

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN &

GENDER EQUITY

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023

Start: 10:18 A. M.

Recess: 11:20 A. M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING: HANIF

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER

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

SALONI SETHI

First Deputy Commissioner for ENDGBV at the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

JAMAL ALSARRAJ,

Director Of Special Projects for ENDGBV at the New York City Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

Michael Polenberg,

Vice President, Government Affairs at Safe Horizon

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER

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2 SERGEANT LEWIS: Good morning, good morning.
3 Sound check on The Committee on... The Committee on
4 Women and Gender Equity. Today's date is February
5 27, 2023; location is the Chambers, recorded by
6 Walter Lewis.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to the
8 New York City Council hearing of The Committee on
9 Women and Gender Equity.

10 At this time, please place all electronic devices
11 to vibrate or silent mode?

12 If you wish to testify, please go up to the
13 Sergeant's Desk to fill out a testimony slip.

14 Written testimony can be emailed to
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov, again that is
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
17 cooperation.

18 Chair, we are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN:

20 Thank you

21 [GAVELING IN] [GAVEL SOUND]

22 Good morning, My name is Council Member Tiffany
23 Cabán; my pronounces are she/her, Chair of The
24 Committee on Women and Gender Equity.

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2 Today, the committee will hold a hearing on the
3 ENDGBV The HOME+ Program, as well as two pieces of
4 legislation: Introduction Number 534-A, sponsored by
5 Council Member Shahana Hanif, related to a program to
6 assist with changing door locks on the dwellings of
7 survivors of domestic and gender-based violence; and
8 Resolution Number 475, sponsored by Council Member
9 Amanda Farías, calling on the New York state
10 legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign,
11 legislation to create a "purple alert system" for
12 missing victims of domestic violence.

13 This is the committee's fourth hearing related to
14 domestic and gender based violence this session. As
15 I stated in our February 2022 hearing on barriers to
16 services, it is our duty to proactive about survivor
17 services.

18 Housing instability is one of the largest
19 barriers, for example, domestic violence is one of
20 the leading causes of homelessness for women and
21 their children. The HOME+ program addresses this
22 need by providing free and confidential security
23 resources to survivors of domestic violence and
24 gender-based violence who want to stay in their homes
25 instead of entering a shelter or going somewhere

1
2 else. This includes personal alarm systems that can
3 be used to alert others of a crisis within the home,
4 and as of last October, lock, door, and window repair
5 and replacement services free of charge. I look
6 forward to discussing The HOME+ program expansion at
7 today's hearing and learning more about how the
8 Council can support survivors.

9 Before going further, I'd like to pause for a
10 moment to recognize colleagues who have joined, I
11 think we have, virtually, Council Member Gennaro, and
12 I think we will be welcoming Council Member Hanif
13 shortly to provide brief remarks on the legislation.

14 So, I think we will just hold for a minute.

15 All right, maybe we will testimony and we'll
16 provide an opportunity for her to give remarks a
17 little bit later.

18 So, I would also like to thank my staff and
19 committee staff for their work in preparing today's
20 hearing: Madhuri Shukla, my Legislative and Budget
21 Director; Brenda McKinney, the committee's Senior
22 Legislative Counsel; and Austrid Chan, the
23 committee's new Financial Analyst.

24 And now I will hand it over to committee counsel
25 in order to address some housekeeping items, read the

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2 oath, uh, before we begin with the administration's
3 testimony.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, so much, Chair.

5 First, as a reminder, today is an in person
6 hearing with the option of virtual testimony for the
7 public. The committee's will be accepting
8 registration for testimony throughout the hearing.
9 Anyone who is attending in person and who wishes to
10 testify in person, should see the Sergeant At Arms to
11 fill out a witness slip -- even if you registered in
12 advance online.

13 As usual we will begin today's hearing with
14 testimony for the administration, followed by council
15 member questions and answers, and then moving to
16 public testimony. We will be limiting council member
17 questions and answers, including comments, to five
18 minutes. During the public testimony portion of the
19 hearing, witnesses from the public will be limited to
20 three minutes. Depending on the number of witnesses
21 and members, we may also not be using a clock.

22 As a reminder to all of our witnesses, please
23 state your name prior to your testimony for the
24 record.

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2 The committees will also be accepting written
3 testimony for up to 72 hours after the hearing.

4 So, with this, we will administer the affirmative
5 to the witnesses from the administration, who may
6 begin their testimony.

7 If you may please raise your right hand? Today
8 we have Saloni Sethi First Deputy Commissioner from
9 ENDGBV and Jamal Alsarraj, Director Of Special
10 Projects from ENDGBV, apologies for any
11 mispronunciations:

12 Please raise your right hand, Do you affirm to
13 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
14 truth, in your testimony before this committee, and
15 to respond honestly to council member questions
16 today?

17 [ADMINISTRATION AFFIRMS]

18 Okay, thank you so much.

19 At this point, the administration may begin your
20 testimony, thank you.

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Good morning,
22 Chair Cabán, and members of The Committee on Women
23 and Gender Equity. I am Saloni Sethi, First Deputy
24 Commissioner of The Mayor's Office of The Mayor's
25 Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence or

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2 ENDGBV. I am joined by Jamal Alsarraj, ENDGBV's
3 Director Of Special Projects.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you
5 about ENDGBV's HOME+ program and Introduction Number
6 534-A.

7 ENDGBV directly manages a contract portfolio of
8 prevention and intervention programming; builds
9 capacity for agency staff and community members to
10 identify and respond to domestic and gender based
11 violence or DVGBV through outreach and training and
12 develops policies and best practices to strengthen
13 the City's approaches to these issues. We collaborate
14 with city agencies, 100 nonprofit providers,
15 community stakeholder, and people with lived
16 experience to reduce barriers and ensure access to
17 inclusive services for survivors of DVGBV. This
18 includes services like Home+.

19 HOME+ is a citywide program that helps survivors
20 to safety stay in their homes as an alternative to
21 relocating or seeking shelter placement.

22 In 2021 HOME+ replaced and expanded upon the
23 Human Resource Administration's Alternative to
24 Shelter Program. Like the alternative to Shelter
25 Program, HOME+ provides survivors with free personal

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2 alarm systems. But its services also includes safety
3 planning and case management to support survivors'
4 safety in their homes; locksmith services, and
5 referrals to ancillary services as needed.

6 HOME+ has minimal barriers to eligibility. All
7 services are free, and to participate an individual
8 only needs to identify as a survivor of domestic of
9 gender based violence and live in New York City. The
10 program does not require any documentation of
11 survivorship such as police reports or orders of
12 protection.

13 Currently ENDGBV contracts with five community
14 based providers -- one in each borough -- to
15 implement HOME+. We partner with The Violence
16 Intervention Program in the Bronx, HELP R.O.A.D.S in
17 Brooklyn, Rising Ground Steps to End Family Violence
18 in WOMANKIND in Queens, and the Seamen's Society for
19 Children and Families in Staten Island.

