

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

----- X

April 24, 2018

Start: 1:28 p.m.

Recess: 5:00 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.  
14<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Daniel Dromm  
Mathieu Eugene  
Mark Gjonaj  
Robert F. Holden  
I. Daneek Miller  
Kalman Yeger

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

Camille Mackler, Parent

Linn Ye Miller, Parent

Cesar Zuniga, Research and Evaluation Director  
Parent/Child Home Program

Abigail Velikov, Senior Director  
Early Childhood Health and Development Unit  
Division of Family and Child Health  
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, DOHMH

Maite Junco, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and  
External Affairs, NYC Department of Education, DOE

John Tritt, Executive Director of Outreach  
Division of Early Childhood Education  
Department of Education, DOE

Lorelei Atalie-Vargas, Deputy Commissioner  
Administration for Children's Services, ACS

Nicole Jen, Chinese Mother via Translator

Unidentified Chinese Mother via Translator

Kathy Henderson, Regional Manager  
Footsteps to Brilliance

Ernie Collette, Staff Attorney  
Mobilization for Justice

Claire Thomas, Professor

New York Law School & Director of Asylum Clinic

Mary Chang, Chinese-American Planning Council

Aracelis Lucero, Executive Director of MASA

Diana Noriega, Chief Program Officer  
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Kim Sykes, Director of Education Policy  
New York Immigration Coalition

Constance Lesso, Advocate for:  
Make Brooklyn Botanic Garden Free Again

Chloe Breyer, Director of Interfaith Center of New  
York & Episcopal Priest Saint Philip's, Harlem

Amy Punt, Staff Attorney, Immigration Law Unit  
Legal Aid Society

Jessica Griack, Social Worker  
Human Rights First

Betty Baez-Mellow, Attorney & Project Director  
Early Childhood Education Projects  
Advocates for Children

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: We're going to get  
4 started in the next minute. If you can quiet down a  
5 little bit, and make sure that your phones are on  
6 silent or off, though we would recommend you can  
7 Tweet-Tweet about everything that's happening in  
8 here. So, keep in mind to be silent. Okay, we are  
9 good. [gavel] [Speaking Spanish] the Pre-Kinder Unit,  
10 Pre-K, Universal Pre-K [Speaking Spanish] And again,  
11 my name is CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA, and I'm the Chair of  
12 the Immigration Committee here at the New York City  
13 Council. I want to thank our Council committee, and  
14 we have from Queens Council Member Holden, and I will  
15 be announcing them as they come in. Roughly two-  
16 thirds of New York City residents are either  
17 immigrants or the children of immigrants. Stop and  
18 think about that for a second. Two-thirds of all New  
19 Yorkers, all New Yorkers not just in Brooklyn, not  
20 just in my district all New Yorkers. Today we are  
21 focused on our littlest New Yorkers, and we know that  
22 children growing up in immigrant families often bear  
23 the burden of this lack of resources this lack of  
24 access to resources, and the disparities in this  
25 access to health and early education are just two

2 examples that can and do have lasting impacts. The  
3 early years ages 0 to 5 are critical for late life  
4 outcomes in child's development. In fact, the  
5 research has shown that disparities in vocabulary  
6 begin to appear at 18 months—18 months old and grow  
7 exponentially so that by three years old children of  
8 college educated parents or caregivers have two to  
9 three times the vocabulary of those parents who have  
10 not completed high school, and that there is 90 to  
11 100% chance of development delays when children  
12 experience 6 to 7 risk factors such as abuse,  
13 neglect, exposal—exposure to mental health issues,  
14 including domestic violence and substance abuse,  
15 divorce or separation of parents and caregivers,  
16 detention or deportation of a parent or caregiver.  
17 With having 7 to 8 adverse childhood experiences,  
18 children have a 3 to 1 odds of contracting adult  
19 onset heart disease. Additionally, the Migration  
20 Policy Institute found that children of undocumented  
21 immigrants have lower pre-school enrollment,  
22 experienced high rates of linguistic isolation and  
23 limited English proficiency, higher rates of poverty  
24 than their peers and peers and reduced socio-economic  
25 progress overall. These negative outcomes were found

2 to have lasting impacts throughout life affecting  
3 individuals—affecting individuals' future socio-  
4 economic status and wellbeing in adulthood. That is  
5 why today the Immigration Committee is holding an  
6 oversight hearing on existing citywide resources for  
7 immigrant parents of children ages 0 to 5. The  
8 committee will explore how programs like the  
9 Nurse/Family Partnership, the Newborn Home Visiting  
10 Program, the Early Intervention Program, and outreach  
11 and education efforts like the Safe Sleep and Breast  
12 Feeding Information Campaigns serve immigrant and  
13 mixed status families. We will also be looking at  
14 Universal Pre-K, and 3-K programs. Specifically, the  
15 committee will explore how these programs are serving  
16 immigrants—immigrant and mixed status families.  
17 Specifically, the committee will explore whether  
18 these initiatives and services and outreach are  
19 conducted in a linguistically and culturally  
20 appropriate manner, and whether services are  
21 available in neighborhoods with high immigrant  
22 populations. The Committee will also explore how the  
23 deep fear in our immigrant communities has impacted  
24 families' desire to seek out supportive city  
25 services. Immigrants are more fearful than ever, and

2 are sending, and they are fearful of sending their  
3 children to school seeking out city services for  
4 themselves or their families, and even seeking  
5 assistance from police and the court system. As a  
6 result, it is imperative that city agencies be  
7 acutely aware of the needs of immigrant families, and  
8 tailor their services accordingly. Further, we hope  
9 that this is at the start—we are at the start of many  
10 conversations about the emotional wellbeing of our  
11 immigrant and mixed status families. The persistent  
12 uncertainty of federal immigration policy, which  
13 changes abruptly sometimes overnight places  
14 significant and extensive emotional stress on our  
15 immigrant families. This is especially true for  
16 children, and studies show that uncertainty about the  
17 fate of their parents leaves children living in  
18 stress and fear for extended periods of time. This  
19 is called toxic stress, and it can have a significant  
20 and endless negative consequence on a child's  
21 learning and develop. So, the city must recognize  
22 the negative impacts that persistent fear and stress  
23 have on children's wellbeing and begin thinking of  
24 ways to counter these negative impacts. Mental  
25 health cannot be an after thought. We must support

2 children and families in a comprehensive holistic  
3 manner. Today the Council and the Administration  
4 will consider ways to better support immigrant  
5 parents. This is a conversation that the Committee  
6 on Immigration began with city agencies and community  
7 members when in the fall of 2016 we held a hearing on  
8 interagency coordination of services for immigrant  
9 families. This is also why the Council passed a law  
10 that requires MOIA, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
11 Affairs, to convene an interagency task force to  
12 discuss how the city can coordinate their services  
13 and better address the immigrant needs, the immigrant  
14 needs that our New Yorkers are facing, issues like  
15 the ones that we are going to explore today. Today  
16 is also a reaffirmation of the city's commitment to  
17 ensure that we support parents with young children in  
18 a meaningful way, one that we can measure, the one  
19 that we can keep accountable. With that, I would  
20 like to thank everyone for attending today's hearing,  
21 and I would like to remind you that we want you to  
22 fill out a witness slip [laughter] which you can find  
23 at the door if you haven't done that. If you haven't  
24 done that, please do that. This is going to help us  
25 put the panels together. To provide context for the

2 hearing and the testimony, we will first hear from a  
3 couple of impacted parents followed by the  
4 administration who will give their testimony. We'll  
5 ask them questions, and then we'll open up the floor  
6 to all of you in your neighborhoods and organizations  
7 and other parents that might want to speak as well,  
8 and I think we have our first panel set. I will call  
9 your name, and if you can come to the desk over here  
10 by the mics. Our first parent is Camille Mackler and  
11 Tammy Linn will be represented by Ms. Linn Ye Miller,  
12 who will read out loud her testimony, and she could  
13 not be here today. There are parents that we invited  
14 today that could not show up for multiple reasons  
15 including childcare, and so then we think about them  
16 in this moment, and we'll be following up with them  
17 to make sure that we get their testimony, and I'm  
18 really happy and proud that you're here today to  
19 start us off, and if you can start first with Ms.  
20 Camille Mackler.

