17 group orientations and general information packets
18 are insufficient to address this need. Migrants want
19 and need individual guidance and counsel on their
20 options, next steps, and process. Although this
21 information-giving should be overseen by legal
22 employees, lawyers should not be the primary on-the-
23 ground staff for this element of the response. The
24 need is too great and too broad for staff line
25 attorneys at non-profit legal service organizations

2 to cover, and it is not an effective use of the
3 limited human resources in our city.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 JODI ZIESEMER: Okay. It is burnout work
6 for attorneys. NYLAG has been at the Centers, and it
7 is trying to give a stream of triage information
8 without any ability to take on cases or actually
9 provide representation is not sustainable.

10 I'll also just mention because this was
11 talked about before. We are not assisting people
12 actually applying for asylum or even beginning this
13 process. We are basically giving basic triage
14 information, and there needs to be more resources put
15 in for actual representation.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

17 Next, we will call on Rex Chen. You can go ahead when
18 the Sergeant calls time.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

20 REX CHEN: Hello. My name is Rex Chen. I'm
21 the Immigration Director at Legal Services NYC. Our
22 non-profit provides free immigration legal services.
23 I'm just going to make a few points.

24 One is that as Jodi was pointing,
25 counting how many asylum seekers get some level of

2 legal assistance can be a limited measure because
3 helping to get a little bit of help one day at a
4 Navigation Center is very different from getting
5 support for preparing their asylum and having a
6 lawyer in court to win asylum, very different.

7 Another thing I want to emphasis is we've
8 seen that with many traumatized asylum seekers,
9 social workers support is extremely important in
10 preparing a case. They've received trauma from what
11 they're fleeing from, trauma from the travel to the
12 U.S., and also trauma from mistreatment by the U.S.
13 government and also by some states of the U.S. at the
14 border and afterwards.

15 Jodi touched on how the work at the
16 Navigation Centers is high risk of burnout. I just
17 want to point out that even the later phases of the
18 case and lawyers representing people seeking asylum
19 is also an area where there have been a lot more
20 studies in the last few years of the large amount of
21 burnout and trauma for those representing asylum
22 seekers all the way through to immigration court, and
23 we've seen that it is actually difficult for us to
24 retain staff in a healthy manner and also to recruit
25 and hire new staff so that's important to understand

2 in the context of if we could just find the money,
3 can we just put it out there and there may be so many
4 people so eager we can just hire a ton of people,
5 that actually might be much more challenging than it
6 might seem on paper.

7 My last point I'll just highlight is just
8 give a feel for some things that are a bit unexpected
9 about what it is to work on an asylum case these days
10 in the dysfunctional immigration court system. One is
11 that cases take much longer than people would expect
12 to complete. There's a very large existing
13 immigration court backlog before the recent arrivals
14 of asylum seekers, and, as Jodi was referring to,
15 even just other parts of the process, checking in
16 with the deportation officers has a huge, massive
17 backlog and so there's even going to be a large
18 backlog even to start the immigration court case for
19 many of these asylum seekers. It could take four
20 years or more to resolve these cases so it's quite a
21 commitment and an important commitment to take on
22 these cases. As Jodi touched on, these cases are
23 harder to win than you might expect. That the
24 government writing bogus addresses of asylum seekers
25 that are supposed residences, they're tricking the

2 court to think that the notices they're mailing out
3 are actually going to get to the asylum seekers.
4 These add extra obstacles that you might not expect
5 with these asylum cases.

6 Thank you very much for holding this
7 hearing today.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
9 Next, we'll move on to the people who are in-person.
10 It doesn't look like Ligia is here. Mario, would you
11 like to go ahead.

12 C. MARIO RUSSELL: Sure. Absolutely. Good
13 afternoon or good evening. I noticed it's 10 after 5
14 so 10 minutes beyond your scheduled time I suppose,
15 but I'll do my best to not add too many more minutes
16 to your afternoon.

17 Chairwoman Hanif, nice to see you and
18 thank you for hosting this meeting. I am Director of
19 the Immigrant and Refugee Services with Catholic
20 Charities Community Services and with me here is
21 Debra Presti who is our Senior Director of Case
22 Management with Catholic Charities.

23 In late April and May 2022, recently
24 arriving asylum seekers from the southern border
25 began to arrive at our administrative offices on

2 First Avenue where our Executive Management, human
3 resources, and other fiscal functions are located.
4 Many of those asylum seekers then arrived as we see
5 now still disoriented, confused, and really
6 effectively stripped of all of their personal
7 belongings, holding nothing really but an immigration
8 document that was often fraudulently and improperly
9 issued as you've heard. Beginning at a just few
10 individuals, over the months that number came to
11 about 200 a week seeking assistance of all kinds,
12 which we provided in that time on First Avenue in the
13 frontline, food, basic needs supplies, legal
14 screening of course, at least in the moment to triage
15 what were the cases that needed particular attention.
16 At our administrative offices alone and prior to our
17 work at the Navigation Center, we saw over that period
18 of time about 2,000 individuals, and, since the
19 Navigation Center has opened its doors, basically I'm
20 giving you data that's about four weeks' worth since
21 the end of August, that number has risen to about
22 3,000, with 2/3 of the population being adults and
23 the remainder of children.

24 With the arrival of buses, which we of
25 course are so deeply and concernedly aware of, we

2 have choices to make. How we will welcome? How will
3 we support those who come to us from afar seeking a
4 home and protection?

5 I would say this simply. Yes, we've done
6 a job of standing up some services, and we've begun
7 it, I think, in earnest and as well as we can. We've
8 heard, of course, many contours and shadows in that
9 process, but we need to do more, and I think we need
10 to do it with a long-term perspective. We are really
11 on the cusp at some level, I think, of a change over
12 time and how immigration and refugee policy will be
13 administered and whether we've seen this through the
14 experience with Syrian refugees, Afghan refugees, the
15 Ukrainian parolees, unaccompanied children, we've
16 seen all modes in which America receives those in
17 need of protection and safety and now from the South.
18 The welcome and resettlement is a 50-state issues.
19 It's as much about the interior as it is about the
20 border. It's as much about New York City as it is
21 about El Paso, and I think we need to bend our
22 imagination deeply and urgently in that way and think
23 in the long-term.

24 To talk about just some needs or some
25 migrants or some issues is not enough. We've been

2 doing this work in partnership, and we're very
3 grateful to the City for the work we've done with
4 them and the Council as well too, but I think it's
5 time to step up our game and our response.

6 I just want to say four things that are
7 specific to today's conversation and to what I think
8 we need to do in order to move this forward better.
9 Specifically, the Navigation Center in terms of legal
10 support. On the legal side, the current RFP that we
11 did not submit a proposal for is deficient, and it
12 needs to be rethought. We need to divide it into two
13 sections. One is group orientations, group know-your-
14 rights informational sessions section and then a
15 separate multi-year baseline legal representation
16 program. Clearly, as you've mentioned yourself,
17 Chairwoman, the case rate is unacceptable and the
18 math does not work. This RFP is a band-aid proposal.
19 I'm almost done.

20 Workforce development. If we think and
21 are serious about welcoming refugees to our City then
22 we have to enhance our OSHA Site Safety Training, we
23 have to think about creative ways in which we can in
24 fact plug so many talented people into perhaps, yes,
25

2 day economy, day gigs. We see this at our day laborer
3 centers, but we can do more there.

4 At our Navigation Center, critical, and I
5 think Debra can speak to this, the need for clothing,
6 access to essential products, and, of course,
7 transportation.

8 Finally, I would say this. We need your
9 help in advocacy. I think the broader question about
10 how can people work when they're here is key to this
11 whole equation, and I think if we push and make a
12 case for well-articulated policies around
13 humanitarian parole that become a predicate for
14 employment then maybe we can start to think something
15 differently going forward. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. A
17 question I have is just so folks who are still
18 watching and we have this on the record, we've talked
19 a lot about the asylum process being one that is a
20 tedious one, it is a multi-year wait. Can Jodi, Rex,
21 and Mario, either one of you can chime in, describe
22 what the asylum process is like right now?

23 JODI ZIESEMER: I'm happy to take that on.
24 I think part of the issue is that this process is not
25 functioning the way even that it is set up to

2 function because of the confusion at the border, and
3 so in an ideal situation, somebody comes in, they're
4 issued a charging document that is filed in court,
5 they have a hearing in which they can file an
6 application for asylum as a defense from deportation,
7 and then have a trial where they present evidence and
8 have to bear the burden to show their eligibility for
9 this type of relief. That in and of itself is a
10 burdensome and cumbersome process that, as many of my
11 Colleagues have mentioned, really requires a lawyer
12 in order to successfully navigate. The problem right
13 now is that even that process is getting delayed, is
14 getting off-track because of the confusion at the
15 border, because of the overwhelming numbers, and
16 because this federal administration has elected to
17 place everyone in an overburdened court system so
18 people are not even being given their charging
19 documents, are not being given court appointments in
20 a consistent manner, and they're not even having a
21 forum in which to file their asylum application.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What are the
23 conditions for denying asylum? Could it be possible
24 that everybody who's arrived from Venezuela applies
25 for asylum gets rejected?

2 JODI ZIESEMER: Asylum is often very
3 political in terms of how we adjudicate cases. I
4 think our main concern, and this is not ineligibility
5 if somebody actually goes through a trial and is able
6 to fully present their claim, but that there are so
7 many administrative missteps that can cause somebody
8 to get an order of deportation without the
9 opportunity to actually present and fully have their
10 asylum application heard.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What are those
12 conditions?