20 These organizations were chosen because they have
21 extensive experience providing culturally specific
22 domestic violence services to diverse populations.

23 To obtain HOME+ services, survivors can connect
24 directly with the HOME+ provider in their borough or
25 obtain a referral through an organization or a

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2 program they are already working with. The HOME+
3 personal alarm system is comprised of a base unit and
4 a portable pendant. Once a survivor has completed an
5 intake process with a HOME+ provider and chooses to
6 receive an alarm system, the HOME+ provider will
7 discuss safety concerns and risks with the survivor
8 and establish who they would like to be notified in
9 case of an alarm activation. This can be one or more
10 people or agencies including law enforcement, trusted
11 friends or family members or a service provider.
12 This information is kept confidential and transmitted
13 to our alarm system vendor.

14 Our alarm system vendors will ship an alarm
15 system to the survivor's address typically within two
16 to three business days. The alarm system arrives
17 with instructions for self-installation including a
18 phone number for assistance. The alarm system vendor
19 will also attempt to reach the HOME+ client shortly
20 after the expected delivery to support them through
21 the self-installation and answer any questions.

22 If a survivor has difficulty with self-
23 installation they can also request an in person
24 installation by a technician. A survivor can
25 activate their alarm by pressing a button on the

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2 portable pendant. Once the alarm is activated, staff
3 from the emergency response center will attempt to
4 verify if the activation was intentional or
5 accidental by communicating with the survivor through
6 the alarm system's base unit or via call or text if
7 that is the client's preference. The emergency
8 response center will also notify the survivor's
9 designated contacts.

10 HOME+ locksmith services provide survivors with
11 door and window lock changes or repairs to help
12 survivors safely remain in their homes. Once a
13 survivor completes an intake with a HOME+ provider
14 and chooses to receive locksmith service, our lock
15 change vendor will schedule an appointment with a
16 survivor to come to their home, assess the extent of
17 the job required, and either complete the job or set
18 up an appointment to return if additional equipment,
19 such as a new door, is necessary.

20 For standard locks, the repair or replacement
21 work is typically completed within a single visit.
22 HOME+ can facilitate 24-hour door lock replacements
23 for basic locks when needed.

24 In addition to the locksmith and personal alarm
25 system services, HOME+ coordinators can connect

1 survivors of DVGBV with a wide range of support and
2 assistance such as safety planning, case management,
3 and referral to services to other specialized
4 domestic violence service organizations -- including
5 those the ENDGBV used justice centers.

6
7 The goals to provide comprehensive support to
8 survivors and help them remain safely in their homes.
9 Since the launch of HOME+ personal alarm systems in
10 October 2021, HOME+ providers have received 248
11 requests for security pendants. Since the launch of
12 HOME+ lock changing program in the fall of 2022,
13 HOME+ providers have received 62 requests for
14 locksmith services.

15 An evaluation of the HOME+ is being conducted in
16 partnership with graduate students at NYU's Wagner
17 School of Public Service. The evaluation is
18 currently underway, and it is expected to be
19 completed by May 2023.

20 Regarding Intro 534-A, ENDGBV thanks Council
21 Member Hanif and her legislative team for their
22 commitment to survivors and their partnership in
23 drafting bill language that aligns with our office's
24 current efforts to help survivors maintain safe and
25 secure housing.

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2 We look forward to continuing to collaborate with
3 the Council, our sister city agencies, and our
4 community based providers to better meet the home
5 security needs of survivors.

6 Thank you for the opportunity to appear here
7 today; I welcome any questions you may have.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, I would like to
9 take a moment to acknowledge that we have been joined
10 by Council Member Stevens and Council Member
11 Gutiérrez.

12 And we can start with questions.

13 Okay, thank you again for your testimony. I
14 would like to start just by asking: What are the
15 city's biggest challenges in responding to issues
16 surrounding housing instability for survivors of
17 domestic and gender based violence -- especially for
18 those who want to stay in their homes instead of
19 entering a shelter or going some else. I know that
20 you mentioned that in your testimony, but if you
21 could go into that in further detail?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, I mean, I
23 think ,you know, uhm, as with many people in the
24 City, housing in general is a challenge and, like,
25 maintaining safe and affordable housing continues to

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2 be a challenge that the City -- I think for survivors
3 in particular, you know, one of the things that we
4 see is that they often leave housing purely for
5 safety reasons. Right? And I think that's where we
6 are thinking about programs like HOME+, where if we
7 can keep survivors safely in their homes, we can
8 avoid one major reason that survivors are leaving
9 housing that was otherwise affordable and
10 maintainable.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Hmmm, and if I could just ask
12 you to flesh out a little bit more there. I
13 understand the, uhm, you know, the very real
14 challenge that we face as New Yorkers in terms of
15 just maintaining a place, but what are some of the
16 other reasons why a survivor in addition to finances
17 might want to stay in the home they're currently in?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I mean, for,
19 again, a lot of survivors especially, for instance,
20 survivors, you know, with children, they may want to
21 stay in their community because of school is close,
22 they may have family in their community, they may
23 have other supports. Right? And I think one of the
24 critical things for survivors that we that happens
25 when they relocate to shelters, they lose a lot of

1 those supports that they had within community, and
2 this is one way to ensure that they are keeping the
3 people that support them through experience close to
4 them.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Right, thank you.

6 And at... At this committee's December 2022
7 hearing on coerced debt, we heard about ENDGBV's work
8 with over a 100 nonprofit providers and community
9 stakeholders, uh, including, but not limited to
10 through the City's Family Justice Centers and
11 offering initiatives and programs to support
12 survivors, other than the HOME+ program, what
13 programs are focused on housing stability, and in
14 what ways are they focused on housing stability?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, I mean, so
16 I think ,you know, most of our partner orgs all do
17 housing work and housing stability work in some way,
18 shape, or form. I think in addition to that
19 recently, we have had a lot of success with working
20 with the emergency housing voucher, the EHB program
21 and connecting in community to homes through that
22 program. And I think the other sort of [BACKGROUND
23 NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] all mentioned that is [BACKGROUND
24 NOISE] [INAUDIBLE] new that we are working on
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2 launching is we are working on a microgrant flexible
3 funding program that, again, provides survivors with
4 low barrier grants to meet whatever need that they
5 have that would allow them to stay safely at home

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, and how would the
7 HOME+ program work with or compliment the similar
8 programs that you just talked about that might exist,
9 and then also expanding including similar programs
10 for Safe Horizons Project SAFE for example?

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so I think
12 ,you know, in general, our goal is to make sure that
13 what we are offering to survivors is as comprehensive
14 a set of services as possible. Right? So, I think
15 when it comes to HOME+ or a micro grant program, or
16 EHV or Safe Horizons Project SAFE, one of the things
17 that our office is committed to doing is making sure
18 that we are communicating with all of our partners
19 and ensuring that that there is cross referral.