21 CAMILLE MACKLER: Thank you, Chair  
22 Menchaca, and thank you for this opportunity and  
23 Council Member Holden. I have appeared in front of  
24 you too many times to count, and this is the first  
25 time I've been here in my personal capacity, but this

2 is something that is very important to me. I wanted  
3 to speak a little of the challenges I've had in  
4 obtaining special services for my daughter who is  
5 being raised bi-lingual in the city. My daughter is  
6 currently enrolled in a school in your district, K280  
7 in a UPK program. She speaks English primarily, but  
8 I speak to her only in French, and that is her second  
9 language at home. The delays that I have experienced  
10 means that my daughter will have taken almost the  
11 entire UPK year to get the services that she needs to  
12 be able to succeed in school. We requested our  
13 first—and I go into this in more detail in my written  
14 testimony, but we requested an evaluation on November  
15 2<sup>nd</sup>. To this date, I have yet to meet with the  
16 district to determine what additional evaluations may  
17 be necessary or what services she may be qualified to  
18 receive, and during that time, her difficulties in  
19 learning have only grown, and she has only fallen  
20 further, further behind her own peers. The delays  
21 are because of two factors. The first one is  
22 challenges in getting accommodation because she is a  
23 bilingual child, and the second one are burdensome,  
24 opaque and slow bureaucracy. The evaluation site  
25 that is contract by the DOE to provide the evaluation

2 services did not provide an interpreter, refused to  
3 conduce the evaluations without an interpreter, and  
4 told me that by law I had to provide the interpreter,  
5 something which despite my years of-of experience  
6 advocating to this Administration I was-I did not  
7 challenge stupidly in-in hindsight. Two evaluations  
8 that were before that she's refused so far had to be  
9 rescheduled because of that. I have no idea how they  
10 would have handled this if I had not spoken English  
11 because they had no French speakers on staff. They  
12 made no provision to have French speakers on staff.  
13 They only speak English and French-and Spanish in the  
14 evaluation site, and they never made any attempt to  
15 help address the language issues. The other issue is  
16 that every step that was taken, every-everything that  
17 happened, happened because I called multiple times.  
18 I emailed. I made myself known to them. Anyone  
19 whose ever worked with me in this room knows that I  
20 don't let go [laughs] when I start working on  
21 something. You can only imagine when my child is the  
22 one who's at stake. In one and since, I had to  
23 remind them that there was a 60-day deadline by which  
24 they had to complete the evaluations at which point  
25 they schedule two more evaluations, and then I had to

2 remind them of the deadline again before they would  
3 send me a copy of evaluation and forward them onto  
4 the district. Ultimately, I was able to tap into a  
5 lot of my resources. I live in Windsor Terrace,  
6 which is right next to Park Slope, which we all know  
7 is in mecca of parenting for Brooklyn, if not New  
8 York City. I have access to list those (sic) through  
9 my professional networks. I have access to advocates  
10 on these issues. I have health insurance so I have a  
11 pediatrician in private practice who also worked  
12 through this with me, and through that, I was able to  
13 connect to other advocates who gave me information of  
14 how to challenge a district who gave me information  
15 on how to hire a lawyer, because commonly parents  
16 have to hire attorneys to compel the district to  
17 provide the services that they need. I was able to  
18 be connected to a private evaluator, and we have the  
19 means the thousands of dollars we are now going to be  
20 paying to have her privately evaluated. I know that  
21 when I do finally have my meeting with the district,  
22 which is currently scheduled for next week, I will  
23 have to push for more evaluations, and what is worse  
24 is that I have learned that none of this is uncommon.  
25 Now, my daughter does not have a learning disability

2 nor is she on the Autism Spectrum. Her needs are  
3 more around speech and occupational therapy and  
4 processing issues. While, they are impeding her  
5 learning, these are not the most serious needs that  
6 I know many parents face in this city. I can't  
7 imagine what it would feel like to have a child going  
8 through those issues, and not have the resources and  
9 the knowledge that I have access to. My daughter has  
10 been accepted to a dual language program in Brooklyn  
11 next year. She'll be going to a French-English Dual  
12 Language program if she can enter general education,  
13 which I still don't know, but it is my wish for her  
14 to be able to learn to read, write and speak in her  
15 native, two of her native languages. So, I am pushing  
16 for her to be able to have a general education with  
17 proper support, and I—I know that I'm going to have  
18 to fight for that. At the end of the day, I would  
19 never pretend to know the challenges that immigrant  
20 communities face in New York City. Although I have  
21 been advocating for them for 15 years, I speak, read,  
22 and write in English. I am a lawyer who graduated  
23 from an American law school. I have because of me  
24 and my husband's professional occupations, we have  
25 access to private health insurance, and to an income

2 that allows us to provide these private services, but  
3 if I with all of my experience advocating to city  
4 agencies, have had this much trouble, I can't imagine  
5 what it must be like for parents of an immigrant  
6 family. I have spent 15 years working for immigrants  
7 in this city, and I know that one of the biggest  
8 reasons they come here is to provide better  
9 opportunities for their children, and it is breaking  
10 my heart to see how difficult that is, and how much  
11 work se still have to do. But I want to end first by  
12 thanking the city, the City Council and  
13 Administration for UPK, because without access to a  
14 trained educator, we would have never known my  
15 daughter had these issues, thinks these issues until  
16 much—until much later when it could possibly have had  
17 even a greater impact, and been harder to resolve,  
18 and I especially want to end by giving a shout out to  
19 Ms. Tony and Ms. Mary in Classroom 276 at K280 for  
20 all the support and the—and the patience that they  
21 have shown us and their partnership in all this  
22 process.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Ms.  
24 Mackler and thank you for your testimony today. That  
25 helps us kind of set the tone in the set of questions

2 that I think we're going to going to want to explore.

3 We've been joined by Brooklyn's Council Member

4 Mathieu Eugene, and also Brooklyn's very own Kalman

5 Yeager, Council Member right next to me in Borough

6 Park, and we also have a third parent that made it up

7 Mr. Cesar Zuniga, if you can join the panel, we have

8 your—if you're in here. Yep, you can just join the

9 panel as the third, and also Ms. Ling Ye Miller is

10 also representing Ms. Tammy Linn. If you can read

11 her testimony, and I will also say that Ms. Ling Ye

12 Miller is on my team and on my staff, and organizes

13 through my office participatory budgeting working

14 with parents from all—all over the district.

15 Specifically, leads onto our Chinese families in

16 Sunset Park. Thank you for being here today, and if

17 you can—if you can go and read the testimony.

18 LING YE MILLER: Thank you, Council

19 Member. I'm—I have worked—today I am here in my

20 private capacity representing a parent who is not

21 able to be here due—due to her inabilities to take

22 time off from work. As immigrant parents, the first

23 thing is they struggle to pay rent to keep—to keep

24 the family housed and them fed. Ms. Tammy Lane was a

25 mom—one of the—was a mom—the parents that parents

2 that had a meeting with the Council Member back in  
3 early March when they brought the issue of Early  
4 Childhood Care and UPK overcrowding of UPK in Sunset  
5 Park to Council Member CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA, and this  
6 is her original—this is her statement that I'm going  
7 to read now. Hello, my name is Tammy Linn. I have a  
8 4-year-old son who was diagnosed with speech—with  
9 speech development issues back when he was 2-years  
10 old, and we were very lucky. When we applied for the  
11 IEP program, we got approved right away, and a  
12 teacher visits us every week to—to help my son  
13 getting—getting his language needs, and then I worked  
14 with the teacher to learn the programming, and then  
15 how to work with my son to improve his language  
16 development, and the result has been phenomenal. My—  
17 my son still needs to be in Special Education, but  
18 he's improving a lot because of the IEP program, but  
19 I know—around me, I know many people who are not so  
20 lucky due to the school—due to the overcrowding, due  
21 to the lack of bilingual teachers for the IEP  
22 program, many of my friends whose children have  
23 language developmental delays, they are put into  
24 waiting programs. They're put into waiting for many  
25 months before they can get a teacher. Two of my