13 JODI ZIESEMER: If somebody fails to
14 receive a hearing notice because Immigration at the
15 border has made up an address for them or is sending
16 their notices to the Catholic Charities
17 administrative offices or because they have their
18 case filed in Utah, even though they're being on a
19 bus to New York City, if they miss that court hearing
20 they will be ordered removed in absentia without the
21 opportunity to apply for asylum. If they don't file
22 their application for asylum within one year of their
23 arrival in the United States, that can be a barrier
24 for them receiving relief. There's a number of other
25 concerns.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Would you say that it
3 poses an issue that the folks who are going to live
4 or stay at a HERRC or are currently staying at a
5 shelter could potentially miss mail coming to them
6 about their case?

7 JODI ZIESEMER: Yeah, that is a concern
8 that we have. NYLAG has been at the Navigation Center
9 along with Catholic Charities and other service
10 providers, we are providing change of address to
11 notify courts for people who actually have their
12 cases already filed in court of where they can
13 receive mail, but, of course, in the shelter system
14 it is I think both difficult to receive mail in a
15 shelter but also the movement of people between
16 shelters and the obligation to update the court after
17 every single move and then to receive mail can
18 definitely cause people to miss their hearings, to
19 miss mailings, and to cause like I was talking about
20 really to derail the whole process for their asylum
21 case.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

23 REX CHEN: If I could add a little.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Yeah, go for it.

2 REX CHEN: I agree with Jodi. Another way
3 you can lose your asylum case is you don't follow the
4 specific strange instructions only in English to
5 prepare for the hearing such as mailing certain pages
6 of your asylum applications to the Nebraska Service
7 Center. I know you're not following me. It's a very
8 weird process. Also, critical is having evidence to
9 support your case, and if the border officials threw
10 your stuff out, the U.S. officials threw it out when
11 you came through the border or you lose it in the
12 course of being moved around to different shelters,
13 your case is going to be in much harder shape.

14 Another issue, people have written about refugee
15 roulette, is that traumatized asylum seekers often
16 will say slightly inconsistent things, and the danger
17 there is judges who are very much against these
18 immigrants have the discretion to say I just don't
19 find this person believable, and there's so much
20 discretion because no traumatized person can tell
21 their story perfectly every single time they have to
22 tell it. There's a lot of ways that people can lose
23 their cases.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Did you
25 have a final comment?

2 C. MARIO RUSSELL: Yeah, I wanted to add
3 that I think there's also the arc of the case and I
4 think if we think that a person who is navigating
5 this time period is unemployed then that is a further
6 shackling and a binding of them to really no way to
7 move forward. Frankly, if a person were to come into
8 my office today, it probably wouldn't be for another
9 six months that they can actually get a lawyer, and
10 I'm saying that somewhat conservatively. After that,
11 probably three to six months before they can actually
12 file an application for asylum. After that, it's 150
13 days before they can submit a work authorization
14 request and then after that it's about 8-1/2 to 12
15 months before they actually get the card. When you
16 add all that up, you're looking at two to two-and-a-
17 half years before a person from today can actually
18 legally work. That in itself existentially I think
19 adds to all of these problems and these conditions.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you for
21 elaborating. That is very, very helpful to know, and
22 I'll definitely be reaching out individually to just
23 get a better understanding on the legal ramifications
24 here and just how critical it is for us to have
25

2 funding allocated that really meets the need of every
3 single case. No more questions for this panel.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

5 Next, we will be calling Ilze Caroline Thielmann
6 followed by Judith Goldner, Vianey Romero-Mendez, and
7 Siya Hegde. You can go ahead whenever you're ready.

8 ILZE CAROLINE THIELMANN: Thank you. Good
9 afternoon. I'm Ilze Thielmann. I am the Director of
10 Team TLC NYC. You've heard quite a bit about our
11 activities at the Port Authority today, and I'm glad
12 to finally be able to give our perspective on what
13 has been going on down there.

14 We have been the only non-profit at Port
15 Authority along with one other group for the last
16 several weeks. A lot of organizations have testified
17 that they have been at Port Authority, and that's
18 true, but they have been for a few weeks at a time.
19 We have been there since day one, since before the
20 City was there, since before the City ever took a
21 part in greeting and helping these migrants, Team TLC
22 was on the ground and then the City has been playing
23 catch-up ever since to be honest with you.

24 My partners at Port Authority who have
25 been there day-in, day-out, we are literally there

2 seven days a week and I try to be there six days a
3 week, but my partners are there seven days a week.
4 Team TLC is always there. It was mentioned earlier,
5 Artists-Athletes-Activist. Power Malu is the
6 individual who is there literally every single day. I
7 don't know how he does it, and Adama Bah, who's also
8 been mentioned here, she is an equal partner among
9 Artists-Athletes-Activists and Team TLC. She is a
10 powerhouse and hopefully she'll be able to come here
11 and testify today. These three partners are the ones
12 who are every day down there greeting, feeding,
13 clothing, assisting these people. Rest assured that
14 every single person who has been reticketed to
15 another city was reticketed by Team TLC. Team TLC NYC
16 is the one who is sending these people to meet with
17 their families, whether it be by an Uber, whether it
18 be by a bus, a train, a plane, we are the ones who
19 are reuniting those families through that transport.
20 The City has testified earlier today people are
21 getting transported from the Welcome Center at Port
22 Authority. They're being transported by me, sometimes
23 literally by me, because we have no funding. We have
24 zero funding from the City, from the State, from the
25 Feds, from anybody. We are getting grants that are

2 being given to us by other charitable organizations,
3 and we are bearing the burden of relocating these
4 people to be with their families.

5 It's interesting because there was also a
6 mention of the DHS program to relocate people when
7 they need to be in other cities to be with their
8 families, and that system does not work. I don't know
9 of anybody who has gone to a DHS shelter and has been
10 relocated. In fact, two days ago I got a text from a
11 city employee saying the Queens Borough President has
12 a family that is in a shelter in Queens and they
13 would love for you to help them get to Chicago. This
14 actually happened. I said how can they even ask that
15 when I've been begging for funding and then the
16 Queens Borough President's office asked me to send
17 these people to Chicago and I said you know what,
18 that's what we do, please come down, and I said to
19 the representative of the Queens Borough President's
20 office I don't know how the office has the audacity
21 to do this, however, and then the person said we have
22 no funding, and I said I have no funding. Team TLC
23 has no funding. We are deeply, deeply in the red. We
24 have about, I wrote it down, I just checked my bank
25 balance, \$1,642.72 in the bank at the moment and

2 every last penny of that plus about 20,000 grand is
3 owed to me, to my volunteers, to other people who
4 have helped out so we are deeply in the red and yet
5 the Queens Borough President is asking me to send
6 these people to Chicago, which I did, and it went on
7 my AmEx, my personal AmEx, so what we really need
8 obviously to be able to keep doing this is funding,
9 we need funding, and the City has not stepped up in
10 any way, shape, or form. The City has not bought a
11 donut at the Port Authority for these people. The
12 City has not put a person in a cab and paid for it.
13 My organization is doing all of that. Artists-
14 Athletes-Activists are doing the legwork and making
15 sure these people are getting into the shelters and
16 doing the troubleshooting after people are in the
17 shelters and get kicked out in the middle of the
18 night. Adama Bah is on the phone all day, I don't
19 know when she sleeps, she's on the phone all day,
20 every day, running around trying to help people who
21 have been kicked out of this broken, broken shelter
22 system and she will hopefully be here soon to testify
23 as to how broken that system is. I just want to
24 address some things. That's kind of what I prepared
25 to say, but I wanted to address some of the things

2 that were said here earlier by the administration.
3 The administration says that the reason why they're
4 opening this tent camp is because they need the time
5 to be able to triage these people and the work that
6 is being done at the Port Authority is just not
7 working, it's not the right place for it. Well,
8 that's ironic because when we are at the Port
9 Authority doing this work, the only reason why we
10 ever have any problems with getting the work done is
11 a) the funding, and, of course, we just go into our
12 own pockets to address that problem, and b) that we
13 are being rushed by city employees to wrap it up and
14 get these people out of here. I was told today that
15 if somebody is going to be picked up by their family
16 member, they have one hour, one hour for that family
17 member to get there and pick them up and get them out
18 of there because why, I still don't understand why.
19 You heard a bunch of times today we have 45 minutes
20 to an hour to triage these people and do what needs
21 to be done. There is no such time limit. The Port
22 Authority is not putting a time limit on the time we
23 spend with these people. The City is doing that.
24 Every day I am pulling people off lines that are
25 being taken out to be brought to the shelter, people

2 whose family members are on their way, people who I
3 am trying to send to Chicago, people I am trying to
4 triage because they are in the LGBTQ community and
5 should not be put into the general population. I have
6 to go and like physically pull people off the line
7 because the city employees are trying to just get
8 them out the door in that 45 minutes to one hour time
9 period so when the City says it's not working at Port
10 Authority and we need to have 96 hours to figure out
11 what happens with these people, it makes me want to
12 either laugh or throw up because they're the ones who
13 are putting time limits on what we do at the Port
14 Authority. If they gave us the funding and the space
15 and time, I don't mean space but just get out of our
16 way, stop trying to interfere, and the time to do it,
17 it would be a lot more successful, and it has been
18 very successful. We have reunited many, many, many
19 families physically at the Port Authority despite the
20 City's best efforts to get us the hell out of there
21 when we're trying to get people there to be reunited,
22 we've sent them to other cities. I don't even have
23 the numbers, but yesterday I think there were 25
24 families who were reunited there at Port Authority.
25 Every day we're sending 20 people to other cities to

2 be reunited with their families, and I don't
3 understand the imperative that the City seems to feel
4 to get these people rushed off to the shelter when
5 all we're hearing today is how overburdened the
6 shelter system is. Why would we send people to the
7 shelter when they have family they can be with? Why
8 is the City not paying the 135 dollars it takes to
9 get somebody on a bus to Chicago and choosing instead
10 to have them placed in a shelter where they're paying
11 135 dollars a day to keep them there? Why are they
12 sending family members to different shelters so that
13 you can spend 135 dollars a day here and 135 dollars
14 a day there instead of putting the families together
15 in a family shelter where it costs 190 dollars a day
16 to keep the family together? I'm perplexed at the
17 logic behind we're going to separate families, we're
18 going to put them in this absurd tent camp, and
19 that's supposed to be a solution. That's not the
20 solution. We have come up with a solution. We just
21 need the City to support the solution that we have
22 and to provide the funding, to provide the
23 assistance, to stop interfering, and to get out of
24 the way.