20 Right? So, if there is a program that meets ,you
21 know, need "x" of a survivor, and there is another
22 program that meets need "y", we can make sure that
23 the survivor is connected to both. And none of the
24 programs are exclusionary. Right? So, a survivor
25 could get services through... Could get a voucher

1 through EHV, and then get services through HOME+, and
2 potentially get a micro grant later on. There is no
3 sort of barriers in terms of how many services a
4 survivor can receive.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: That's great, thank you.

7 And what agencies and offices, other than the...
8 those present at today's hearing are working on this
9 issue?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, you mean
11 broadly in terms of housing stability or in terms of
12 HOME+ in particular?

13 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: I guess, maybe a little bit
14 both I think you know broadly in the context of the
15 intersection of ,you know, domestic violence gender
16 based violence and housing instability.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I mean, I think
18 we partner very closely with our colleagues at
19 DSSHRA. And they operate the City's sort of
20 nonresidential domestic violence services as well as
21 a residential services for domestic violence
22 survivors. We are always in communication with them
23 to make sure that we are supporting sort of housing
24 stability needs broadly for survivors. And, then,
25 with all of our providers, I think we are constantly

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2 outreaching and making sure that the information
3 about the programming we are developing is available
4 to them and to the clients that they serve.

5 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Right.

6 So, I want to move into asking you a little bit
7 about outreach, like, you talked about the
8 communication and the collaboration, but outreach is
9 in place surrounding this issue, again more broadly,
10 the intersection, uhm, of housing instability or
11 housing for [INAUDIBLE] and ENDGBV, uh, but then also
12 ,you know, more narrowly with the HOME+ program, and
13 then similar programming?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, so I mean
15 with HOME+ in particular, it is ,you know, we have
16 gone through sort of all the channels that we usually
17 go through, so we can... We are doing press releases
18 when we are adding new services into the program. We
19 have information on our website about the services.
20 We are working to incorporate this NYCHope, which is
21 our portal for survivors for recourses. We also
22 conduct regular meetings with our providers to kind
23 of talk about the program and get the word out there.
24 People can connect to the program through our Family
25 Justice Centers, they can connect through the

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2 Domestic Violence Hotline -- the City's 24-hour
3 hotline. So, ,you know, we are trying to make sure
4 that all the touchpoints that a survivor might
5 connect to. They have the information that they need
6 to make referrals to this program and all of our
7 programs.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: And the, uhm, what about folks
9 who are non-English speakers, uh, folks with various
10 disabilities, in terms of being able to access the
11 information, and also kind of reaching folks beyond
12 the digital divide?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think ,you
14 know, in terms of accessibility, like, all of our
15 services are accessible language wise. So, all of
16 our providers have access to language line or
17 telephonic interpretation services. In addition, all
18 of the materials for HOME+ [BACKGROUND NOISE]
19 [INAUDIBLE] programs are translated into the City's
20 top ten designated languages. We are working, again,
21 as ,you know, part of our... As we are doing the
22 physical printing of our resource guide, we are going
23 to include information about HOME+ and our other
24 programs in that guide as well. And in terms of ,you
25 know, accessibility for people with disabilities, I

1 think, again, that is something that we work very
2 closely on making sure that all of our programs are
3 accessible to folks that are ,you know, in terms of
4 HOME+, especially thinking about folks who are deaf
5 and hard of hearing and may have low visibility or
6 visual impairments, and making sure that, uh, our
7 alarm systems and services are accessible to those
8 folks as well.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

11 And the programs that you've mentioned, including
12 HOME+, how is addressing the issues that they
13 address, uhm, changed in the last three to five
14 years? And I think I am particularly talking about
15 ,you know, what kinds of pandemic necessary
16 adjustments have taken place?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yeah, I mean, I
18 think ,you know, I think, again, I think in terms
19 of... I think in terms of the past three to five
20 years, I think ,you know, what is great is that I
21 think the City has been trying new things in terms of
22 addressing the intersection of domestic violence and
23 homelessness, right? And I think... And some of
24 that has been informed by the pandemic. So,
25 [BACKGROUND NOISE] ,you know, in addition to a

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2 program like HOME+ , which is a variation and
3 improvement on a programming that the City... Or an
4 expansion of a program the City had run for a long
5 time, I think about our flexible funding or micro
6 grant program, which is something that really ,you
7 know, we had piloted during the COVID as a way of
8 meeting survivors immediate financial needs. Because
9 I think during the pandemic everyone realized that
10 those concrete financial needs were so dire, and we
11 had a private foundation give us some funding to meet
12 those needs, and now based on what we learned through
13 the pandemic and based on that pilot, we were able to
14 sort of expand that program into an ongoing city
15 funded program.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Which I am very excited about
17 that. And actually, just based on that, and I think
18 the, uhm, the sort of piloted, uh, micro grant
19 program lasted about three months, served well over a
20 100 survivors, I believe... And about how much money
21 was spent during that time period?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: About
23 \$500,000.00.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: About \$500,000.00 to service
25 those folks for three months. So, I look forward to

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2 fighting for a substantially larger amount of that in
3 the budget to stand up the program and meet the needs
4 of folks year-round.

5 So, I wanted to just quickly acknowledge the
6 presence of Council Member Hanif and also invite you
7 to make some remarks.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much, good
9 morning, thank you to Chair Cabán, and The Committee
10 on Women and Gender Equity for holding this important
11 hearing and for including my bill Intro 534-A on the
12 agenda.

13 I also want to thank the 25 members of the
14 council who sponsored this bill, especially co-prime
15 sponsors, Chair Cabán and Council Member Narcisse ,
16 Council Member Farías, Council Member Louis, and
17 Council Member Riley.

18 When a domestic violence survivor needs to change
19 the locks of their door in order to protect
20 themselves against their abuser, they can put in the
21 difficult decision of needing to choose between
22 paying for an expensive lock change out of pocket or
23 forgoing the lock change and putting themselves at
24 risk. This dilemma should not be a reality in New
25

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2 York City. No one should fear for their safety
3 because of their economic status.

4 I am grateful that in recent months ENDGBV's
5 program, HOME+, has begun to address this issue by
6 providing free lock installations and replacements to
7 domestic violence survivors.

8 If passed, Intro 534-A will ensure HOME+ becomes
9 a permanent city program and codifies key program
10 elements including providing connections to wrap
11 around services such as counseling, safely planning,
12 housing services, and legal services -- not requiring
13 an active order of protection and police response in
14 order to qualify for the program -- and lastly,
15 centering the work of trusted community based
16 organizations. This will set this critical program
17 up for sustained success citywide. Together with
18 Chair Cabán's Support Survivors legislative package
19 that passed last year, the passage of Intro 534-A
20 would create a holistic infrastructure of direct
21 services for domestic violence survivors in our city.