2 friends are still waiting after 10 months waiting,  
3 and children have—children are—the IEP program is for  
4 children between the age of 0 to 3. When you put  
5 children into a 1 or 2-year waiting, they will just—  
6 you are missing the golden opportunity for children  
7 to get early childhood intervention, and a lot of  
8 children born in immigrant households especially low-  
9 income immigrant households they are prone to  
10 develop—they are prone to have language development  
11 delays because of the complex experience they are in.  
12 They are exposed to multi-lingual environment, and  
13 their parents because they are low-income, the  
14 parents also lack the education—education level or  
15 the language skills to help the children bridge the  
16 gap of the environment. Therefore, those children  
17 are left behind, and then when they—and then I—it's  
18 essential that they get bilingual IEP teachers to  
19 help them because the parents are involved. The  
20 parents need to learn from the teachers to help the  
21 children get on board, but a lot of friends that I  
22 know, because they cannot get IEPs they—because  
23 there's a lack of bilingual teachers. So, they  
24 either wait for months without getting their children  
25 on board on time, or they have to—or they have to

2 pick an English speaking teacher, but then that  
3 totally defeats the IEP, the purpose of the IEP  
4 program, which is to have the parents and teacher  
5 involved, and to design an individualized program to  
6 help their children, and we are—we are lucky, but I—I  
7 personally know over a dozen—a dozen parents—such  
8 families who have applied for IEP but are still  
9 waiting for their bilingual children after many months  
10 in Sunset Park. And—and then this is very crucial.  
11 This is so crucial. The children are missing out on  
12 this golden opportunity to have the correction before  
13 they enter—before they enter school because IEP it's  
14 home—the teachers come to your house between the age  
15 of 0 to 3. After 3 years old, they go to a special  
16 school, and when they miss out on that, it's—they  
17 are—basically, they are losing. Before they even  
18 start school, they are using in—at the beginning  
19 line, and I in my community there are a lot of  
20 people—there's —there are a lot of children who are  
21 called satellite babies, immigrant children—immigrant  
22 parents who cannot afford childcare. They send  
23 their—their send their children back home to the home  
24 country to be taken care of by grandparents, and then  
25 sent back to—to America to attend school. When they

2 reach school age it's usually 4 to 5 years old, and  
3 when those—and a lot of those children when they  
4 suddenly come back to a brand new environment, they  
5 have some—lot of them experience psychological  
6 problems, developmental problems and the language  
7 barrier, language development problem, and they need—  
8 they also need bilingual teachers who can help them  
9 guide through that phase, and then everywhere I look  
10 around in my community, there's a huge lack of  
11 bilingual Chinese teachers. I am—in my one—in one of  
12 my friend's schools, there is only one bilingual  
13 Chinese teacher that is shared by kindergarten, by  
14 Pre-K kindergarten and—and elementary school, and all  
15 of this is placing a huge burden on—the parents  
16 and then making, and huge burden on the children who  
17 are not—who are not getting the help they need at an  
18 age when they can be helped.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much  
20 for—for the testimony and your kind of review of  
21 experiences with our parents in Sunset Park, and then  
22 our final Cesar Zuniga from Sunset Park, as well.  
23 Thank you.

24 CESAR ZUNIGA: [coughs] Good afternoon,  
25 everyone. First of all, thank you for—for having

2 this really important hearing. I think the first  
3 thing that I want to say is that, you know, children  
4 develop in context, right, and children develop  
5 within families, and they develop within communities.  
6 So, I so appreciate the opportunity to have these  
7 conversations, and I also want to thank the  
8 Administration and the Council for, you know, the—the  
9 support. Our first speaker talked about UPK.  
10 There's the City's First Readers. These are all  
11 extremely important initiative, but I will say that  
12 we have a long way to go, and we need to keep our  
13 foot on the accelerator particularly in this context  
14 when we're talking about immigrant families. As the  
15 son of an immigrant family, I—I know first hand that  
16 the—the risk factors and the challenges are high,  
17 and—and I also know that notwithstanding some of  
18 those risk factors, immigrant parents have a lot of  
19 strengths, and they have a lot of resources, and if  
20 we are able to capitalize on those resources, and  
21 really bring programming to families that capitalize  
22 on these resources, I think, you know, we're going  
23 to—we're going to see a lot better integration of our  
24 immigrants. We're going to see a lot more  
25 participation, and on that note, on the participation

2 note, well let me take a step back. So, I—I wear two  
3 hats today. I'm the Research and Evaluation Director  
4 for the Parent/Child Home Program, which is an  
5 internationally implemented program that serves 2 and  
6 3-year-old kids. We have sites all across the five  
7 boroughs and in 14 states, and one of the—sort of the  
8 two or three outcomes that we're really focused on  
9 are the integration of the families into the context,  
10 and we do that because we're an intensive home  
11 visiting program that spends a lot of time in homes.  
12 We spend two—two days a week over two years, and that  
13 really gives us the opportunity to create good  
14 relationships with the families, and typically these  
15 families are especially now—I mean I think the—the  
16 last 5 to 10 years have seen—has seen a real shift in  
17 the demographics of our—of our population within PCHP  
18 that reflects the—the shift of the population across  
19 the city and across the country. So, as of last  
20 year, we—we are predominantly an immigrant serving  
21 program. Seventy percent of our families [coughs]  
22 come from a different country; 68% don't speak  
23 English as their first language, and I think we're—  
24 we're seeing that not just in Early Childhood  
25 programs like ours, but across a whole bunch of whole

2 different context. So, the outcomes are really to  
3 empower the parents, provide them tools and resources  
4 through literacy and play, to-to allow them to help  
5 their children become ready for school. Now, in that  
6 process, what we also achieved is the engagement of  
7 the parents, and one of the things that we have found  
8 is that in-in context where we have predominantly  
9 immigrant families we have the highest retention  
10 rates, and we started to look into this more  
11 scientifically, and we indeed found that immigrant  
12 parents are a little harder to engage initially, but  
13 once you engage them, and once you demonstrate that  
14 this program is going to-is going to affect your life  
15 in a positive way, they stick around. So, one of the  
16 take homes for us is that if we build programming  
17 that is sensitive, culturally appropriate to the  
18 families, they are going to utilize services. So,  
19 just to give you an example, in Queens we have a site  
20 that where we have 94% retention rate. Now, these-  
21 these are folks who in the literature appear to be  
22 very transient and noncommittal and-and-and have all  
23 those risk factors that prevent them from  
24 participating. That's not what we find in our data,  
25 and so again, you know, we're-we're constantly

2 advocating across a whole bunch of different state  
3 capitals and even at federal I meant that when you  
4 build programming that's responsive, parents will  
5 utilize it and, you know, as long as—as long as we,  
6 again, keep in mind the—the need, I mean, the needs  
7 that are way beyond what some of us here can ever  
8 comprehend, and I—and I want to just echo the—the—the  
9 comments from—from our first speaker. I have a child  
10 who also has special needs, and the amount of  
11 resources, the amount of time and when I talk about  
12 resources I mean in terms of our sort of human  
13 resources, and the money that we have to spend to get  
14 the services that my kid was rightly entitled to is  
15 beyond the pale, and we had a conversation, a very  
16 similar conversation around the fact that if we have  
17 to go through that, and we have—I have a PhD in Early  
18 Childhood Education, my partner has a degree in—in  
19 Early Childhood Education, and—and if we had to sort  
20 of climb such a big hill to get the services that my  
21 kid needed, we can't even begin to imagine what—what  
22 some of these folks who don't have resources, who  
23 don't have the time and the money to—to advocate for  
24 their children. So, that—that's from a personal  
25 perspective. I'm also the—the Chair of the Community