25 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

2 SIYA HIGDE: Hi. Good afternoon, Chair
3 Hanif, Staff Members of the Council who've supported
4 this very, very important hearing today. My name is
5 Siya Hegde. I'm here as Housing Policy Counsel to the
6 Bronx Defenders. We are a holistic legal public
7 defender organization that serves over 20,000 clients
8 across the Bronx in various legal system contacts.
9 I'm here to speak from an intersectional frame. The
10 political weaponization of newly arrived asylum
11 seekers in our city is not only an indictment of our
12 system of immigration and social services, but it is
13 a multi-system failure of government at every level.
14 The right to shelter in New York City continues to be
15 under assault. Since the courts articulated it in the
16 1979 Callahan decision, successive mayoral
17 administrations and City Councils have created all
18 kinds of costly and easily exploitable systems of
19 temporary shelter that do not provide homeless
20 individuals and families with meaningful, safe
21 affordable housing solutions. The result is a city
22 with over 60,000 New Yorkers who sleep in temporary
23 shelters including over 15,000 children, a city with
24 nearly 43,000 vacant housing units across all its
25 five boroughs, and while laws and policies have been

2 passed with the intent to make this human warehousing
3 system humane, there are countless stories that we
4 can add to what has already been said about how basic
5 rights to food, water, linguistic, and transportation
6 services and public assistance never materialize.

7 Sadly, this result is not unexpected. The people who
8 need housing and care the most including newly
9 arrived migrants belong to a disproportionate
10 demographic of black and brown children with
11 children. Not only do they continue to suffer the
12 harms of heightened xenophobia and racial biases in
13 the wake of this humanitarian crisis but through
14 government intervention and neglect they are over-
15 surveilled, policed, and caged as political pawns. As
16 just one example, city officials as we've heard are
17 in the process of turning a Bronx parking lot into a
18 temporary encampment zone, and there is clearly no
19 plan in place as to where the thousand or so
20 estimated migrants will be permanently housed. We are
21 troubled by reports of proposals to increase the NYPD
22 presence in the area as a response to the creation of
23 an encampment, and this is in a community that's
24 already faced severe divestment of resources. This
25 type of temporary human warehousing must be abolished

2 as it does not meet any commonsense definition of a
3 right to shelter. We ask that the Council find the
4 courage to do something truly transformational,
5 rather than spend money criminalizing poverty. In the
6 short-term, it must use every means it has to turn
7 vacant units into housing for asylum seekers and
8 homeless New Yorkers, and in the long-term it must
9 use its budgetary and legal powers to create a real
10 capital plan for building safe, affordable,
11 permanent, and dignified housing for all. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you both so
13 much, and I really do wish that the administration
14 was here to listen to you, but this is all recorded
15 so we will make sure that they receive this.

16 Ilze, could you speak more about how much
17 money has gone into reticketing?

18 ILZE CAROLINE THIELMANN: I would say at
19 this point it's approximately 80,000 to 85,000
20 dollars, and that also includes Ubers to get people
21 to where they're going here in the city or over the
22 New Jersey border or something like, but it's been a
23 a lot of money. I haven't had the time to gather up
24 my receipts and give a final total, but the 60,000
25 dollars that was quoted earlier was just through the

2 beginning of September or the end of August so we're
3 much further along now and the money is going out
4 much more quickly than it's coming in.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Reticketing, this
6 refers to plane fare, train, Uber?

7 ILZE CAROLINE THIELMANN: Yeah,
8 reticketing, we generally call plane, train, and bus,
9 but I'm saying we have spent more than just that
10 segment of getting someone to a different city. We've
11 also spent additional dollars on Ubers and taxis and
12 things like that.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I know you've made
14 appeals and have asked for funding from the Mayor's
15 Office of Immigrant Affairs. Could you share what
16 those conversations have looked like?

17 ILZE CAROLINE THIELMANN: Generally what
18 we're told is yes, we know, you absolutely deserve
19 it, you absolutely deserve to have some money, we're
20 working on it, we're working on it, we're going to
21 connect you with people, etc. The main response that
22 has borne any fruit is that some people from MOIA
23 have connected me with United Way, which of course is
24 not a city agency, so I've recently been awarded a
25 grant from United Way. I don't even know how much

2 that is, but that's hopefully going to get us through
3 a couple more weeks, and we've also received a grant
4 from Save the Children, another non-profit obviously,
5 so we've been talking to MOIA for nine weeks about
6 needing some funding and basically what we're told is
7 we'll try to figure it out, you have to be a
8 contractor, you have to submit for an RFP and, of
9 course, we're competing with organizations like
10 Catholic Charities and the Red Cross who are huge and
11 already well-funded and are able to front a certain
12 amount of money to, for example, open up this
13 Navigation Center and so they were granted millions
14 of dollars to do this. They were also given millions
15 of dollars to provide legal services, and, yet, we
16 have people who we have seen at Port Authority who
17 then go to the Navigation Center, are given a slip of
18 paper that says come back in 10 days or 13 days or
19 whatever and they come back and tell us that they
20 have been told at the Navigation Center if you go
21 back to Port Authority they'll help you over there so
22 this multimillion dollar center that is being funded
23 with taxpayer money is sending people back to little
24 old Team TLC and Artists-Athletes-Activists and Adama
25 Bah who finally, I'm so glad that you guys

2 (INAUDIBLE) because you have to hear from these
3 incredible individuals, but we are being burdened
4 even after Catholic Charities and the Red Cross is
5 given all this money to open this Navigation Center,
6 they come back to us and they seek more help and,
7 guess what, we give it to them. We always give it to
8 them. Not only are we ready, willing, and able to
9 give it to them, we are oftentimes in conflict with
10 the city employees at the Port Authority because we
11 wish to give them this assistance. We are told,
12 listen, you can't keep having these people come back.
13 It's not like we're inviting them back. They're
14 coming back because they know this is the one place
15 or one of the few places that they come back and
16 actually get assistance so the city employees are
17 telling us you're messing with our numbers, this is
18 just going to delay things further, and we say what
19 are we here for, we're here to help asylum seekers,
20 we're going to help asylum seekers, and you can work
21 with us or you can work against us but we're going to
22 do it with or without your help so that is what we
23 have been up against for weeks, and the audacity for
24 people to ask us for more help or to try stand in the
25 way of our helping these asylum seekers who are

2 seeking that help or to try to rush us out the door
3 and get these people to shelters when they should be
4 with their families and then to sit here, to have the
5 Mayor's Office sit here and talk about all these
6 incredible things that they're doing for asylum
7 seekers, and I'm shaking my head the entire time
8 because they're not doing it, they're not providing
9 these services, they're certainly not providing them
10 at Port Authority, they've left us behind at Port
11 Authority, and this Navigation Center is really, you
12 have to win a lotto to get any assistance there
13 because you have to get an appointment, you can't get
14 an appointment online, you show up, you get sent
15 away, and there's no help for these people. They go
16 there and they say I need legal help, I have an ICE
17 check-in coming up, I have an asylum appearance
18 that's coming up, I need legal help, and they're told
19 come back in 10 days when their ICE check-in is in
20 three days so they come back to us, and, with no
21 funding and with the City trying to stop us from
22 helping these people, we're facing an uphill battle.
23 If the city would just give us the funding and give
24 us the assistance and we need people who care about
25 these people, who are not seeing them as a problem to

2 be shunted off to the shelters. We are dealing with
3 people who really just seem to be interested in one
4 thing and one thing only, just getting them out of
5 the way as soon as possible, and that's not what we
6 do, and we're not going to allow the City to stand in
7 the way of our doing what we do, but it'd be really
8 nice if they would stop trying to stand in our way.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. No more
10 questions.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
12 Next, we will be calling Anne Pillsbury followed by
13 Patrick Boyle, Terry Lawson, and Juan Diaz. Anne, you
14 can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

16 ANNE PILLSBURY: Hi. Thanks for inviting
17 all of us to this hearing. The Central American Legal
18 Assistance, we've been helping Central American
19 asylum seekers for about 30 years, and, even though
20 there are a lot of defects in the City's response, I
21 have to say that all of our clients that came across
22 the border probably spent their first few nights in
23 the city sleeping on the trains so it's nice to see
24 everybody working together trying to come up with a
25 solution to help this artificially created surge in