22 I want to thank the advocacy groups and service
23 providers whose insights were essential in shaping
24 this legislation, including the Arab-American Family
25 Center, Sakhi for South Asian Women, Asiyah Women's

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2 Center, Jahajee Sisters, Safe Horizons, and New
3 Destiny Housing. I also want to thank the staff who
4 have worked on the bill: Alex Liao; Musarrat Lamia;
5 and Nora Brickner from my team; Madhuri Shukla from
6 Chair Cabán's team, Nell Beekman, from the Council's
7 Legislative Division; and Committee Counsel, Brenda
8 McKinney. I also need to extend gratitude to the
9 folks and ENDGBV who have been incredible, proactive
10 partners on this bill including Melissa Pickett
11 (sp?), Yua Chow (sp?); First Deputy Commissioner
12 Saloni Sethi, and Commissioner Cecile Noel; as well
13 as Emily Stitelman, Martha Alfaro from the Law
14 Department; and Kevin Cho from City Legislative
15 Affairs.

16 I will now turn it back to Chair Cabán.

17 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Would you like to ask any
18 questions about your legislation? I am happy to...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Have at it.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, I know I missed some of
22 the start of the hearing, I would like to know does
23 the Administration support this legislation, and
24 please share why or why not?

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2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, thank you so
3 much, Council Member Hanif. We are definitely in
4 support of this legislation. We think HOME+ is an
5 important program and resource for survivors, and we
6 would be happy to sort of have it codified as an
7 ongoing program.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's great. That's
9 wonderful news. We are really grateful to have your
10 partnership in this life saving policy and to be able
11 to codify what you have already begun.

12 In the past we have heard from advocates that it
13 can take some legwork to manage the vendors for lock
14 changes, does ENDGBV have a list of vendors? Or do
15 you do any training to ensure that vendors are trauma
16 informed and understand the importance of
17 confidentially in the safety context?

18 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We do. So, we
19 ,you know, we have a vendor right now, I want to say
20 it's Maximum Security is our current vendor, and I
21 think ,you know, we have worked with them to provide
22 training on intimate partner violence and trauma
23 informed responses. We also ensure that they
24 maintain confidentially, and they get sort of
25 training on that, right? So, they sign an NDA,

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2 because I think the other piece, in addition to the
3 response, is making sure that the information that
4 they have is secure. So, we are always trying to pay
5 attention to both of those things.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That's really great. And
7 would a contract for locksmith services cover the
8 cost of labor or any or all costs associated with
9 replacing door locks?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, there is no
11 cost to the survivor of the program. We cover all
12 the costs associated.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

14 We have heard from survivors and advocates that
15 survivors sometimes do not feel comfortable speaking
16 with organization but will go to a religious center
17 like a mosque for assistance, who in turn help with
18 replacing locks. Would there ever be a possibility
19 for a stipend or reimbursement program as part of
20 HOME+ to support those organizations or centers?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So,
22 unfortunately, right now, that is not something that
23 is contemplated by the program.

24

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And is there any effort to
3 expand the program's reach to religious centers, or
4 has that been contemplated?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I think ,you
6 know, we are happy to consider that as part of our
7 broader sort of outreach efforts for sure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

9 And, then, what will you do to guarantee same day
10 lock changes in NYCHA housing? Changes can take
11 days, and at times, uh, survivor's pay for it
12 themselves out of fear and desperation.

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we have been
14 in communication with NYCHA to sort of discuss how
15 lock changes would work within NYCHA housing. And
16 HOME+ does the ability to provide lock changes within
17 24 hours.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

19 And have survivors from NYCHA been apart of the
20 program already? If you could clarify?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I'll defer to
22 Jamal on that one.

23 DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: Hi, Council Member Hanif. And
24 to my understanding, we will have to verify that.

25 Off the top of my head, I don't believe we have NYCHA

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2 residents who are current clients, uh, with the lock
3 change component.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And could you walk me
5 through what a client's relationship with ENDGBV
6 looks like from the beginning to sort of the end? Or
7 are they a part of ENDGBV's network for life?

8 DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: So, clients sort of part and
9 parcel with the way we approach providing services to
10 survivors, it is a self determination around
11 continuing or terminating services in that context.
12 So, there is no forced case closure or time in which
13 they have to sort of redo an intake. So, walking it
14 through the beginning, a survivor can self-refer or
15 just reach out to any of the organizations in their
16 implementing HOME+. They can be referred from
17 another organization. They go through an intake
18 process that is a lot about discussing safety and
19 risk. At that point, they become a client and get
20 connected to the specific services that are a part of
21 the program. And, through regular check ins with the
22 provider, they come to a decision about if they would
23 like to continue and they need more services through
24 the program or if they would like to stop
25 participating in the program.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

2 How will ENDGBV ensure transparency of data
3 results 12 months after signing? And how can CBOs
4 and advocates hold stakeholder parties accountable to
5 survivors?
6

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think ,you
8 know, we always welcome feedback from all of our CBOs
9 and advocates. I think there is ,you know, ways to
10 provide feedback on website in general about our
11 programming, HOME+ being included in that. We are
12 ,you know, working on developing sort of an FAQ about
13 the program as well to kind of make sure that there
14 is information and clarity for everybody about what
15 the program does and how best to utilize it as well
16 as continuing to do outreach and make sure that
17 information keeps getting out there.

18 In addition, I will say that ,you know, we have
19 on our website, information about specific complaints
20 around language access and accessibility as well.
21 So, folks are welcome to... And people can also
22 always call 3-1-1 as another option in terms of ,you
23 know, giving feedback if need be.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And, at this time, are you
25 all holding a stakeholder's table where anti-domestic

1
2 violence organizations are meeting maybe on a regular
3 basis to offer feedback directly or what does that
4 look like?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, we partner
6 ,you know, in many of our [TIMER CHIMES]... Many of
7 our existing stakeholder convenings. So, for
8 instance, the Downstate Coalition comes to mind, that
9 we are regularly at. In addition, we have an
10 advisory council with about 25 different provider
11 orgs on the advisory council that continually meet
12 quarterly and provide feedback on our office and its
13 work -- as well as help inform sort of future
14 directions for the office. And, then ,you know, in
15 addition to that, through the Family Justice Centers,
16 all of the partners there, all of the providers there
17 are regularly convened through those centers.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it.

19 Could I do a few more questions?

20 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Yes, of course.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair.

22 At present, there is just one required report on
23 the effects of the program required by the
24 legislation rather than annual reporting. Is
25 progress on this program something that the

1 administration might consider tracking in ENDGBV's
2 annual reports, even if not required by the law?

3
4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: I think we are
5 definitely opened to considering it. And I think
6 ,you know, as we mentioned in the testimony, we are
7 working with ,you know, on an evaluation of the
8 program that we anticipate to have completed by May
9 2023... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great...

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: graduate
12 students at NYU Wagner.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: That is wonderful to know.
14 We really look forward to that report.