2 Board in Sunset Park, and in that work unfortunately,  
3 I have become painfully aware of—of how—what  
4 disconnect there is between families and what—what  
5 they're entitled to in terms of services for their  
6 children. There are countless cases in our community  
7 of families who—who have absolutely no idea where to  
8 begin the process. We have countless families who  
9 have begun the process that are not treated well.  
10 They are not being attended to in the right way.  
11 They're not being consulted like you would see in  
12 other communities, and one of the things that I want  
13 to do, and—and I hope that, you know, you guys will—  
14 will join in the effort is to—is to really begin to  
15 have a conversation in these communities, and  
16 accessible conversation about what services exist and  
17 how to maneuver the process. At the same time, we  
18 should also start a conversation around how do we—how  
19 do we change up some of these processes, right?  
20 Because I think part of what—what we're seeing is,  
21 you know, the bureaucracies are set up in a way that  
22 aren't really receptive not just to the general  
23 population but especially to folks who don't have  
24 resources such as immigrants. The final thing that I  
25 want to—I want to just leave you with there earlier—

2 so this is from—from the literature just Early  
3 Childhood Education generally. I think it's very  
4 clear that the earlier that we intervene in  
5 children's lives, the—the more outcomes, the more  
6 positive outcomes we're going to have over time, the  
7 return on investment is—is significant. For every  
8 dollar that we spend in Early Childhood, we get \$7  
9 back, and I think the—the most import and the most  
10 relevant thing for today is that the earlier we start  
11 intervening with children, the more engaged parents  
12 become not just in the lives of their children, but  
13 in all of the support systems and institutions that  
14 are in the context where their children are  
15 developing.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you not just  
17 from a position of a parent but as a highly educated  
18 New Yorker, and—and kind of civics—civics—civically  
19 minded. Both of you have kind of really presented  
20 the hurdles even for—for parents who have many, many  
21 resources at their hand. So, thank you so much for  
22 this panel. We're going to move over to the  
23 Administration where we will hear from the Mayor's  
24 Office of Immigrant Affairs. They have brought  
25 several other members of different agencies. So,

2 whoever would—is going to be kind of conducting the  
3 Q&A, et cetera. If you we can make—if you can make  
4 your way to the ideas. [pause] This is great. I  
5 am—I'm really happy that the agencies are here  
6 testifying and just kind of speaking n all the  
7 different issues that we're talking about. We have  
8 Ms. Abigail Velikov from DOHMH. We have Maite Junco,  
9 the Senior Advisor to the Chancellor of the  
10 Department of Education; and then we also have John  
11 Tritt from Department of Education as well, the  
12 Director of Outreach. We have Lorelei Atalie, Deputy  
13 Commissioner for ACS. So, thank you so much for  
14 being here. You can choose who goes first in this  
15 work, or in this conversation and this committee, but  
16 whoever wants to go first go ahead and testify, and  
17 we also know that the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
18 Affairs is—is in the house as well, and if we needed  
19 any—any Q&A from them, they'll—they'll come up. Thank  
20 you. [pause]

21 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: Good afternoon Chair  
22 Menchaca and members of the committee. I am Dr.  
23 Abigail Velikov, Senior Director of the Early  
24 Childhood Health and Development Unit of the Division  
25 of Family and Child Health at the New York City

2 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. On behalf  
3 of Commissioner Bassett and Deputy Commissioner  
4 George Askew, I want to thank you for the opportunity  
5 to testify on the many ways the department's supports  
6 expectant parents and families with children from  
7 birth—from birth to five years old. Before I talk  
8 about the department's programming, it is important  
9 to note that the department serves all New Yorkers  
10 regardless of immigration or documentation status. We  
11 do not request any information concerning immigration  
12 status as a condition for participating in our  
13 programming, and our services are offered to families  
14 who meet the income and service eligibility  
15 requirements without any consideration of immigration  
16 status. The department aims to protect and promote  
17 the health of all New Yorkers regardless of origin,  
18 education and primary language. Therefore, in a city  
19 where 40% of our population is foreign born and 24%  
20 have limited English proficiency, providing language  
21 services representing the diversity of New Yorkers is  
22 vital to the agency's mission and goals. Our  
23 Comprehensive Language Access Policy mandates that  
24 emergency communications, legal notices, and health  
25 bulletins are translated into any languages spoken by

2 at least 1% of the New York City LEP population. All  
3 other communications are translated into any  
4 languages spoken by at least 5% of the eligible  
5 population as determined by program or census data,  
6 and may be translated into additional languages if  
7 necessary. We also offer professional interpretation  
8 including telephonic interpretation, in-person  
9 interpretation and American Sign Language  
10 interpretation. This policy ensures wide access to  
11 information and allows DOHMH to eliminate language  
12 barriers to its services. The first five years of  
13 life are foundational for assuring lifelong physical,  
14 cognitive, economic and social-emotional health and  
15 development. The impact of both the physical  
16 environment, home, early care and education settings  
17 and neighborhoods and socio-socio-environments,  
18 relationships that young children share with their  
19 primary caregivers and other adults in their lives  
20 are critical to future health and well being. In a  
21 city of numerous health and development disparities  
22 our best hope of achieving overall health and  
23 development equity rests in early investments and  
24 supports before a woman even begins to consider  
25 becoming pregnant. One of the cornerstones of a truly

2 comprehensive public health department is the robust  
3 support and promotion of the health and development  
4 of young children. We know that investments made in  
5 the early--earliest years of life with benefits  
6 beyond early health and development to life success  
7 and fiscal saving for all. The department is  
8 committed to promotion of the health and development  
9 of our littlest New Yorkers. This commitment is  
10 evidence for--evident in--for example in the Division  
11 of Family and Child Health, whose vision is that  
12 every child, woman and family in New York City  
13 recognizes their power and is given the opportunity  
14 to reach their full health and development potential.  
15 The majority of programming for families of our  
16 littlest New Yorkers is offered through this division  
17 and other divisions with relevant programming  
18 including the Division of Mental Hygiene, Division of  
19 Environmental Health, and the Center for Health  
20 Equity work closely with this division to coordinate  
21 service delivery across the department. The  
22 department offers a number of resources and avenues  
23 of support for families and parents, expectant  
24 parents and those who may become parents. The Here  
25 for You Campaign launched in 2017 on social media,

2 television, subways and buses encouraged parents and  
3 caregivers to call 311 or visit the department's  
4 website to learn about the range of available city  
5 resources and services. Calls to 311 are routed to  
6 the Early Childhood Health and Development Unit who  
7 provides information and support specific to parents  
8 and caregivers' needs. This campaign also promoted  
9 the department's programs for families with young  
10 children including neighborhood-based parent groups,  
11 home visiting programs and the Early Intervention  
12 Program. Our neighborhood-based parent groups called  
13 Parents Connect were launched in 2017 in response to  
14 parent focus groups that indicated a desire for  
15 parents and caregivers to connect with one another  
16 and learn about Early Childhood Health and  
17 Development including department resources. The  
18 Nurse-Family Partnership Program provides evidence-  
19 based support for first time mothers through  
20 voluntary home visits by specially trained nurses to  
21 help improve pregnancy outcomes, child health and  
22 development and to provide our littlest New Yorkers  
23 with the best possible start in life. NFP is  
24 available to first-time mothers who meet income  
25 requirements regardless of age or immigration status

2 and services are provided to families throughout the  
3 five boroughs. NFP also works with mothers in the  
4 foster care system, homeless shelters, and those  
5 involved in Juvenile Justice or either incarcerated  
6 or recently released from Rikers Island. The program  
7 serves over 2,500 unique clients annually, and thanks  
8 to funding from the City Council, we have been able  
9 to significantly expand NFP and increase capacity by  
10 over 30% and reach additional families. The Newborn  
11 Home Visiting Program, another Health Department home  
12 visiting program offers voluntary home visits to  
13 families in the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem,  
14 and North and Central Brooklyn with an infant birth  
15 to two months of age to facilitate the adjustment to  
16 parenthood, assure a safe living environment for  
17 families, provide maternal and infant health  
18 education on topics including child development and  
19 safe sleep, offer breast feeding support, and  
20 identify health and social issues that require  
21 referral to community-based services. In 2015, the  
22 Newborn Home Visiting Program expanded its reach to  
23 provide visits to all families with an infant birth  
24 to two months of age who reside in a Department of  
25 Homeless Services shelter. This collaboration has