2 people, but most of us have been working with this
3 same population for many, many years. We all have to
4 take a deep breath and step back and try to
5 understand the process a little better. I appreciate
6 the fact everyone's been referring to everybody as an
7 asylum seeker, but the sad fact is that it's a mixed
8 population. Some of them are what the law recognizes
9 as legitimate asylum seekers, and they have a chance
10 at winning their cases. The majority probably aren't,
11 and so the real tough problem here is trying to
12 figure out who has a shot at asylum and who doesn't.
13 There are a lot of legitimate reasons people leave
14 their home countries from a human standpoint, and
15 it's right that we should try to welcome them here as
16 neighbors, but in terms of deploying legal services
17 we have to focus on people that under our narrow
18 statutes have a shot at asylum and that's probably
19 only about 20 percent of the people that we have had
20 landed on our doorstep so how we identify them and
21 then how we help them is really tricky because those
22 of us that do free legal services are already swamped
23 helping this same population, the Central Americans,
24 the Venezuelans, the Nicaraguans are mostly the
25 people that we see. Now, it's statutory. It's not a

2 matter of will, but you cannot get work authorization
3 when you're newly arrived. You cannot get work
4 authorization unless and until you apply for asylum,
5 and that, of course, invites a perverse incentive to
6 apply for asylum even if you're not eligible. Most of
7 the legal service providers won't do that. We want to
8 make sure it's a legitimate case before we apply, but
9 they're still going to wait as Mario Russell pointed
10 out many, many months before they're going to have
11 work authorization so that's just a non-starter.
12 That's statutory, and we can't change that. The one-
13 year filing deadline is statutory, and we can't
14 change that, unless we get control of Congress and
15 life gets much, much better, but we have to work with
16 the realities that we're...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 ANNE PILLSBURY: Up against because we
19 can't represent everybody, and the RFP the City put
20 out was ill-conceived...

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much.
22 Could you wrap up?

23 ANNE PILLSBURY: Yeah. We need to work
24 more closely together with the Mayor's Office to come
25 up with a realistic way to provide legal services.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

4 Next, we're going to call Patrick Boyle. You can go
5 ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

7 PATRICK BOYLE: Thank you to the Chair and
8 to the Members of this Committee.

9 My name is Patrick Boyle. I'm an
10 Assistant Vice President for Public Policy for
11 Volunteers of America. We are a non-profit dedicated
12 to ending homelessness in the New York region by
13 2050, and we run four family shelters, an intake
14 assessment shelter, a number of DV shelters, and
15 other transitional housing where bebx over the summer
16 we started to see a large number of asylum-seeking
17 and migrant families coming to our shelters in need
18 of services, and we immediately got to work on these
19 folks that we are proud and honored to be serving
20 them, many of whom have come from unspeakably
21 difficult circumstances and a really arduous journey
22 to get here, so we thank the Council's attention to
23 this issue. We also just want to give a thanks and
24 some attention to the DHS team who have been working
25 under incredibly difficult circumstances so we do

2 want to acknowledge our government partners in this
3 as well as the Council for all of the attention that
4 you're bringing to this and to the individual Council
5 Members who have been very helpful to us where we
6 have had sites that a lot of these folks coming
7 through in their Districts.

8 I don't really have anything beyond what
9 you've heard today, but I just want to acknowledge
10 and sort of second a lot of what has been said in
11 terms of the need. We have immediate needs for
12 essential items, toiletries, culturally appropriate
13 foods, kitchenware, clothing, a lot of these people
14 have come here with just the clothes on their backs
15 so we look forward to a coordinated effort by the
16 City to really link donations and philanthropic
17 efforts with non-profit providers like us. We really
18 need that ramped up, and we need it very quickly. Of
19 course, longer term we're going to have a need for a
20 greatly bolstered legal services infrastructure to
21 meet the needs of these families who are here
22 applying for this. Everyone we're trying to partner
23 with right now, as you've heard time and again, is
24 very over-subscribed and under-capacity for that.

2 We also stand ready to work with the
3 federal government, our Congressional representatives
4 on anything that we can be advocating for from a
5 federal perspective, whether it's funding or whether
6 it's policy changes to help process folks, whatever
7 is needed from the advocate community to really push
8 for, please use us and other non-profit partners like
9 us to help advocate. We're going to need a major
10 response to this as a humanitarian crisis, and we
11 know it's going to take some federal help.

12 Again, everything I've said you've heard
13 from many other speakers today. I just want to say
14 that it is our mission and our honor to serve these
15 people, it's been challenging for us as a provider
16 and certainly for the City...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 PATRICK BOYLE: Looking forward to
19 partnering with everybody to make it a positive...

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

21 PATRICK BOYLE: For these families.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

24 Next, we will go to Juan Diaz. You can go ahead when
25 the Sergeant calls time.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

3 JUAN DIAZ: Thank you, Chair Hanif and
4 City Council Immigration Committee, for holding
5 today's.

6 My name is Juan Diaz, and I am a Policy
7 and Advocacy Associate at Citizens' Committee for
8 Children, a multi-issue children's advocacy
9 organization dedicated to ensuring that every New
10 York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

11 Over 3,000 asylum-seeking children and their families
12 have recently arrived in New York City seeking safety
13 and an opportunity to have a better life. The city's
14 housing crisis, lack of shelter capacity, and fiscal
15 constraints have further exacerbated their struggle.

16 We applaud the City's effort to establish a migrant
17 Navigation Center and to partner with community-based
18 organizations to open more. However, so much more
19 must be done to adequately address the urgent needs
20 of asylum-seeking families. As we all know, families
21 are struggling in DHS shelters due to lack of Spanish
22 language access, school supplies for their children,
23 clothing, cash aid, and legal assistance just to name
24 a few fundamental resource barriers. Earlier this
25 week, over 80 migrant children residing in a DHS

2 shelter were added to a District 10 Bronx elementary
3 school. These children lacked essential school
4 supplies and clothes. Teachers and school officials
5 generously purchased a few essential items, and
6 community-based organizations like the New York
7 Immigration Coalition stepped in to help. However,
8 community-based organizations have limited resources
9 and need the City's help. It is critical that the
10 City develop a robust and coordinated approach to the
11 provision of emergency support services for these
12 migrant families. The City must fund and provide
13 essential items such as clothes, toiletries, cash
14 assistance, and transportation assistance, ensure
15 that all contracted programs have access to
16 translation services, both written and verbal. As
17 many partners have said, the City needs to fund legal
18 assistance for these migrant families as the
19 immigration system is very difficult and complex.
20 Additionally, intracity communication must be
21 improved to connect migrant families with services
22 and social supports. For the long-term solution to
23 improve the well-being of migrant families, the
24 CityFHEPS voucher eligibility should be expanded to
25 include undocumented households. The City must also

2 proceed with the hiring of shelter-based community
3 coordinators as critical liaisons between families,
4 shelters, and school personnel for all homeless
5 families.

6 Additionally, the City must (INAUDIBLE)
7 more stops needed for city social services in all
8 areas of the civic government. To this end, the 90-
9 day rule of shelter stay prior to CityFHEPs
10 eligibility must end in order to move families from
11 shelter to permanent housing quickly.

12 As a formerly undocumented immigrant from
13 Ecuador who arrived at the age of 12 to New York
14 City, I understand the struggles to assimilate to a
15 new culture..

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

17 JUAN DIAZ: I had the existence of family
18 and social networks. Thank you so much. I look
19 forward to submitting our written testimony.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you so
21 much. Chair, do you have anything.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No questions.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

24 We'll move on to the next panel. We'll call Peter
25 Malvan, Ariadna Phillips, Adama Bah, and Power Malu.

2 ARIADNA PHILLIPS: Ariadna Phillips, South
3 Bronx Mutual Aid, part of the Mutual Aid Collective.
4 The Mutual Aid Collective, which includes many mutual
5 aids, allies, faith communities, and autonomous
6 activists working alongside arriving migrants, has
7 been handling ongoing care and support for thousands
8 of asylum-seeking migrants since early August every
9 day. We have spent tens of thousands in crowdfunds on
10 food, phones, migrant transportation, medical care
11 access, medications, essential supplies, home goods,
12 clothing, supply transport, 24-hour rapid response
13 for those left unsheltered by the city, legal and
14 court services, workforce preparation, support for
15 queer refugees, family reunification travel, and
16 sanctuaries across the city as well as respite sites.
17 This does not account for the endless translation
18 work and thousands of hours of unpaid general labor.
19 We have done this completely outside the scope of
20 government and affiliated nonprofits as unpaid
21 organizers in coalition with arriving asylum seekers.
22 We do not, on principle, partner with racist and
23 harmful entities. Before asylum seekers arrive in New
24 York, most have their identity documents taken from
25 them at the border by immigration officials, many are

2 forcibly separated from their families without phones
3 to even know where they are. Migrant families and
4 individuals have been consistently abandoned to our
5 care outside of Port Authority and outside shelter
6 intake. This includes emergency medical transport
7 upon their arrival, which we coordinate and do
8 accompaniment to city hospitals as many who are
9 arriving are injured and ill from Texas detention
10 encampment centers, which according to migrants the
11 new Orchard Beach encampment closely resembles. We
12 tirelessly pick up asylum seekers that have not known
13 where to go and were left on the streets walking to
14 addresses printed on immigration documents, churches
15 and shelters that have no idea who they are. Dozens
16 of migrants have attempted to walk from city airports
17 in areas like Newark, LaGuardia, JFK, and White
18 Plains who we find and escort to safe shelter. It is
19 through this organizing we have realized the depth
20 and breadth of shelter abuse and general negligence
21 to all unhoused New Yorkers. Belongings are
22 constantly stolen or repossessed by shelter staff,
23 including in some cases immigration paperwork. Queer
24 asylum seekers are often assaulted and now within our
25 sanctuaries. We have heard from hundreds of migrants

2 that they prefer to sleep on the streets than in the
3 shelters because of the danger. Despite the
4 omnipresence of DHS police, migrants trying to report
5 abuse in shelters are told simply to vacate the
6 shelter. Migrants have been beaten and tased by large
7 groups of shelter police and NYPD in retaliation for
8 speaking out. Families, including mothers, have been
9 explicitly threatened by shelter officials for
10 reporting ongoing trafficking and other corruption
11 that occurs with simply the blessing of certain
12 shelter officials. When we speak to recently arriving
13 migrants outside Port Authority, in some cases
14 they're only given information on how to get to a
15 shelter. They did not get to the multimillion dollar
16 Navigation Center. According to an arriving migrant,
17 it felt like the city shook his hand, took his photo,
18 and he was led through the back. The Navigation
19 Center is of little use to migrants if they can't get
20 there and they don't even know it exists. There's
21 over a month wait for appointment and only 25 people
22 can be seen a day. Countless others walking for hours
23 to assigned shelters are often sent again and again
24 to different locations, told there are no beds
25 available, and they walk back across boroughs. They

2 sleep on floors in waiting rooms from early morning
3 until late at night. The food they receive in the
4 shelter is frozen. At PATH shelter intake, they are
5 bused in the middle of the night, told to walk across
6 boroughs with their children without support and made
7 to leave again at 7 in the morning only to spend the
8 whole day and evening sent back to PATH again over
9 and over, pregnant women and children.