15 The press releases for the HOME+ program
16 expansion mentioned a million investment for HOME+.
17 This is technically not new money, but it has been
18 ENDGBV's budget since Fiscal 2021. Why hasn't this
19 number been adjusted since then given that inflation
20 has become an issue? And could you provide a budget
21 cost breakdown for the HOME+ program?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, I think
23 ,you know, in terms of expanding the number, right
24 now we have not currently seen a need in terms of
25 demand and that our providers are able to meet the

1
2 demand right now with the existing budget. But, as
3 with all of our programs, we will continually sort of
4 review and ask for more as we hear that ,you know,
5 from our providers. Right? I think that that is
6 sort of how that works.

7 And, in terms of the breakdown, we have an annual
8 budget, as you said, of ,you know, \$100,666,000.00.
9 Of that, about \$628,000.00 goes directly to the
10 providers, and the rest go to the response alert for
11 the personal security devices and the locksmith
12 services.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Could you repeat those last
14 few numbers one more time?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so I said
16 it is about \$628,000.00 goes directly to the
17 providers, and the rest go to locksmith and alarm
18 services.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And could you just clarify
20 who the providers are?

21 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: For HOME+?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Yes.

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Okay. So, the
24 providers are, it's VIP Community Services in the
25 Bronx, it's Womankind in Queens, it is Rising Ground,

1
2 STEPS to End Family Violence in Manhattan, Seamen's
3 Society for Children and Families in Staten Island,
4 and HELP R.O.A.D.S in Brooklyn currently.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And, so, are there other
6 providers who might get instated into the program or
7 what does that process look like?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so, right
9 now these contracts, uh, we will probably renew them
10 through FY24. And our plan is to resolicit through a
11 competitive solicitation after that. So, once that
12 happens, anybody who ,you know, wants to apply can,
13 and it will be the regular competitive solicitation
14 process for the City.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then what is the
16 provider tasked with?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, the provider
18 is ,you know, tasked with making sure that they have
19 somebody who is a HOME+ coordinator who can ,you
20 know, take the incoming referrals, do the assessments
21 of the clients -- and the assessments are really
22 focused on, like, what are their needs? What are the
23 services that they want? They communicate with the
24 various vendors in terms of making sure that the
25 client's needs are also communicated to the vendor.

1
2 Right? So, if somebody ,you know, wants to make sure
3 that the personal security system company only talks
4 to them in Spanish, the provider will let the company
5 know that. And they are responsible for connecting
6 the client to any other services that they may need.
7 So, that could be services like legal services,
8 counseling. Providers will do safety planning with
9 all of the clients and provide case management really
10 related to staying safe in the home.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. So, for an
12 organization right now who is not a provider, what
13 does that mean for them when they have clients who
14 may need lock changes?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: They would be
16 [BACKGROUND NOISE] encouraged or referred directly to
17 one of the HOME+ providers.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay.

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: And have that
20 client go there and get services there.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: So, right now, if I am
22 understanding this correctly, the non-provider
23 organizations know which are the providers?
24
25

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, and I think
3 that is part of our ongoing sort of outreach for...

4 (CROSS-TALK)

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: okay... (CROSS-TALK)

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Right? And I
7 think that is why we want to make sure that folks are
8 aware of the program. Because the cross referral
9 piece is really important.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

11 And, then, is there a specific timeframe for CBOs
12 to render the lock changing services? Both Project
13 Safe and The City's HOME+ program have varying
14 timelines for their services depending on volume and
15 the availability of third party vendors, and may not
16 be able to same day lock changes with many clients.

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Yes, so I think
18 ,you know, uh, for HOME+, we are able to do 24-hour
19 ,you know, lock changes. I think, uhm, part of that
20 is also on the provider and the assessment with the
21 client and their needs. Right? So, I think it
22 depends on what that conversation with the client
23 looks like; what the safety plan looks like, and
24 making sure that they get the lock changed in the
25 time that they need to maintain their safety.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

3 And, then, what does eligibility look like for
4 survivors who are still living with the person
5 causing abuse or harm?

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, survivors
7 who are still living with their abusive partner, uh,
8 are eligible for the program, but again I think part
9 of that goes to the provider and the conversation
10 they have with the survivors. Right? Because when I
11 think you're in that situation, you really need to do
12 a delicate sort of safety assessment and have a
13 conversation with the client about what makes sense
14 and how this impact their overall safety.

15 DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: I also wanted to add in terms
16 of... earlier we had mentioned that their devices,
17 if it is the alarm system, are mailed to the person's
18 address, that they can be mailed to any alternative
19 address that is deemed safe by the client. So, if
20 someone lives with their abusive partner or the
21 person causing harm, and in the context of having a
22 device mailed, that could escalate risk or danger, it
23 can be arranged that it can be sent somewhere else.
24 So that is just one of several considerations we take
25 into place around your question, Council Member.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

2 And, then, do you all coordinate, uh, the
3 alternative mailing address or how is that sorted
4 out? Is that with the provider?
5

6 (NONVERBAL RESPONSE)

7 Okay.

8 And, then, finally, the bill language only covers
9 lock changing services but mentions additional
10 services with the administrative potentially also
11 covered door and lock repair.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, currently,
13 HOME+ does cover door and lock repair as well as sort
14 of window security. So, we are trying to make this
15 as comprehensive as possible in terms of meeting a
16 survivors safety needs.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great, thank you. Thank
18 you, Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I want to
20 acknowledge the presence of Council Member Riley, uh,
21 who has joined us.

22 And, then, I just want to ask one followup
23 question before handing it over to another colleague.

24 You had talked a little bit about eligibility for
25 survivors who are still living with the person

1 causing harm. Can you talk a little bit about some
2 of the difficulties or how it would be navigated if,
3 in that scenario, ,you know, a lock change is
4 performed, and the intersection within housing laws
5 around unlawful evictions and things like that?
6

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, I think,
8 again, I think is where we are working with our
9 providers and working ,you know, have given them some
10 guidance on sort of the conversations they should be
11 having with survivors as they consider this program.
12 So, as part of the intake, if that's the situation,
13 the provider would talk to a survivor and make sure
14 that they look at their lease, for instance, who is
15 on the lease? Are they only ones on the lease? Is
16 the person causing harm the main leaseholder? Right?
17 Because that will impact what that looks like. I
18 also this is one of the reasons that ,you know, we
19 include the referrals to housing attorneys here,
20 because in those kind of thornier cases, we want to
21 make sure that that survivor is also connected to
22 legal resources that they need to navigate the
23 situation while maintaining their safety and still
24 being able to access the program if it makes sense.

25 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

1
2 I am going to pass it over to Council Member
3 Gutiérrez.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair.

5 I was just talking with my colleague, Council
6 Member [INAUDIBLE], this is great. I know it is a
7 relatively new launch since Fall 2022. Uhm, so, I
8 think my first question is just related to outreach.
9 I know right now it's a small program, it's one CBO
10 in each borough. But, I also think that it is
11 important for folks to know about it and ,you know,
12 being completely ignorant to the process, right? You
13 want to make sure that you are offering safety and
14 security before you roll out and do any of these
15 things. So, is there a plan to expand outreach? To
16 expand, uhm, the way that New Yorkers understand that
17 this is a program that is potentially accessible to
18 them? That's my first question.