2 enabled more comprehensive and coordinated education  
3 and support to meet the needs of family in shelter,  
4 and we have been able to reach over 1,500 families  
5 residing in shelters since then. The program  
6 recruits participants at hospitals and receives a  
7 daily client listing of eligible families from DHS to  
8 serve families residing in homeless shelters. The  
9 Early Intervention Program provides a broad array of  
10 services to children birth to 3-year-olds with or at  
11 risk of development delays or disabilities, and  
12 assists and empowers families to meet their  
13 children's needs. Infant or toddlers suspected of  
14 having a developmental delay or disability can be  
15 referred to the EI Program by a wide range of  
16 individuals including family members, doctors, Social  
17 Service workers, childcare workers and staff at  
18 community organizations. EI services are provided to  
19 families citywide regardless of immigration status,  
20 and includes speech therapy, special instruction, and  
21 physical and occupational therapy. The program  
22 serves over 30,000 New York City children each year.  
23 The Cribs for Kids Program provides free cribs to  
24 families in need of a safe sleep space for their  
25 children. Outreach workers provide cribs to new

2 parents in parts of the South Bronx, East and Central  
3 Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn during home  
4 visits. Families in the Newborn Home Visiting  
5 Program and Nurse-Family Partnership Program also  
6 received cribs and Safe Sleep Education. The Healthy  
7 Start Brooklyn Program out at the Center for Health  
8 Equities, Brooklyn Health Action Center provides a  
9 variety of support programs for new parents who live  
10 in the neighborhoods of Brownsville, East New York  
11 Bedford-Stuy-Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick,  
12 including childbirth and parenting education, fitness  
13 classes, and resources on breast feeding, perinatal  
14 depression, developmental delays and stress relief,  
15 group prenatal care through centering pregnancy, the  
16 In the Circle Father's Program, Healthy Families Home  
17 Visiting and Dual Services. The department has  
18 several initiatives to encourage breast feeding and  
19 address the racial and ethnic disparities and breast  
20 feeding rates. We offer breast feeding education and  
21 pumps to new mothers through our Home Visiting  
22 programs, develop and distribute educational  
23 materials and information to providers and consumers  
24 about breast feeding; work with community-based  
25 organizations to build local capacities to support

2 breast feeding and offer trainings local healthcare  
3 providers, hospital staff and field workers including  
4 Certified Lactation Counselors, Train the Trainer,  
5 and Community Breast Feeding Educator courses. Last  
6 year, we also installed a Lactation Pod, a self-  
7 contained mobile unit that offers a comfortable and  
8 private space for breast feeding or pumping in each  
9 borough including public locations such as the Bronx  
10 Zoo, the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the Staten  
11 Island Children's Museum. As part of Latch On NYC,  
12 we work with hospitals to support mothers who choose  
13 to breast feed, reduce formula supplementation to  
14 health breast fed infants during the hospital stay,  
15 and discontinue distribution of promotional or free  
16 infant formula that can interfere with a mother's  
17 choice to breast feed. The New York City Breast  
18 Feeding Hospital Collaborative works to increase the  
19 number of maternity facilities that achieve the World  
20 Health Organization and UNICEF Baby Friendly  
21 designation, a special recognition for hospitals and  
22 birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care  
23 for infants and feeding and mother/baby bonding.  
24 There are currently 16 baby friendly designated  
25 maternity hospitals and birthing centers in New York

2 City. The Brooklyn Breast Feeding Empowerment Zone  
3 is a place-based initiative in North and Central  
4 Brooklyn run by our Center for Health Equities  
5 Brooklyn Health Action Center. BHAC trains and  
6 recognizes the power of community member to support  
7 breast feeding parents and families, including male  
8 partners and family members, faith-based leaders,  
9 small businesses, and other community members to  
10 ensure that every mother and baby has the opportunity  
11 to experience the health benefits of breast feeding.  
12 Additionally, we engage local groups, faith-based  
13 organizations, employers, and employees, to adopt  
14 practices that protect, promote and support breast  
15 feeding through our Breast Feeding Friendly Spaces  
16 Initiative and Know Your Rights workshops. The  
17 department works collaboratively with other city  
18 agencies including the Department of Education and  
19 the Administration for Children's Services to  
20 coordinate service delivery for families and  
21 children. For example, DOE sends information packets  
22 on NYC Well, the city's connection to free  
23 confidential crisis counseling, mental health and  
24 substance misuse support, information and referral,  
25 and available health resources homeless students in

2 an effort to reach more families. We also  
3 participate in cross-agency work groups including the  
4 Children's Cabinet. Thank you again for the  
5 opportunity to testify, and we look forward to  
6 continuing to work with the Council to connect New  
7 York City families to the comprehensive range of  
8 department programming and services. I'm happy to  
9 answer questions you may have.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much  
11 for that. Do we have copies, by the way, of that  
12 testimony? [background comments] We do. Okay,  
13 thank you.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS:  
15 Buenos Tardes. Good afternoon, Chair Menchaca and  
16 members of the Committee on Immigration. I am  
17 Lorelei Atalie-Vargas, Deputy Commissioner of the  
18 Division of Child and Family Wellbeing for the New  
19 York City Administration for Children's Services.  
20 Thank you for this opportunity to discuss ACS'  
21 programs and initiatives that serve immigrant parents  
22 of children ages 0 to 5 years. The Administration  
23 for Children's Services protects and promotes the  
24 safety and wellbeing of New York City's children,  
25 young people, families and communities by providing

2 child welfare, Juvenile Justice and early care and  
3 education services throughout the city. Along with  
4 our community partners ACS provides support and  
5 neighborhood-based services to all of New York City  
6 families including immigrant parents to help ensure  
7 grow up in faith, permanent homes with strong  
8 families. Many of ACS' programs and services are  
9 offered without regard to immigration status and  
10 printed materials for our programs and services are  
11 largely available in a variety of languages including  
12 our Parents Rights literature, which is available in  
13 11 languages. ACS' Office of Immigration Services  
14 and Language Access closely monitors all program  
15 areas within ACS for compliance with language access  
16 mandates and trains the agency's foster care  
17 providers to identify and refer all non-citizen  
18 children in care for legal services in the interest  
19 of gaining special immigrant juvenile status or other  
20 forms of legal status when possible. In the past  
21 eight months, this office has certified over 180 U  
22 and T Visas, some benefitting families with children  
23 ages 0 to 5. ACS is dedicated to promoting the  
24 wellbeing of all New York City's children and  
25 families. Over the past year, the agency has

2 significantly enhanced our work in preventive  
3 services to provide supports for families before a  
4 need for intervention arises. In September 2017, ACS  
5 created the Division of Child and Family Wellbeing  
6 making ACS the first child welfare agency in the  
7 country to spearhead a new primary prevention  
8 approach, which seeks to reach families proactively  
9 with services, resources, and educational messages  
10 that can support healthy children, families and  
11 communities. The Division of Child and Family  
12 Wellbeing of CFWB aims to engage families before they  
13 ever reach the child welfare system with resources  
14 and services to help them thrive and services to help  
15 them thrive. CFWB focuses on the factors that  
16 contribute to the child—contribute to family  
17 wellbeing including health, education, employment and  
18 culture, and uses place-based and population-based  
19 approaches to engage families and communities.  
20 CFWB's scope includes ACS' Community Partnership  
21 Programs, Family Enrichment Centers, the Safe Sleep  
22 Initiatives, the Medication Safety Campaign, Early  
23 Care and Education and a new Office of Equity  
24 Strategies that works to identify strategies to  
25 reduce inequities, implicit bias and other factors

2 that contribute to disparate outcomes for the  
3 families and communities we serve. One of the first  
4 major initiatives of the new division was the fall  
5 2017 launch of ACS' Medication Safety Campaign. In  
6 an effort to help parents and caregivers ensure that  
7 medications and potentially dangerous household items  
8 are stored out of children's reach. In addition to  
9 this information campaign, we've begun to distribute  
10 lock boxes and bags to families engaged with ACS, and  
11 we will eventually share them across the city  
12 agencies as well as the programs that provide in-home  
13 services. Lockboxes and bags are easy and effective  
14 ways to keep medication accessible to parents but out  
15 of children's reach. We're bringing our Awareness  
16 Campaign across the city, and literature will be  
17 available in multiple languages. ACS' Safe Sleep  
18 Initiative was launched in 2015 with the goal of  
19 diminishing the occurrence of sleep related infant  
20 injury deaths. In 2016, ACS partnered with the  
21 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to launch a  
22 public awareness campaign to educate parents and  
23 caregivers about the potentially fatal risks  
24 associated with unsafe sleep practices, and our  
25 sustained efforts have yielded encouraging results.