10 We testify here today to give you a sense
11 of the gaps and, frankly, abuses in shelter, food,
12 safety, and dignity that thousands of asylum seekers
13 have faced upon arrival in our city. There is nothing
14 humanitarian about the existing shelter system, and
15 the plan to place migrants in outdoor tents in flood
16 zones as the temperature drops is cruel and
17 potentially fatal. We are here to say our city must
18 do far better. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

21 Next, we'll go to Peter Malvan.

22 KARIM WALKER: Thank you. Peter's not here
23 so I'm going to speak on his behalf. Thank you,
24 Committee Chair Hanif and to the City Council, for
25 holding this important hearing and the opportunity

2 for us to testify in front of you today. My name is
3 Karim Walker, and I work for the Safety Net Project
4 at the Urban Justice Center. We are submitting
5 detailed written testimony, but we feel it's
6 imperative that we get the verbal testimony to you as
7 quickly as possible.

8 Since the new administration came into
9 office in January, we have witnessed a steady,
10 increasingly aggressive assault on homeless people
11 across the five boroughs. The construction of a
12 refugee camp through the creation of a giant tent in
13 a flood-prone zone on the margins of the Bronx as we
14 move into fall and winter clearly indicate that this
15 is a runaround. These plans are clearly intended to
16 undermine the city's sacrosanct right to shelter,
17 something that's been in place for four decades and
18 that countless thousands of homeless New Yorkers have
19 relied upon. This is yet another effort by the City
20 to hide rather than help people of color as well. The
21 city is scapegoating migrants as the cause of the
22 homelessness crisis that they failed to manage. The
23 city has seen an increase in asylum seekers, but
24 we've also seen eviction, domestic violence, and
25 affordability crises that are causing large numbers

2 of people to enter the shelters. Moreover, by
3 creating a new system only for asylum seekers, the
4 Mayor is clearly opening the door for providing
5 lesser care to those in need. There is nothing human
6 about the City's plan. In fact, it's downright
7 barbaric. What the City is doing is part of a long
8 line of efforts by different Mayors to try to limit
9 access to DHS shelters rather than focus on getting
10 homeless people into permanent housing, the only true
11 solution to addressing homelessness. The Mayor has
12 available to him significant housing resources such
13 as HPD, NYCHA, and elsewhere as well as the ability
14 to challenge widespread source of income
15 discrimination that workers routinely use. The City
16 could also prioritize placement of people into
17 permanent housing in all these ways. They could also
18 open new hotels and facilities as they did during
19 COVID in response to the pandemic when people need to
20 get out of congregate shelters. They could this, but
21 instead of having to talk about the painful reality
22 of them opening shelters in a flood-prone zone on a
23 parking lot in the margins of the city as we enter
24 the winter season, our cooler temperatures.
25 (INAUDIBLE) thousands of people have been shoved

2 (INAUDIBLE) subways, into the streets by city
3 agencies, DHS, NYPD, Sanitation, Parks, etc., though
4 very few have gotten housing. Our office works with
5 homeless individuals who sleep on subways and in
6 encampments and in the shelters. We know firsthand
7 that these sweeps end up with people losing key
8 belongings, chief among them medical and paperwork
9 such as their birth certificates, maybe even their
10 IDs. Thank you again.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
12 Again, you can all submit longer testimony. We accept
13 written testimony up to 72 hours after the hearing.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much for
15 being here with us since 11 or earlier when we
16 started the rally so I see you and I deeply, deeply
17 appreciate all the work that you're doing.

18 KARIM WALKER: My pleasure, Councilwoman.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
20 Next, we will move to Adama Bah followed by Power
21 Malu.

22 ADAMA BAH: Can you hear me? Hi. My name
23 is Adama Bah. I'm an immigration advocate. I'm also
24 formerly undocumented. When I first heard about these
25 buses, it was very important for me to step up and

2 assist because I knew the City would fail these folks
3 like they have failed me. I'm going to talk about
4 what's going on in DHS. I sat here and listened to a
5 lot of lies that DHS has said. These migrants are
6 being abused by DHS. The process of what happens is
7 once they leave Port Authority where we are every
8 day, they will shuttle them to the shelter where
9 they're then sitting there for hours, sometimes 17
10 hours sitting, just waiting for intake. Once they are
11 done with intake, they are given a one-way Metro
12 card, instructions in English how to get to their
13 destination. They are not instructed how to get there
14 in another language at all. Once they get there to
15 the shelter that they're supposed to be at, they're
16 told there's no bed for them. They must leave, and
17 they're escorted by DHS police. If they do not leave,
18 NYPD is called on them, and folks leave because they
19 cannot risk being arrested because they are not
20 undocumented, they're still asylees waiting to be
21 processed. Once they leave these facilities, they are
22 asleep in the streets. They are calling my team, they
23 are calling South Bronx Mutual Aid, they're calling
24 EmPower, they're calling (INAUDIBLE) and they're
25 asking us to pick them up. We have been in the

2 streets until 1 a.m. trying to house these folks. We
3 have 18-year-old migrants with adult males in the
4 shelter. They're so many ongoing safety issues at
5 this DHS shelter. I have sent countless emails to
6 every elected official for help, but I am constantly
7 ignored and told that this is not going on. DHS has
8 been truly in denial about what's going on. African
9 migrants aren't allowed on these Abbott buses so when
10 they do arrive, which they are arriving in other
11 routes, they're not adequately being taken care of.
12 Their halal meals are not being taken care of. Their
13 dietary needs are not being taken care of. Their
14 religious needs are not taken care of. Another issue
15 that's happening in DHS shelter is clothing. These
16 migrants are coming off the buses with just the
17 clothing on their backs, sometimes short and flip-
18 flops. For weeks they would have the same thing on
19 with no support. These DHS shelters do not have
20 social services or social worker to work with them.
21 The City has not prepared for this. There is no
22 social service for undocumented folks, and we're
23 trying to build that but we're met with a lot of
24 pushback. Being kicked out is constantly a thing.
25 Every 10 days, undocumented folks have to recertify.

2 If they do not recertify, they are kicked out of the
3 shelter. We had two migrants that were kicked out of
4 the shelter last night at midnight. The migrants,
5 themselves, recorded the interaction because no one
6 believed them as to what is going. The Welcome Center
7 is not so welcomed because they're being returned
8 back to us for us to help them. We have proof of
9 everything that we're saying. We have countless
10 pictures, videos, and emails so I'm upset and you can
11 hear it in my voice because they're making me sound
12 like I'm a lunatic, but we're not. We're advocating
13 for folks who have been silenced.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
15 Power, you can go ahead.

16 POWER MALU: My name is Power Malu. I
17 represent Artists-Athletes-Activists based in the
18 Lower East Side of Manhattan. Our team has been at
19 the Port Authority almost I'm going to say every day,
20 you hear my voice like this because it's a result of
21 constantly trying to advocate for the migrants, the
22 asylum seekers that are coming in. At the same time,
23 when they do arrive on the bus, we are not
24 sugarcoating anything. We are letting them know that
25 their journey has been and unfortunately it's going

2 to continue to be long here in New York City because
3 we say that we are a sanctuary city and as
4 representatives of New York City we have to make sure
5 that we advocate for these people and we tell them
6 the truth and they are faced with a lot of pushback.
7 There's not enough translators at the centers. As
8 Adama has been mentioning, we actually go to these
9 spaces and we try to translate and we try to help out
10 and we get met with aggression and pushback. We're
11 not met with any kindness. We bring food to these
12 places, and they rush people inside. They tell them
13 they shouldn't be outside, go inside when they see
14 us, they know who we are. We meet them with love and
15 empathy at the Port Authority and we see that there's
16 also a show that happens when a lot of politicians or
17 whoever wants to take pictures with people, they come
18 to this space to do that, and we want to make sure
19 that it's not just hey, welcome to New York City and
20 that's it. We're actually going to the airports,
21 we're following up, we're going to Randall's Island
22 to pick people up that are stranded, that are told at
23 11 p.m. that they have to go to another shelter or
24 they're excuse is well, they arrived at 10 o'clock,
25 we had this paper for them waiting at 5 o'clock. You