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, thanks for
20 the question.

21 I think, yeah, I think as I said earlier, I think
22 that the outreach is ongoing and perpetual. I think
23 for us, it is for all of our programs. Right? And I
24 think one of the biggest things that we can do around
25 domestic and gender based violence is continually

1
2 raise awareness of the issue and raise awareness of
3 the recourses. And I think ,you know, our... ENDGBV
4 has a citywide outreach team that is dedicated to
5 this, as well as Jamal and his team who do outreach
6 on HOME+ in particular. So, we are always open to
7 connecting with anybody who would be interested to do
8 some kind of presentation about domestic and gender
9 based violence as well as the recourses available.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

11 My next question is just about the... I guess
12 the process or the protocol, in those instances where
13 a victim is connecting with the CBO, has the alarm
14 system set up, and is now asking for a lock. Are
15 there are instances where building management or the
16 supers will ask for a spare key? Like, what does the
17 safety plan look like in those instances? Like, my
18 building is an example -- the building that I grew up
19 is an example of that where you can change the locks
20 as many times as you want, but they want a copy.
21 And, like, does that compromise the victim's safety,
22 and kind of what is the response that you all have in
23 those instances?

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, and I
25 think that is a great question, because I think ,you

1 know, it is so case by case. Right? And, I think,
2 again, this is why our providers are really
3 encouraged to talk to the survivors about their
4 specific situation. Because, to your point, it's
5 like, every landlord may be different. Every
6 building may be different. And, I think, again, it's
7 like if they feel safe in that building or with that
8 landlord, and a safe with them having the key, that
9 is sort of what will be driving the process as much
10 as possible.
11

12 So, assuming that they feel safe living in the
13 building, and, like, the landlord already has a key
14 to the apartment, and that feels safe to the
15 survivor, then we would probably ,you know, we can
16 make multiple keys. Our providers is open to making
17 multiple keys to give one to the landlord of the
18 building if need be.

19 If the survivor doesn't feel safe in that
20 building or with the landlord having the key, then
21 that is a separate situation. And our providers
22 would sort of access for that and try and make a
23 safety plan around those needs as well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Great. So, I guess
25 that kind of answers my next question about, uhm,

1
2 victims that are maybe perhaps like renting rooms
3 from ,you know, from a person. So, like, they'll
4 have a specific lock on their room door or just the
5 different dynamics. Right? Housing looks very
6 different to folks. So, I mean, I appreciate that it
7 is a case by case, but if you... Are there any
8 examples that you can share about how you are
9 responding to those very unique cases -- or buildings
10 where there's -- the key is downstairs -- if you're
11 in a big building, ,you know, someone can walk right
12 in -- and I guess just kind of expanding on that.
13 Again, I appreciate, and I understand that it is case
14 by case, but I think this is a really [INAUDIBLE]
15 problem. I would love to help fight and join the
16 chair in expanding for... funding to expand this.

17 But, I think there are so many unique scenarios,
18 especially in a district like mine, uhm, in Bushwick
19 and Williamsburg, so I am just curious how you all
20 kind of respond to that? That is my last question.
21 Thank you.

22 DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: Yeah, I appreciate you
23 acknowledging that case by case nature is kind of how
24 the program is operating to be the most responsive
25 that we can to survivors.

1
2 You know how, internal doors and situations where
3 folks are sharing apartments with other individuals
4 in and out of their family, we can arrange for
5 installations of locks on internal doors through our
6 vendors. So, in that context -- that is one specific
7 thing I recall you saying. I do think on a case by
8 case basis, uh, we are understanding how it plays
9 out, for example, if folks had questions about
10 changing locks on like the front door to an apartment
11 building which serves others, that is going to be a
12 sort of higher... more of a challenge to potentially
13 surmount, but to my colleague, Saloni Sethi's, point,
14 ,you know, we are trying to work with all of the
15 stakeholders and center the clients. So, if they
16 have a dynamic with the landlord or management
17 company where they feel comfortable and safe
18 approaching them, the provider will talk to them
19 about what that conversation could look like and if
20 there could be, uh, ways to surmount or pass those
21 potential barriers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Thank
23 you, Chair, thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, Council Member.

25 [TIMER CHIMES]

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I guess for me, just
3 thinking about the cultural relevance and language
4 access, can you talk to me a little bit about what
5 that looks like? Because, often a lot of, uhm, folks
6 who experience domestic violence, sometimes are
7 silenced because of cultural issues and things like
8 that. So, could you talk about what that outreach
9 looks like? And how do we let them know about these
10 programs? And do you have, like, when you are doing
11 your recruitment, how many languages do you have them
12 in, and what does that look like?

13 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure. So, I
14 think ,you know, in terms of our outreach, part of
15 the office's outreach efforts are always around just
16 having folks understand that domestic and gender
17 based violence is an issue? Right? Because I think
18 so many times there is so much that we don't talk
19 about. So, making sure that we are out there talking
20 about it is a huge part of getting communities -- all
21 types of different communities to kind of recognize
22 it and identify it and understand that there are
23 supports available.

24 In terms of the language access piece in
25 particular, our providers do offer services in

1 multiple languages for the most part. If they don't
2 have staff who speaks those languages, they all
3 access to telephonic interpretation through Language
4 Line. Our materials are also all translated in to
5 the top 10 languages, uh, both on our website as well
6 as materials specific to this program -- about
7 HOME+. And then the other thing sort of mentioned is
8 that part of the assessment done with the client,
9 also concerns ,you know, how they want to be
10 contacted. Right? So, in addition to whether they
11 want phone calls or texts, that includes what
12 language they would like to speak. And, so, even our
13 providers who are responding, have that information
14 on file. So, if somebody wants to be... have
15 response happen in another language, the sort of
16 personal alarm, uh, security company has access to
17 Language Line to make sure that they are responding
18 with an interpreter who speaks that language.

20 DIRECTOR ALSARRAJ: And, quickly, just to add to
21 that, uhm, and just repeat it for emphasis, even the
22 installation instructions with the alarm systems,
23 uhm, the vendors would get the information about the
24 language needs of the client. So, that has also been
25 translated into the top 10 City languages and would

1
2 be included in the package, so that the survivor
3 wouldn't even have to ask additionally at that point
4 for that to be given to them.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: This is just another
6 question I had that just kind of occurred to me, too.
7 So, let's say I had this service done once, what
8 happens if I need it again? Because we know
9 sometimes it does not... Sometimes they come back
10 and sometimes ,you know, survivors, that's just part
11 of the process.