2 Since the launch of ACS' Safe Sleep Initiative there  
3 has been a significant reduction in the number of  
4 sleep related infant injury deaths reported to the  
5 Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and  
6 Maltreatment. Also, families known to ACS. There  
7 was a 17% decrease in sleep related infant deaths  
8 reported to the SCR from 2015 to 2016. In 2017, the  
9 ACS Safe Sleep Team trained over 10,000 child welfare  
10 and healthcare professionals and prenatal patients,  
11 fatherhood groups, community and faith-based  
12 organizations, expectant and parenting teams,  
13 formerly incarcerated mothers, public housing  
14 residents, and homeless families. This important  
15 work was conducted in communities with the highest  
16 rates of sleep related infant deaths. We are now  
17 developing a Safe Sleep Kit to pilot for  
18 dissemination to maternity patients at the city's 11  
19 Health and Hospital facilities. As 15% of New York  
20 City's annual births occur at H&H facilities, we  
21 anticipate reaching approximately 18,000 families.  
22 [coughs] The foundation of the Division of Child and  
23 Family Wellbeing is early care and education. CFWB  
24 currently administers one of the largest publicly  
25 funded childcare systems in the country with the

2 capacity to serve almost 110,000 infants, toddlers,  
3 preschool and school age children to age 13. ACS  
4 provides access to child care in two primary ways:  
5 We run a contracted system called Early Learn, which  
6 serves children between the ages of six weeks and  
7 five years, and includes both state funded childcare  
8 programs and federally funded Head Start program. We  
9 also fund vouchers that parents may use to purchase  
10 care in a variety of settings for children between  
11 the ages of 6 weeks and 13 years. Further, ACS  
12 serves children with special needs through age 18 and  
13 up to age 19 if they are a full-time student in an  
14 educational or vocational activity. Our services  
15 enhance power development and assist eligible public  
16 assistance recipients, low-income working families  
17 and families that are receiving child welfare  
18 services. While New York City residents may access a  
19 variety of services through ACS regardless of their  
20 citizenship or immigration status, such information  
21 is required in order to access some childcare  
22 services through ACS. Children and families that  
23 receive cash assistance must follow TANF eligibility  
24 rules, which requires the parents to be a citizen.  
25 Families applying for non-mandated CCBG funded

2 childcare through vouchers and Early Learn except  
3 Head Start programs, must certify that all children  
4 to receive childcare are citizens, nationals or  
5 persons with satisfactory immigration status, but are  
6 not required to know citizen or immigration status of  
7 anyone else in the family. However, the application  
8 does require families to attest to understanding that  
9 information about the children noted in the  
10 application may be submitted to INS. Head Start  
11 programs do not require documentation of citizenship  
12 immigration status, and DOE funded Pre-K seats are  
13 exempt from the citizenship immigration status  
14 requirements. ACS works in earnest to make sure that  
15 families understand citizenship and immigration  
16 status requirements to access our childcare programs.  
17 To help ensure clarity, CFWB works with all of our  
18 childcare providers so that they can clearly discuss  
19 these requirements with families, and we also created  
20 signs that clearly articulate immigration status  
21 requirements, which are posted conspicuously in our  
22 resource areas where families apply for childcare.  
23 I'm also excited to share that our childcare  
24 application will officially be updated as of May 1<sup>st</sup>.  
25 We worked collaboratively with MOIA to implement

2 changes to our application to ensure that immigration  
3 information is collected only for the child in need  
4 of subsidized care, and that instructions were clear  
5 for parents and guardians. While New York City has  
6 gone to great lengths to ensure that childcare  
7 services are accessible to all families in the city,  
8 we firmly believe that immigration status should not  
9 be a barrier to accessing quality childcare and early  
10 education programs. We are proud that CFWB's Early  
11 Learn program has become a pillar for promoting  
12 healthy childhood development while also providing  
13 wraparound supports to families, a hallmark of Early  
14 Learn. As you know, ACS' Early Learn contracts will  
15 be transferred and integrated into the Department of  
16 Education's Division of Early Childhood Education in  
17 2019 as part of Mayor de Blasio's commitment to early  
18 education. This integration will build on the  
19 important work done by Early Learn programs today,  
20 strengthening birth to 5 care and education in New  
21 York City and creating a more seamless experience for  
22 children and families into elementary school and  
23 beyond. The transfer of Early Learn will also  
24 support the Mayor's 3-K For All Initiative, which  
25 will ultimately offer free high quality early

2 educational services to all three roles in New York  
3 City. As Early Learn and—as Early Learn transfer to  
4 the Department of Education, ACS will continue to  
5 administer the city's Childcare Voucher system. We  
6 will continue our efforts to bolster the quality of  
7 care in this system, which serves close to 30,000  
8 children under the age of 5 in collaboration with  
9 Human Resources Administration, Department of Health  
10 and Mental Hygiene, and Department of Education, and  
11 we are committed to continued efforts to make  
12 childcare available to some of the most vulnerable  
13 families in New York City. As a city, we all share  
14 responsibility for protecting children and supporting  
15 families. To help further this mission, ACS and the  
16 Department of Homeless Services executed a Memorandum  
17 of Understanding, which enables ACS and DHS to share  
18 information between agencies about children and  
19 families in the shelter system, and also requires  
20 shelter providers to issue vital information to  
21 families such as information on availability of  
22 childcare and safe sleep practices for infants. All  
23 staff at 162 shelters citywide have been trained on  
24 the new protocol. In the first half of 2018, ACS is  
25 helping launch an innovative new model for providing

2 comprehensive community focused support to families  
3 known as Family Enrichment Centers or FECs. FEC is a  
4 family centered primary prevention strategy that is  
5 designed to reduce rates of child maltreatment and  
6 increase family stability and wellbeing. Everything  
7 about each center from the name to the physical  
8 layout to the services offered is co-designed with  
9 families in the community. The FECs are open to all  
10 families in their communities and will provide a  
11 range of two generation services that support healthy  
12 child development. Because the design of each center  
13 is community driven, they're an important vehicle for  
14 helping children and families thrive. In communities  
15 with large immigrant populations, we expect our  
16 family enrichment centers to mirror the needs of the  
17 community and, therefore, to help immigrant parents  
18 locate and access the resources they need to succeed.  
19 The first pilot center is now open in the Hunts Point  
20 neighborhood of the Bronx, and two additional pilot  
21 centers will be located in the Bronx and Brooklyn.  
22 The Community Partnership Programs is ACS' first  
23 funded community based initiatives committed to  
24 partnering with local communities in key aspects of  
25 the agency's work. The program embodies a commitment

2 to the children, youth and families of New York City,  
3 a commitment that is shared by both the city and  
4 local communities. Community partnerships serve as  
5 ambassadors to the community, advocates for families  
6 and advisors to ACS and the city. The program  
7 focuses on community organizing, community education  
8 and capacity building, recruiting and training  
9 community leaders, managing community coalitions or  
10 partnerships and engaging children, youth or families  
11 in social service programs. CPPs are vital to ACS'  
12 work to build strong meaningful relationships  
13 [coughs] with the most vulnerable communities  
14 including immigrant parents of young children. In  
15 closing, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to  
16 discuss some of the many ways ACS supports families  
17 in New York City. ACS is deeply committed to  
18 providing high quality programs and services to meet  
19 the needs of all families in the city including  
20 immigrant populations. ACS is grateful for the  
21 support of the Council in this mission and we look  
22 forward to further cultivating our partnership with  
23 you to carry out this important work.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for that  
25 testimony, and Maite?