2 can't wait until the next morning. You know that
3 these people are new into this country. After 10
4 p.m., we know as New Yorkers how messed up the train
5 system is with all the train work that goes on so
6 you're trying to tell these people how to get to
7 another place where we know that they're going to get
8 turned away. For us, it's all about how can we
9 continue to represent New York City as it is put on
10 the map and being told to the rest of the world that
11 we do welcome people but yet we're pushing them away.
12 When we're at the Port Authority, we provide food for
13 them, we're asking other organizations to pull from
14 their budgets to help us out, and that's all based
15 off of the relationships that we have. We're
16 providing food. As Team TLC has testified, we're
17 helping to reticket people. We're doing all of this
18 work that we don't have the funding to do but we have
19 friends and resources that we're counting on to help
20 us because we know that if we're not there, these
21 people are going to be abandoned. They're going to be
22 shipped and pushed into these buses from one bus to
23 the next bus and then they're going to be left
24 stranded in New York City trying to fend for
25 themselves so all we're trying to do is represent

2 this city as it's supposed to be a sanctuary city,
3 we're trying to do the right thing by these migrants
4 because all of us are migrants. If you weren't born
5 here 500 years ago and you didn't have family members
6 that were here 500 years ago, you are an immigrant. I
7 was born and raised in the Lower East Side, my
8 parents were born in Puerto Rico, but I consider
9 myself an immigrant and I tell that to these people,
10 and I thank them for shining a light on the system
11 that has been shambles. This housing system, the
12 shelter system, we have unhoused people living on the
13 streets because they'd rather live in the streets
14 than in these shelters and now the migrants that are
15 coming in are doing us all a favor by shining a light
16 on this system that has had no accountability for
17 years and years and years. Since I was about seven or
18 eight years old, I remember my mom going to HRA to
19 get food stamps and how they disrespected her because
20 she didn't speak the language. Now, at my age, I'm
21 going to these shelter systems trying to represent
22 for these people and I see how they continue to be
23 disrespected and I'm disrespected because at first
24 they think that I'm coming for shelter and I say no,
25 I'm trying to help you with this process. We know you

2 don't have translators here. I'm just trying to help
3 you smooth out this process, and I'm still getting
4 met with this disrespect and it's like we don't care,
5 nobody's going to do anything to us no matter how
6 many emails you send, nothing's going to happen. I'll
7 just leave it at that. I'm very passionate and that's
8 just off the top of my head but there's way more and
9 we have film and footage and pictures to prove all
10 the lies to debunk everything that they've been
11 saying. They always say no, we provide beds to
12 everybody, we provide clothing to everybody, we
13 provide food to everybody then why is it that it
14 takes these non-profit organizations, unfunded non-
15 profit organizations to do their work.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I did want to learn a
18 little bit more from Adama about the African migrants
19 who I remember for several weeks were taken to a
20 mosque, a community center, and then the community
21 figured out a meal train and clothing and other
22 expenses for them. Could you just speak a little bit
23 more about how our African siblings are being treated
24 in this process?

2 ADAMA BAH: Sure. African migrants are
3 arriving in New York City just like the Venezuelans,
4 but, once they arrive to Texas, they are held in
5 detention center and then transferred to Atlanta
6 detention center. Atlanta has a lot of strict rules.
7 Once they are released at detention center, they are
8 depending on black-led organizations to pay their way
9 here. We pay for their flight and their buses here.
10 Once they arrive, they are not welcomed in the
11 shelter. There is no language access whatsoever. You
12 do not have (INAUDIBLE) They will sit them to the
13 side and tell them there's no way we can help you.
14 They also turn them away from the shelter. Once they
15 leave, they go to the mosque. There are thousands and
16 thousands of African migrants sleeping at mosques.
17 The borough that has the most African migrants is the
18 Bronx, the second is Harlem, the third is Queens. I
19 cannot say what mosques they are. There are only two
20 mosques that said that I can tell which they are, but
21 they're not being taken care of. They're depending on
22 organizations like South Bronx Mutual Aid, EmPower,
23 but they're just depending on the community to help
24 them. The City has not assisted in any way for
25 African migrants. (INAUDIBLE) for the Bronx.

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. No more
3 questions for this panel.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
5 Again, any other testimony you have, you can
6 definitely email it over to us.

7 Moving on, we will call Terry Lawson
8 followed by Scott Hutchins, Charisma White, and
9 Dmitri Daniel Glinski. Terry, you can go ahead when
10 the Sergeant calls time.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

12 TERRY LAWSON: Good evening. My name is
13 Terry Lawson, and I'm Executive Director of UnLocal.
14 We provide community education, outreach, and legal
15 representation for New York City's undocumented
16 immigrant communities. Since we were founded 10 years
17 ago, we've always been devoted to advocating for
18 those seeking safety at our borders. I'm also the co-
19 founder and Steering Committee Member of the Bronx
20 Immigration Partnership. Thank you, Chair Hanif, the
21 Immigration Committee, and the Council for holding
22 this hearing.

23 As providers, it is critical that we
24 provide our communities with accurate and the most
25 up-to-date information as these puzzle pieces keep

2 shifting. While we applaud some of the centralized
3 efforts testified about today, we have been forced to
4 ask ourselves why it is taking the City so long to
5 undertake an effort of this nature. Given the fact
6 that, as Council Member Hanif shared many hours ago
7 at the beginning of this hearing, we have always been
8 a place where immigrants seek safety and stability.
9 We ask why so many of these current efforts have been
10 unfunded, under-resourced, and reliant on volunteer
11 time. We know that the work of showing up for crises
12 like these so often falls on BIPOC and impacted
13 individuals who are too often underpaid and
14 overworked. As providers of immigration legal
15 services, we at UnLocal know that we operate in a
16 racist and xenophobic system that causes harm and one
17 that we sincerely hope will be abolished. As an
18 organization, we refuse to perpetuate that harm by
19 asking our staff, many of whom are BIPOC and
20 impacted, to overextend themselves to meet a timeline
21 to respond to a crisis created by political actors.
22 We believe that the legal services RFP released by
23 MOIA does not come close to covering the true cost of
24 providing legal services the City says it plans to
25 offer as Council Member Hanif noted. We heard Dr.

2 Long testify that legal services are provided at the
3 asylum seeker Navigation Center, and, while we do
4 applaud some of our Colleagues who have been working
5 diligently there this past month, the RFP which we
6 also did not submit a proposal for does not come
7 anywhere close to funding legal services for the new
8 immigrants in this city, certainly not for the 100
9 individuals per day as the RFP contemplates. I want
10 to underscore the point made about the urgency of
11 creating long-term plans made by both Council Member
12 Gutierrez and Chair Hanif, and I also thank Chair
13 Hanif for her questions regarding the RFP and looking
14 forward to MOIA only answering them. We too are
15 troubled by the low rates of funding and the rate of
16 250 per case and we know that that rate is going to
17 plummet.

18 We disagree with Commissioner Iscol. This
19 is not an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Those of
20 us here today have been doing this work for decades.
21 It's not unprecedented. The City's long overdue
22 efforts covered here have been prompted by political
23 wins and, while we understand that later is better
24 than never, we again urge this administration to
25 listen to the experts with deep experience, both here

2 and across the country, and specifically members of
3 impacted communities, organizers, advocates...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 TERRY LAWSON: Social workers, case
6 managers, and educators. Almost done. We heard the
7 Commissioner testify that they spoke with Bronx
8 stakeholders on the same day they decided on the
9 location of Orchard Beach, which is deeply
10 concerning. The testimony regarding...

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

12 TERRY LAWSON: Separation of families goes
13 to show how much trauma accompanies the migration
14 patterns forced by our inhumane policies and our city
15 agencies do not operate in a vacuum. This is a time
16 that requires deep collaboration and coordination
17 with community members and stakeholders and a
18 critical rethinking of how we treat all immigrants in
19 this city. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

21 We will move on to Scott Hutchins followed Charisma
22 White and Dmitri Danile Glinski. You all can go
23 ahead.

24 SCOTT HUTCHINS: I'm here testifying on
25 behalf of myself and Neighbors Together. My name is

2 Scott Hutchins. I'm a formerly homeless physically
3 disabled college graduate who has spent over eight
4 years in the New York City shelter system. As a
5 member-leader with Neighbors Together and other
6 groups, I have advocated for homeless New Yorkers and
7 vulnerable tenants across the state of New York. In
8 2018, I (INAUDIBLE) produced the Business of
9 Homelessness of which I was the co-author about our
10 recommendations for how the shelter system should
11 change. We were ignored. I languished in the New York
12 City shelter system for 99 months. I was verbally
13 abused and intimidated in the shelter system, was
14 impacted by unsanitary conditions and unhealthy food,
15 developing gout, impetigo, high blood pressure, and
16 high cholesterol, and I was once physically attacked
17 by a fellow resident. I desperately wanted to get out
18 of the shelter but couldn't. I was expected to leave
19 without reliable employment and was given no help
20 other than threats of failure to comply if I didn't
21 apply for disability, which was consistently denied
22 because I can do desk work if businesses would just
23 respond to my applications. Faced with source of
24 income discrimination and landlords who would not
25 take my CityFHEPS voucher, I needed to seek the aid

2 of non-profits outside of the shelter system to
3 finally secure housing. The homelessness crisis in
4 the current context with asylum seekers are products
5 of a lack of political will to make housing a human
6 right in New York State. If we house New Yorkers in
7 weeks instead of having individuals wait for years to
8 secure housing like myself, the City would not be
9 violating its right to shelter mandate with the
10 vulnerable asylum seekers. If the shelter system is
11 overcrowded, let's empty it. The City should house
12 individuals quicker by vigorously combatting source
13 of income discrimination and fixing issues with the
14 CityFHEPS voucher. The City should end the 90-day
15 rule that forces individuals to be in a shelter for
16 three months before they can gain access to a
17 CityFHEPS voucher. The City should get rid of utility
18 allowance that lowers the purchasing power of the
19 voucher making it harder to find an apartment. I
20 applaud any effort to help asylum seekers gain access
21 to social services, and I hope the Committee sees the
22 link between the homelessness crisis we have been in
23 for years and this influx of people into the shelter
24 system. The City must create a voucher that works to
25 effectively and efficiently move people into housing.