12 So, if you get the service one time is like one
13 and done or could they get it another time? Like,
14 what does that process look like as well?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: That's a great
16 question. And I think ,you know, along with most of
17 our providers and ENDGBV understand that this is not
18 a one and done process. Right? Like, trying to
19 address domestic and gender based violence is an
20 ongoing process. And, so, for that reason there is
21 not limit on how many times a survivor can access
22 services.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That is really good to
24 hear. Because sometimes these programs it will be,
25 like, "Oh, well, you got it, so ,you know, we're kind

1 of done," so it is really good to hear that. Because
2 sometimes, we know, it happens and they come back,
3 and they rekindle and ,you know, it starts up again.
4 So, that is really good to hear. Definitely look to
5 my office as a partner is this as well. I definitely
6 want to make sure that we are getting this
7 information out, because it is something that is very
8 much needed. And, so, please let us know how I can
9 be supportive. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you, does Council Member
12 Gennaro have any questions or do we know?

13 Okay, so I just wanted to ask a few more general
14 questions before we go to public testimony.

15 So, the HOME+ program builds on the existing
16 alternative to shelter programs and HOME+ is limited
17 to survivors of gender based violence. And ,you
18 know, it seems that we are just that what gender
19 based violence means in practical terms is up to the
20 individual non-residential programs providing the
21 service, but for the most part the services end up
22 being for survivors of intimate partner violence. Do
23 you anticipate a more streamlined definition of
24 gender based violence or have you seen issues with
25 the definition in practice?

1
2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: That is a great
3 question.

4 And I think, uh, ,you know, I think as we
5 expanded to become The Mayor's Office to End Domestic
6 and Gender-Based Violence, it sort of... It is
7 defining a new space in some ways. Right? And kind
8 of identifying, like, all of the things that could
9 potentially fit in to that category of gender based
10 violence. I think at its broadest, it's about any
11 violence that sort of exploits unequal power dynamics
12 between people of any gender. And that is kind of
13 the definition we use. I think, uhm, our focus is
14 really also on specific forms of gender based
15 violence so that's sexual violence, domestic
16 violence, trafficking, stalking, all of those...
17 family violence, as part of that, too.

18 So, yes, I think ,you know, we always working
19 with our providers to make sure that we are being as
20 expansive as possible and reaching as many people as
21 possible.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. And, I know that
23 you mentioned HOME+ will cover the lock repair and
24 change, the windows repair and change, the door
25 repair and change, and the panic button -- alarm

1
2 system, is ENDGBV considering adding any other
3 services? Or have you received feedback about other
4 needs, uh, from program participants?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Not at this
6 time, I think in terms of feedback, or any other
7 services.

8 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Uhm, and what prompted the
9 expansion of the HOME+ program to begin with? Did
10 any specific factors lead to the elimination of the
11 requirement for active TOPs or OPs, that... the
12 orders of protection, and police response for program
13 participation? And ,you know, what was ENDGBV's
14 involvement with the Alternative To Shelter Program
15 prior to redesign of the program and launch of HOME+?
16 Like, are there... Is their staff involved? Is
17 there staff that worked at ATP and now working for
18 HOME+?

19 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: So, the
20 Alternative To Shelter Program had existed since the
21 mid 90's and was off rooted by HRA. In 2016-2017,
22 the City convened a domestic violence task force that
23 was co-chaired by ENDGBV and The Mayor's Office of
24 Criminal Justice. And the sort of redesign and
25 expansion of Alternatives to Shelter really came from

1
2 the work of that task force. And that task force
3 engaged other city agencies, stakeholders, our
4 community based partners, and really that ,you know,
5 the thinking behind the expansion was really trying
6 to make sure that as we are thinking about keeping
7 the survivors safe in their homes, we are thinking as
8 comprehensively as possible and making sure that we
9 are reaching as many survivors as possible. So, the
10 thought to kind of reduce barriers to access and to
11 take away those requirements for documentation or
12 orders or protection or police reports, really came
13 from the work of the domestic violence task force and
14 those recommendations. And that is sort of where the
15 expansion and the transition started.

16 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you. I am going to pass
17 it over to Council Member Riley for questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair Cabán.

19 Thank you so much. This sounds like an amazing
20 program. I know outreach was spoken about a lot, uh,
21 is there any evaluation on how we are doing our
22 outreach? Because, we do go to a lot of places
23 within our communities, and they never know about
24 these programs that are happening. So, is there an
25 evaluation process on how we are doing outreach?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: That's a..

Yeah, I mean, not... We don't currently have an evaluation process on outreach in particular, but I think we'd invite all of you, if you have feedback or have people that don't know about the program, we are really open to receiving that. And we are open to coming to your communities and talking about this program and all of our other programs and our services in general. Because I think, it's, yeah, it is a huge... In city like New York, it is an ongoing challenge to make sure that we are getting the information to as many people as possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Of course.

And you spoke about trafficking, uhm, could you just, uh, explain to me how this program benefits those who are possibly, uhm, experiencing that?

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, so, I think ,you know, again, it is applicable to all survivors of domestic and gender based violence. So, even somebody who has been a survivor of trafficking, if they are in a situation where they're now safely housed, but for some reason feel unsafe or need ,you know, need a door lock change or door replacement or a window security device to help them feel safer in

1
2 their homes, they would be eligible for that program
3 as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: All right, thank you.
5 Thank you, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: All right, thank you, and I
7 think a common theme is... has been from my
8 colleagues around outreach. And so, I am just
9 wondering, can you tell us how much is allocated to
10 outreach? Like, for example, like, what is the
11 outreach budget on the team. Do you need more
12 resources to be able to have more folks on the
13 outreach team or money to get materials out?

14 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: We can get back
15 to you on that. But we do have citywide outreach
16 team that does outreach I think. And so, this is
17 also a relatively new program, so I think ,you know,
18 as it develops, and it becomes more part of the
19 ecosystem of services that we have hopefully that
20 will also help our outreach efforts in making sure
21 that folks know about this.

22 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Mm-hmm, okay.

23 And, it does seem like there is a little bit of a
24 gap, and Council Member Hanif touched on a little
25 bit, ,you know, there seems to be good communication

1
2 coordination with, uhm, CBOs, but to kind of catch
3 that person who feels most comfortable in their faith
4 communities, like, the connection, coordination, and
5 partnership with faith based institutions like our
6 mosques, our temples, our churches.

7 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Sure, I mean, I
8 think ,you know, we have made lots of efforts to be
9 faith based specific outreach. And that continues to
10 be sort of a priority for us. We partner with Center
11 for Faith and Community Partnerships on making sure
12 that we are working with them and through them, and
13 ,you know, consistently presenting to them about our
14 work and our programs as well, in hopes that helps
15 engage faith communities. But, again, we are also
16 happy to engage any faith communities directly as
17 well.

18 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

19 So, I just would like to thank you for your time
20 and your testimony and the information you were able
21 to offer today. And, we would certainly love to
22 follow up on a couple of the other items that went
23 unanswered. So, thank you.

24 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SETHI: Thank you.

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes the administration portion of this hearing. We will be moving to public testimony in one moment.