2 MAITE JUNCO: Good afternoon, Chair  
3 person Menchaca and members of the City Council  
4 Immigration Committee here today. My name is Maite  
5 Junco, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor for  
6 communications and External Affairs. In this role I  
7 oversee the Office of Translation and Interpretation.  
8 Seated with me is John Tritt, Executive Director of  
9 Outreach for the DOE's Division of Early Childhood  
10 Education. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss  
11 the DOE's work to support our youngest learners and  
12 their families. Before I talk about our services, I  
13 want to reiterate that all children have a right to  
14 attend public school including Pre-K and 3-K  
15 regardless of immigration status or national origin.  
16 We do not collect information on immigration status  
17 of students or their family members. We are  
18 fortunate to live in a city built by immigrants and  
19 to have a school system that reflects this rich  
20 cultural and linguistic diversity. Our parents speak  
21 over 180 languages with 41 of them speaking a  
22 language other than English at home. The DOE offers  
23 a wide range of supports for immigrant Pre-K and 3-K  
24 parents, and parents with limited English proficiency  
25 including multi-lingual and culturally competent

2 enrollment outreach and language services. As part  
3 of this administration's Equity and Excellence for  
4 All Agenda, our schools are starting earlier with  
5 free full-day high quality education for 3-year-olds  
6 and 4-year-olds through 3-K for All and Pre-K for  
7 All. With your support, the Council, this school  
8 year approximately 68,000 children are enrolled in  
9 Pre-K more than three times the number of kids  
10 enrolled before the expansion. The Administration's  
11 3-K for All Initiative launched last September in the  
12 South Bronx District 7 and Brownsville District 23  
13 and expanding to four more districts this coming fall  
14 is building on the success of Pre-K for All on  
15 providing New York City children a continuum of early  
16 care and education. As you know, ACS Early Learn New  
17 York City contracts—contracts will be transferred and  
18 integrated into the DOE's Division of Early Childhood  
19 Education in 2009 as part of Mayor de Blasio's  
20 commitment to early education like Lorelei said. This  
21 integration will build on the important work done by  
22 Early Learn New York City programs today  
23 strengthening birth to 5 care and education in New  
24 York City and creating a more seamless experience for  
25 children and families into elementary school and

2 beyond. The Pre-K Outreach Team executes a  
3 thoughtful strategy combining grassroots outreach,  
4 hone calls and facilitator enrollment to support  
5 parents in the Pre-K and Pre-K processes. To meet  
6 the needs of all families, the outreach team now  
7 realizes existing DOE resources and leverages  
8 interagency partnership to recruit and enroll  
9 children in 3-K and Pre-K in every community across  
10 the city. Specialist host events on training, phone  
11 banks, canvass, recruit volunteers and leave  
12 disability events. Enrollment specialists also  
13 develop and execute outreach strategies specific to  
14 each community accounting for the context of the  
15 families they serve. Each year the outreach team  
16 attends over 1,200 events across the city including  
17 many organized at community-based organizations.  
18 Outreach team staff members speak at least a dozen  
19 languages other than English including Espanol,  
20 Cantonese, Mandarin and Fugianese, Burdur, Hindi,  
21 Arabic, Russian, Haitian Creole and French. Many of  
22 the members of the teams are immigrants themselves.  
23 In addition, the outreach team works closely with  
24 immigrants-immigration advocacy groups across the  
25 city, many of them here including Make the Road New

2 York and the Hispanic Federation. Last fall we  
3 collaborated with the New York City Immigration  
4 Coalition on the launch of a new program called  
5 Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood  
6 Education of Life Project. The goal of the project  
7 is to improve immigrant families' access to access to  
8 Pre-K and other childhood programs. Four CBOs were  
9 selected to conduct direct outreach and target  
10 neighborhoods around the city, and develop  
11 recommendations to remove barriers to entry. As part  
12 of our commitment to engage our diverse families, we  
13 have significantly expanded and improved language  
14 access services for the 41% of parents who speak a  
15 language other than English at home. The DOE offers  
16 free access to over-the-phone interpretation services  
17 in over 200 languages for staff to communicate with  
18 3-K and Pre-K for All families who speak a language  
19 other than English at home. Program staff can use  
20 the service when a parent or guardian calls or visits  
21 the school or program or a program calls the parent  
22 or guardian. Social workers may also utilize the  
23 service in their work with families. Last school year  
24 the use of over-the-phone interpretation services  
25 tripled to around 50,000—to a record 52–53,000—

53,000—around 53,000 calls from nearly 17,000 during the period—the prior year. To raise awareness of language access services across our school, this school year and last we had a multi-lingual subway ad campaign that reminded parents that New York City public schools speak their language. In the 2018-19 school year, we will offer a total of 63 Pre-K dual language programs and increase from the 30 current programs. The expansion of Pre-K Dual Language classes in every borough is part of the city's effort to bring bilingual education to more students. Following the expansion, we will offer Pre-K Dual Language in five languages, Spanish, Mandarin, and Italian as well as the city's forever—first ever Bengali Pre-K Dual Language Program at the Ezra Jack Keats Pre-K Center in Queens and the first ever Russian Pre-K Dual Language Program at PS145 in Manhattan. Dual language classes are comprised of 50% children whose home language is not English, and 50% English proficient students. Instruction is held in both languages with the goal of teaching students to be bilingual and literate. Students in Pre-K dual language classes will be able to continue under the dual language track in kindergarten and beyond. To

2 conclude, I want to remind the committee that last  
3 year the Chancellor and the Commissioner of the  
4 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs wrote to DOE  
5 families on various occasions reaffirming our  
6 commitment to protecting the right of every student  
7 in New York City to attend public school regardless  
8 of immigration status. We also issued guidance to  
9 protect students and families. If federal agents  
10 visit a school, we do not permit non-local law  
11 enforcement agents including immigration and custom  
12 enforcements of-enforcement officials to enter school  
13 except when absolutely required by law, and we do not  
14 release student information unless absolutely  
15 required to by law. We partnered with MOIA to offer  
16 Know Your Rights workshops in schools for students,  
17 parents and community members. This year we sent a  
18 poster to all schools reminding students and families  
19 that New York City is a city of immigrants that every  
20 child has the right to high-high quality public  
21 education, and that we are committed to protecting  
22 that right. Public school are at the center of our  
23 democracy and New York City should remain safe-  
24 schools remain safe place for all students, families  
25 and educators. Ensuring that parents are partners in

2 their child's education is a top priority, and we  
3 will continue to improve and expand our services.  
4 Thank you and now we're ready for questions.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for your  
6 testimony, all of you for testifying today. Each of  
7 your agencies I think gave an incredibly impressive  
8 array of programs that are not only focused on  
9 important needs, but are understood as—as an  
10 immigrant friendly program for our immigrant  
11 families, and that is—that's something we're going to  
12 want to talk a little bit more about, and—and digest  
13 together. I have a couple questions, and then I want  
14 to hand them over to—and then hand over the mic over  
15 to the members. We have a really busy day to day, a  
16 lot of different hearings, and I want to say thank  
17 you to everyone as we move from the Chambers here so  
18 that the Public Housing Committee could continue  
19 their—their engagement, and hearing everyone that  
20 wanted to testify, and I think it was the right move  
21 and we're committed to make sure that every voice is  
22 heard including some young people that are in the—in  
23 the room as well that we heard, and we welcome that.  
24 We welcome that. That is—that is—that's a beautiful  
25 thing especially on the topic of today. So, my first

2 two questions, and then I'm going to hand it over  
3 are-are really the relationship between these  
4 agencies and the work you do. You talked a lot  
5 about-about translation services, really bringing  
6 parents in. What is your relationship in the work  
7 you do for immigrants with the Mayor's Office of  
8 Immigrant Affairs? If each of you can kind of talk a  
9 little bit about your relationship. Just give us a  
10 sense about what that-what that is-what that is for  
11 each of you. Anyone can go first.