2 By fixing the issues with CityFHEPS, we could help
3 combat overcrowding and needless delays with shelter
4 stays. We can establish housing as a human right.
5 This is a matter of if we have the political will to
6 do so.

7 I would like to thank the Committee on
8 Immigration for the time to testify today, and I want
9 to say that all these sweeps and tent cities, the
10 Mayor destroying people's property, that's fascist
11 and it needs to stop.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.
13 Charisma, you can go ahead.

14 CHARISMA WHITE: Hello. My name is
15 Charisma White. I'm here testifying on myself,
16 Neighbors Together. I am a housing and homeless
17 advocate for over seven years now. I have been in and
18 out of shelter system myself since I was 16. The
19 shelter system is overcrowded because the City of New
20 York makes it extremely difficult for people like me
21 to gain access to stable housing. Not because of
22 migrants. If the City were able to house people
23 quicker, it would free up shelter space to help
24 vulnerable migrants. The City has to see the
25 connection between homelessness crisis and it's

2 failure to address the current situation with
3 migrants. It took me three years to find an apartment
4 with a voucher in the New York City shelter system
5 due to source of income discrimination. Shelters are
6 supposed to be temporary facilities for emergencies.
7 To have the voucher denied for years was extremely
8 taxing on my mental health and my family. Because of
9 that, I recently lost my son within the shelter
10 system because he was in an abusive relationship and
11 I referred the young man that was trying to stay with
12 me in my household to SRO and he lured my son to his
13 room and overdosed him. Most of these places they
14 send you to and try to set you up in are not safe.
15 They're separating families. Even if you have an
16 adult child, he is still your family, and they might
17 need to be in a family setting, not separated in
18 shelters that are unclean, unsafe, and the staff is
19 unscrupulous.

20 DMITRI DANIEL GLINSKI: All right. Thank
21 you, Chair Hanif. Our American Russian-Speaking
22 Association for Civil and Human Rights is the oldest
23 active organization of political exiles from Russia
24 including asylees and asylum seekers and their
25 friends and allies from other post-Soviet countries.

2 Mostly for lack of time, I will limit my remarks to
3 my own community picture in this overall bigger
4 humanitarian and moral crisis, and I will address
5 some things that are different in focus but this
6 hearing is not just the best but perhaps the only
7 place where our community can come and address this
8 at this time.

9 Since I testified here in March, CBP
10 reported 12,000 encounters with arrivals from Russia
11 on the U.S./Mexican border only, and this is 95 times
12 more than two years ago. This was before the exodus
13 of the past 10 days as you might have read in the
14 news. About a quarter to half of them are likely to
15 end up in New York City or in the area. Yet, my
16 community, the third largest linguistic minority in
17 New York, is a social service desert. The CBOs that
18 have their cultural competence, that know the
19 community from the inside are not funded, have no
20 staff, no volunteers to respond to this crisis. They
21 certainly would be disqualified for any of the RFPs
22 that were discussed, and we have that experience in
23 the past. One of the major reasons for this situation
24 is in fact the influence of the other kind of
25 newcomers from my part of the world in this city in

2 the past 20 years, and these are the Kremlin-
3 connected oligarchs and their local neighbors here
4 who control the narrative and the logic of funding of
5 anything related to Russian Americans. They invested
6 billions plundered from my country, not just in Park
7 Avenue houses, but in our most influential
8 philanthropists and our politics to push their
9 agendas and to silence those who are opposed their
10 rule, deny them the opportunity to rise and to be
11 heard in places like this. Just google, for example,
12 the Genesis Philanthropy Group that was set up by the
13 Kremlin's bankers right here in New York and how much
14 it gave to (INAUDIBLE) and other agencies to buy that
15 influence, and our people have seen this influence
16 stay in power in social service agencies and local
17 government offices from Brighton Beach to Washington
18 Height and beyond wherever our people live and find
19 the doors shut in their faces.

20 I have four recommendations for our City
21 Council. One, urge our Department of Homeland
22 Security to give TPS to Russians temporarily in the
23 States who have not benefitted (INAUDIBLE) sanctioned
24 entities. Start recognizing those Russian Americans
25 who fought for peace, human rights, and justice back

2 home or our anti-war leaders in Russia who have a
3 connection to New York such as the world famous
4 political prisoner, Vladimir Kara-Murza. He spent a
5 lot of time in our city. For full disclosure, he and
6 I worked for the same employer here 10 years ago.
7 Many in New York remember him warmly. Pass a
8 resolution in his support. Make him an honorary
9 citizen of New York. Hold hearings on the impact of
10 the Kremlin-connected wealth and oligarchs and their
11 enablers on our public life, on Russian-speaking
12 community and how to mitigate these consequences. Set
13 up an interfaith, interethnic task force on
14 rebuilding social services from scratch for
15 immigrants from Ukraine, Russia, and neighboring
16 countries of the region so that our exiles, including
17 many high-class professionals, could finally both get
18 services and serve their community. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Sorry that
20 I had to step away. As you know, we've been here
21 since 1 p.m. and neither of had breaks for the
22 bathroom. I will follow and listen to your testimony,
23 sorry I missed yours and the rest of yours, but no
24 questions for this panel. Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

3 Next, we will call Nara Milanich, David Miranda,
4 Stephanie Rupp, and Yajaira Saavedra. I apologize if
5 I killed anyone's name.

6 YAJAIRA SAAVEDRA: Hello. My name is
7 Yajaira Saavedra. I am from La Morada Restaurant. We
8 are a group of undocumented family that runs a
9 restaurant in the Bronx. We have also been in the
10 forefront of the immigration movement for decades. My
11 brother famously self-deported to infiltrate the
12 detention centers just to bring light on the abuses
13 of the detention centers under the Obama
14 administration so I personally know through my family
15 history how much and through my own history as a
16 Dreamer, as a DACA recipient, what it is to be
17 undocumented and what it is to be abused by this
18 country. I also know what a detention center looks
19 like from the many detention centers my brother
20 infiltrated and from just constantly advocating for
21 immigrants across the nation. What is being built at
22 Orchard Beach right now is a detention center, and I
23 have little to no faith that after this is built that
24 it will end there so it's scary to think the
25 detention centers are now being allowed in sanctuary

2 cities. I also want to say that through my plight of
3 doing radical changes in the immigration system I
4 have yet to see Manuel Castro at the forefront with
5 me so I find it odd that he is here as leading MOIA.
6 I also questioned why is it that a small business
7 like La Morada whose budget doesn't exceed 1 million,
8 not even close to 1 million, we are still feeding
9 migrants every single day, not at Port Authority
10 because that's where we have been excluded, where we
11 have been violently threatened that we will be
12 arrested if we're at Port Authority so we go to the
13 shelters because migrants call us and tell us that
14 they haven't eaten in days so we visit them at the
15 shelters, most of them are hotels, all over the city
16 to bring hot meals and this is coming from our
17 pocket, and our budget, again, does not exceed the
18 millions, not even 1 million dollars, and you have
19 all these not-for-profits who have close ties,
20 personal and donor ties, to the Mayor receiving
21 millions of dollars, and they are doing a whole lot
22 less than we are. We are working close to the South
23 Bronx Mutual Aid and the Mutual Aid Collective so
24 everything that we do we have receipts, we have proof
25 of, we have been present at shelters. Just yesterday

2 I was at a shelter hotel near LaGuardia Airport and
3 counted easily four migrant children who had high
4 fevers and were asking for medication and this is us,
5 continuing to be in the frontlines providing whatever
6 help we can immediately with our own budgets, not
7 receiving any help from the federal government, from
8 the state government, and being excluded in all ways
9 by MOIA.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

11 DAVID MIRANDA: Hi. My name is David
12 Miranda, and I am the Senior Staff Attorney at
13 Covenant House New York.

14 I would like to thank the Committee for
15 allowing me to testify today. I am here on behalf of
16 the entire Covenant House community. Please refer to
17 my written testimony for more information on Covenant
18 House.

19 I do want to talk about the effect of the
20 crisis on young people, particularly the young people
21 that we serve who are experiencing homelessness and
22 are under 21. We are proud to be on the frontlines
23 at Covenant House, helping these vulnerable young
24 people by providing food, safety, shelter, and other
25 essential services. We are grateful to be able to

2 help, but we are finding that the situation is
3 stretching the available resources available in New
4 York, especially with immigration legal services. Our
5 proximity to Port Authority and our youth-specific
6 focus lead us to be an obvious choice. Those who are
7 already staying with us will go to Port Authority to
8 meet the arriving buses and bring back groups of
9 youth in the hopes that we have available beds. Other
10 times, youth are first referred to churches or
11 shelters in the adult homeless system. Caring staff
12 at those shelters seeing their young age will send
13 them to us. I have heard stories of a young man who
14 was 18 years old who was at the 30th Street shelter
15 who was sexually assaulted in the middle of the night
16 and left that shelter, slept in the street that
17 night, and luckily was able to find a bed with us the
18 next day.