I will read the names of the panelists. There is one panelist on Zoom, Michael Polenberg from Safe Horizon. Again, we will begin in one moment, thank you.

Okay, at this point, we will begin public testimony -- beginning and ending with our one registered witness.

If there is anyone that we have inadvertently missed in the room or online, we will call your name or check for anyone at the end of this panel.

So, Mr. Polenberg, you may begin your testimony when the sergeant begins the clock, thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

MICHAEL POLENBERG: Thank you so much.

And, good morning, I am Michael Polenberg, I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Safe Horizon. I am happy to be with you this morning.

Safe Horizon is the nation's largest nonprofit victim services organization, and we provide a client centered trauma informed response to about 250,000

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

4 Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support,
5 prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of
6 violence and abuse, their families, and communities.

7 We are eager to share with you, our work at
8 Project Safe, which is a program at Safe Horizon
9 where we replace locks and provide services to crime
10 victims. In FY22, Project Safe installed 502
11 security devices in households across the five
12 boroughs.

13 We are looking forward to providing some feedback
14 on Intro 534-A. We are grateful that, uh, the
15 Council is considering this legislation. And I am
16 just going to provide a little bit of background
17 about Project Safe.

18 We primarily assist survivors of intimate partner
19 or family violence, though we do help victims of
20 other crimes as well. I know that's come up this
21 morning. We receive referrals from a variety of
22 sources including the City's Family Justice Centers,
23 District Attorneys' offices, and our own crime victim
24 assistance program, and other Safe Horizon Programs.

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2 Our lock change program is popular enough to
3 where most survivors are asking for this service up
4 front. But, if someone is relaying a narrative
5 wherein their door seems insecure or when someone who
6 is causing harm has key access, then we might offer
7 the lock change as part of safety planning.

8 And what we have learned over the years is that
9 while Project Safe is a lock change service, the
10 clients we assist often need... also need additional
11 case management and safety planning. Changing a lock
12 may provide a certain level of security, but there
13 are often other safety needs that warrant our
14 attention. For example, is the abusive party kicking
15 down the door? In these situations, a lock change
16 may not be the best option, and other safety options
17 should be explored.

18 We have also learned that it takes a lot of leg
19 work to manage our vendors. Invoices are not always
20 sent to us on time or at all, which makes it
21 difficult to reconcile our expenses with our funders.
22 Our contract for Project Safe is with The Mayor's
23 Office Criminal Justice, MOCJ, and it only covers the
24 cost of locks. This means that our staff that does
25 case management and safety planning, must be paid

1 through other contracts for victims' services. And
2 our limited contract funding has never enabled us to
3 provide lock changes to everyone who requests them.
4 We have to try to prioritize the cases that seem the
5 most dangerous.
6

7 I mentioned earlier, we applaud Council Member
8 Hanif for recognizing the need to expand the City's
9 capacity to provide these services for victims' of
10 intimate partner and gender based violence. And we
11 are grateful to all of the council members' staff who
12 have met with us over the past year to better
13 understand the challenges we face in operating
14 Project Safe.

15 We have three [TIMER CHIMES] points of
16 clarification on Introduction 534-A.

17 One is... (CROSS-TALK)

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired... (CROSS-
19 TALK)

20 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Oh...

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: You can finish up, go ahead.

22 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Okay, thanks.

23 Is there a specific... This came up earlier: Is
24 there a specific timeframe for community based
25 organizations to render the lock changing services?

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2 Both Project Safe and the City's HOME+ have varying
3 time lines for services depending on volume and
4 availability. If the Council is contemplating same
5 day lock changes, we think sufficient recourses will
6 need to be dedicated, as these can be very expensive
7 services.

8 This came up also about eligibility for survivors
9 who are still living with the person causing harm.
10 If the bill does not require a police report or an
11 order of protection, and the person causing harm
12 refuses to leave the dwelling willingly, this may
13 make it difficult to perform a lock change and be in
14 line with tenant housing laws regarding unlawful
15 eviction.

16 And, finally, the bill language only covers...
17 Seems to cover lock changing services. Many of our
18 clients are able to get lock changes through other
19 avenues, including by their landlord or Project Safe
20 or The DA's offices, or HOME+; however, there is a
21 lack of services around door and lock repair. Locks
22 and doors are often damaged as a result of the person
23 causing harm. So, we just want to make sure there's
24 additional recourses for door and lock repair.

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So, thank you; sorry I went over my time. And I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: That's quite all right.

Okay, I do have just some... A short followup for you.

You know, you had talked about some of the barriers to accessing services, but I want to talk about, particularly, vulnerable communities.

Research indicates that individuals living at the margins including immigrants, queer folks, BIPOC folks, and people with disabilities experience economic abuse, as well as both poverty and domestic violence at much higher rates than their white, cis gender counterparts. And, so, I would like to know from you, from your perspective, how the City can better address these issues with a particular focus on survivors who are deaf or hard of hearing; survivors with other disabilities; survivors with children and pets; survivors of color; queer survivors; criminalized survivors; survivors at the intersection of mental health challenges or substance use challenges, and things like that -- older or younger; veterans; immigrants survivors?

1
2 MICHAEL POLENBERG: That's a great question. You
3 know, the beauty of New Yorker is that we have such a
4 rich network of service providers in every borough
5 working with a wide array of populations including
6 the populations that you listed.

7 And I know that you and ENDGBV were talking about
8 outreach efforts earlier. I think that there is a
9 way, whether it's through the Family Justice Centers,
10 through the Downstate Coalition for Crime Victims,
11 which I co-chair, or just directly with service
12 providers -- I mean, I am thinking about barrier free
13 living, and thinking about all of these wonderful
14 providers who do such important work with, again all
15 of the populations you listed, that there is a way to
16 make sure that folks know about this program, that
17 there is an easy path to getting access to lock
18 changes or anything else that they need. So, that
19 would be ,you know, that would be my hope that that
20 is how that could play out.

21 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right, thank you so much
23 for your testimony.

24 That concludes this panel. So, at this point, we
25 will ask for anyone we have inadvertently missed. If

1 there is anyone in the room who wishes to testify?

2 We are not seeing anyone in the room and not seeing
3 anyone online. So, at this point, this is the end of
4 the public testimony portion of this hearing.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON CABÁN: So, I know, although a brief
7 hearing, incredibly informative, and I think that
8 there is like, a very clear consensus from myself,
9 colleagues, and from the administration themselves
10 about how important and exciting a program like this
11 and the extension of a program like this is to...
12 and how transformative it can be for folks struggling
13 around the City. So, I am really looking forward to
14 just continuing to partner on the issue and lean into
15 some of the areas that folks mentioned a lot --
16 specially around outreach and removing barriers to
17 access.

18 So, again, thank you very much for time, and
19 thank you to my colleagues and council staff.

20
21 [GAVELING OUT] [GAVEL SOUND]
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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 March 7, 2023