19 I first noticed an increase in immigrant
20 youth in the early summer before the buses. Prior to
21 the buses, we already saw an uptick in the number of
22 undocumented youth at Covenant House. In the past, we
23 had a handful of undocumented youth in need of
24 immigration legal services throughout an entire year.
25 Since the buses began arriving, we now have 38

2 immigrant youth from Central and South America. We
3 would be seeing more if we had beds. I understand the
4 DHS' characterization that there are beds available
5 and anyone has a bed if they want one. That is not
6 the case. We want to be able to accept every young
7 person that comes to our doors, but, unfortunately,
8 the number of beds that we have is finite and
9 sometimes we do have to turn young people away
10 because there are simply no beds. Most of these young
11 people are fleeing persecution, parental abandonment,
12 and starvation. Prior to July, the number of young
13 people who we referred elsewhere because we were at
14 capacity on any given month was in the single digits.
15 This month alone, there were 58 youth who we were
16 unable to shelter, 58 youth that we had to turn away,
17 youth that came back. Some of them were eventually
18 able to get a bed and some were not. We have
19 implemented Spanish-speaking mental health groups and
20 life skills.

21 My role at Covenant House is to provide
22 legal representation for these youth. I am the only
23 lawyer in the Covenant House crisis shelter and for
24 Covenant House youth, and I might be the only lawyer
25 in New York City exclusively dedicated to helping

2 young people experiencing homelessness. That's why
3 I'm here so the youth can get the help where they
4 are. Until recently, most of my caseload was not
5 immigration. It was name changes, it was for victims
6 of trafficking and transgender clients. Those issues
7 now have had to go to the side because I have to
8 focus, I have to triage and make sure that my
9 immigrant clients are served if they're in
10 deportation proceedings...

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I know that you've
13 submitted your full testimony, and I look forward to
14 touching base with Covenant House. I believe we're
15 going to be reaching out on Monday to schedule some
16 time to learn a little bit more about what you've
17 shared. Thank you.

18 DAVID MIRANDA: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

20 Next, we're calling Stephanie Rupp. You can go ahead
21 when the Sergeant calls time.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

23 STEPHANIE RUPP: Good evening. Thank you
24 to everyone for holding on throughout this very long

2 hearing. We are so grateful that you have been able
3 to hang in there for the whole afternoon.

4 My name is Stephanie Rupp, and I'm a
5 resident of the Morningside Heights Manhattan Valley
6 Neighborhood. We have heard from so many wonderful
7 organizations today, and we are very grateful for all
8 of the work that's going on on the ground at Port
9 Authority and in communities throughout our city.
10 Four weeks ago, our neighborhood received over 95
11 families into shelter at 107th and Central Park West,
12 three blocks from where I'm speaking now.

13 As community members, we provide
14 empathetic, immediate, and informed support to our
15 newest neighbors. We can't and shouldn't and don't
16 try to reinvent the wheel of providing comprehensive
17 immigration services, which we rely on from city
18 agencies and Catholic Charities, and, as we have
19 heard, most importantly from all of the amazing NGOs
20 and grassroot organizations in our city. As networks
21 of neighbors throughout our city which bring together
22 ordinary citizens, just residents on our streets,
23 people like me, faith communities, charity groups,
24 community groups, food pantries, local businesses,
25 and more, we are all rallying to support the new

2 families who have joined our city. We are not an NGO.
3 We are not a charitable organization. We are just a
4 neighborhood. We have provided essential items to the
5 95 families who are our new neighbors and have also
6 been supporting families who have come to us seeking
7 resources here in our neighborhood coming to us from
8 shelters throughout Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn,
9 and Queens because these families have not been able
10 to access crucial supplies that they have needed over
11 the past month through city services. The
12 neighborhood level outreach efforts have been
13 crucial. These families have walked from other places
14 to our neighborhood just to find a pair of shoes,
15 some warm clothing, or a hot meal. With the
16 incredible outpouring of logistical and volunteer
17 support from our growing neighborhood network in
18 Morningside Heights, we have received, organized, and
19 distributed tens of thousands of articles of clothing
20 and toiletries including much needed diapers,
21 feminine hygiene supplies, asthma medication, all
22 kinds of over-the-counter drugs for fever treatments
23 for children who are sick, yeast infection
24 medications for women with infections. We've supplied
25 school supplies, toys and books, fresh fruit and hot

2 meals. All of these outreach activities have unfurled
3 each and every day over the past month. We are not an
4 NGO. We're just a neighborhood. Our neighborhood
5 network has been actively in meeting the family's
6 need for community, information sharing, and
7 guidance, accompaniment to appointments and meetings
8 throughout the city. Drawing on small donations from
9 many individuals in our neighborhood, we have
10 purchased phones and phone plans for every family
11 that needed one, negotiating a fair price with a
12 local mobile phone store.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

14 STEPHANIE RUPP: We have so much to do,
15 and we need communication, and we need connection
16 with all of these amazing organizations and with our
17 city. thank you for holding this important meeting
18 and for hearing our voices. We need boots on the
19 ground, and we're grateful to everyone who's here at
20 the end of the meeting for helping to do the right
21 thing. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

23 Next, we'll call Karim Walker and Eric Lee followed
24 Umshala Jayara (phonetic). Since I only see Eric Lee
25 up here, you can go ahead.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

3 ERIC LEE: Okay. Thank you. My name is
4 Eric Lee. I'm Director of Policy and Planning for
5 Homeless Services United. Thank you, Chair Hanif and
6 Members of the Committee for allowing me to testify
7 today.

8 We are grateful to the Chair as well as
9 Members of the Council for defending and reaffirming
10 the right to shelter. Every person in New York City
11 should be afforded this right regardless of
12 immigration status. While we appreciate the difficult
13 task before the Mayor, we must continue to uphold the
14 right for every person in New York City. With regards
15 to the Emergency Management intake process we heard
16 today, it was troubling to hear that people would not
17 be explained that they have the right to shelter
18 until they first take a bus and go all the way out to
19 the tent facility. This just highlights that the new
20 process they're putting in place is really more for
21 the ease of institutional processes rather than being
22 a client-centered approach. While no one could have
23 foretold the migrant crisis, the city's shelter
24 capacity crisis could've been avoided altogether as
25 contributing factors were completely within the

2 City's ability to address including longer lengths of
3 stay within shelter due to bureaucratic delays in
4 processing rental assistance and public benefits
5 cases, lack of new shelter capacity because of
6 NIMBYism, and delays in DHS contract registration and
7 reimbursement processes, which have weakened non-
8 profits abilities to respond to the City's request to
9 stand up new shelter facility sites.

10 Rather than creating an outdoor tent
11 facility within a flood zone during hurricane season,
12 HSU recommends that the City continue to locate empty
13 blocks of hotel rooms, stand up traditional shelters,
14 or convert other suitable structures which can
15 quickly be stood up to meet the immediate need. While
16 utilizing their creativity to locate underutilized
17 sites such as dorm rooms, vacant offices with shower
18 facilities, and gyms which can quickly be repurposed
19 through DHS' emergency procurement contracts.

20 To address the longstanding issues that
21 have led to DHS' current shelter capacity crisis, we
22 recommend that DHS focus on three priority areas:

23 Expanding eviction prevention and legal
24 services to prevent more people from becoming
25 homeless.

2 Establishing a reliable DHS shelter
3 pipeline to create purpose-built, service-rich
4 shelters and normalize the fiscal operations of DHS-
5 contracted programs. There were comments earlier from
6 I believe it was Council Member Gutierrez regarding
7 shelter staff shortages, and we want to echo that.
8 Shelter providers regularly experience fiscal delays.
9 Individual providers are awaiting budget authority to
10 use their accruals for hiring and retention bonuses
11 given that they have high turnover and burnout right
12 now. To Council Member De La Rosa's comments around
13 HRA and DHS vacancies, that is absolutely leading to
14 delays processing rental assistance and public
15 assistance applications, and they really need to
16 staff up in order to actually get through the
17 workload. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.

20 If anyone who has not testified at this point wishes
21 to do so, please either consult the Sergeants or use
22 the Zoom raise hand function.

23 Seeing no one, Chair, do you have any
24 other questions?

25

2 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No questions. I can
3 give my closing. Well, thank you all. Everybody's
4 gone from Chambers, but for the folks who are still
5 tuned in and for the folks on Zoom, to everybody who
6 stayed with us throughout the day, starting at 11
7 with our rally, just thank you. It is a Friday. It is
8 nearly 7 p.m. and what was demonstrated today just
9 shows the commitment New Yorkers have to asylum
10 seekers and I'm particularly talking about the folks
11 from the public who testified. You've heard me ask
12 some heavy hitting questions to the administration
13 around right to shelter, how exactly the HERRCs are
14 going to be built up to mental health services to
15 probing about legal services and the asylum process,
16 the costs that will be needed to meet the needs of
17 our newest students in our schools, and much more,
18 but, of course, we didn't cover many, many topics
19 including those pertaining to youth in particular and
20 youth in shelter, LGBTQ in shelters, and then African
21 migrants which we only got to touch on briefly so my
22 hope is that we will continue to use the Council's
23 hearing authority to be able to engage in further
24 investigation and conversations.

2 I want to thank the countless
3 organizations, the advocates, the neighbors who
4 showed up to share the work they've been doing since
5 before the administration got involved. Thank you for
6 sharing the deep frustration by the mismanagement and
7 the delays in services being procured, the lack of
8 funding to our community-based partners and so much
9 more. I'm committed as the Chair of Immigration to
10 continue to have these conversations and to push the
11 administration to do better. We have to get this
12 right, and I deeply know that New York City can get
13 this right. Thank you all so much.

14 I will gavel us out. [GAVEL]

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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 October 11, 2022