12 MAITE JUNCO: I can tell you that I-that  
13 I-that DOE, but personally myself I work very closely  
14 with MOIA in discussing, and we were constantly  
15 collaborating. I think they, you know, they have  
16 heard that they want to run by us, and that we want  
17 to work jointly in resolving or things that-that have  
18 come up for us, and we want to get their feedback on.  
19 We're constantly-I don't know-in the-maybe in the  
20 last two weeks I had three-at least three conference  
21 calls. We meet. They also-also sort of partnered  
22 with some others and advocates that we partnered with  
23 and they meet, and then we meet together. We had a  
24 meeting not too long ago between MOIA and us and some  
25 advocates, and-so I feel that we work very closely

2 with MOIA. Of course, it's also it's also a great  
3 resource, and so I feel like we work very closely,  
4 and I think it is the same thing for our outreach  
5 team, right, that works very closely. We obviously  
6 partner with them for the Know Your Rights forums  
7 that we did last year with a lot of your offices that  
8 we did in our schools. When—definitely we worked  
9 together when we issued guidance for—for schools and  
10 how to deal with the enforcement. We partnered on—on  
11 flyers, on translation resources, on a whole bunch of  
12 things. So, I feel that we work very closely  
13 together.

14 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: I mean the same is true  
15 for ACS. We really see MOIA as a tremendous resource  
16 for the work that we do building the capacity, you  
17 know, of the agency to better serve children and  
18 families from immigrant, you know, populations. And  
19 so, I think kind of the short answer to that is that  
20 there are just a tremendous resource to us, and we're  
21 in constant communication with them around, you know,  
22 a variety of issues.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: I'm  
24 already agree with what my colleague said that have  
25 constant communication with MOIA around the work that

2 we're doing to—to really address the issues and  
3 really kind of share information of what we're  
4 learning, what—what information they access to is why  
5 I say we'll exchange in constant communication and  
6 collaboration and you mentioned at the beginning of  
7 the hearing the Local Law and the task force, and so  
8 we look forward to that building on the foundation  
9 that already exists into growing that collaboration  
10 and communication.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Have any of you  
12 assembled into this task—into this task force? Is  
13 that at all in—in progress or I should say in motion?  
14 Have you met as a task force?

15 MAITE JUNCO: I think we're looking  
16 forward to convening.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, so it hasn't  
18 happened yet, but—but you're looking for it to  
19 convene?

20 MAITE JUNCO: Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. I'm going  
22 to pass it—pause here and hand it over to Council  
23 Member Gjonaj and who joins us from the Bronx and a  
24 member of this committee.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair  
3 and thank you for the consideration. I have another  
4 hearing going on simultaneously. [background  
5 comments] First of all, I just want to commend you on  
6 the dual language school. I am fortunate enough and  
7 proud to announce that beginning this fall, we are  
8 going to have the first Albanian dual language school  
9 [background comments] in New York City. [laughter]  
10 I can't help it. It's—its one of those things that's  
11 difficult to contain. I'm just so excited and being  
12 the first Albanian elected in the state. It's just  
13 an incredible day for me and the community. So, I'm  
14 grateful to you. My question is around the 3-PK and  
15 4-PK fall within our program goals, and services that  
16 are being offered with both of those initiatives.

17 So, I'd—I'd say overall with the—with--

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Can  
19 you introduce yourself first, please?

20 JOHN TRITT: Oh, yeah, sorry. My name is  
21 John Tritt. I'm the Executive Director of Outreach  
22 in the Division of Early Childhood Education at the  
23 DOE, and so I have a team of 40 enrollment  
24 specialists who spread out all across New York City  
25 to educate families about the—about Pre-K for All and

2 now about 3-K for All and Early Learn services that  
3 are available to them, and so what we've--when it  
4 comes to the--the Pre-K for All program, which is what  
5 the, you know, 4-year-olds program that is--that  
6 expanded in 2014, we feel like we're at scale. We're  
7 always looking for new families. We're always trying  
8 to identify--identify that next cohort of new families  
9 coming up for the upcoming school year because  
10 they're brand new to the system, and so that, you  
11 know that--we feel like we've--we've fully expanded  
12 there, but with 3-K for All program the universal 3  
13 Worlds (sic) Program, that is going to be rolled out  
14 two districts per year over the next four years until  
15 2020 and then we hope to go citywide the following  
16 year. This year we added additional districts and  
17 Districts 5 and 16 were added additionally. So, in  
18 fact, while I'm here, my team--my entire team is up on  
19 the ground in District 5 right now knocking on a  
20 bunch of doors to get the word out to make sure folks  
21 are aware of the 3-K deadline coming up on May 11<sup>th</sup>.  
22 So, that is being rolled out over the next few years,  
23 and we feel that--we think the participation will be  
24 around 90% of what the full 4-year-olds program will  
25 because, you know, the kids are a little smaller.

2 So, that's—that's kind of where we think we'll end up  
3 there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: If I can just be  
5 so bold to say four years is a little bit too long.  
6 I think there are so many families that are out there  
7 that would be so gracious to be able to enroll in the  
8 UPK Program, and whatever we can do for a universal  
9 approach—an approach, we will be supportive of. I  
10 think all my colleagues in this entire body  
11 understand the importance of early education and  
12 whatever it will take financially and otherwise, I  
13 think we'll be—we'll be willing to knock on somebody's  
14 door to make sure those families are enrolling. What  
15 additional services are provided in Pre-K and UPK  
16 program the students would develop mental delays, and  
17 undiagnosed conditions or because it's such an early  
18 age, it's sometimes difficult to identify some of the  
19 disabilities that exist? Are there criterias and  
20 safety nets in place that would help determine any of  
21 these conditions?

22 JOHN TRITT: In fact I—I did say then  
23 that—if I could jump in, I think, you know, that one  
24 of the values of having Early Childhood Education and  
25 these programs is so that these things can be

2 identified that these—these children who might  
3 otherwise be at home or in a different setting will  
4 be with a trained Early Childhood Educator who can  
5 help identify those and work with early intervention  
6 and work with CPSE to make sure that those—the—that  
7 any developmental delay or any learning disabilities  
8 are identified, and appropriately addressed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I want to ask a  
10 more direct question. Do we have the expertise in  
11 those classrooms that can identify conditions that  
12 would go unnoticed to a family, a young family?

13 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: I think I can add to  
14 that. So, in the Early Learn programs, which, you  
15 know, provide services for children from six weeks  
16 through five years, it's a requirement that all  
17 children are screened within the first 45 days of  
18 entering the program. So, that is a requirement.  
19 All of our programs do that. We hold them to that.  
20 Once they are screened, if there are any issues or  
21 concerns that come up, a conversation is has with the  
22 parents, and then children are referred to services.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you so  
24 much, and I just want to commend you on doing God's  
25 work. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Council  
3 Member Gjonaj from the Bronx, and I'm really looking  
4 forward to the official announcements of-of this  
5 incredible program, and as the-as the first and only  
6 Mexican elected in the State of New York as well, I-  
7 commend you on your work, Council Member Gjonaj.  
8 You-have a big responsibility, and I'm glad we're  
9 doing that together and making sure we get everyone  
10 served. Thank you. I'm going to-because we're on-on-  
11 on pre-Pre-K, I'm going to hand this over now to  
12 Council Member Holden from-from Queens, and he has  
13 some questions in Pre-K as well, and-and I just want  
14 to let everybody know this is the first time we've  
15 actually had a public hearing around UPK. As much as  
16 we are so thankful, and proud as a city to be working  
17 on this together, this is the first time we're  
18 actually having a public-public hearing on it, and  
19 it's I think a great testament to the work that we do  
20 for immigrant families, and it's happening h ere in  
21 this committee, but really, this is for everyone.  
22 So, thank you and I'll hand it over now to Council  
23 Member Holden.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you all for  
25 your testimony. I-I just want to talk about the-the

2 3-K, just a few questions. I—who's decision, you  
3 know, who decided on the—the districts because I—I  
4 have one of the most diverse districts, 24. It's in  
5 Queens, a large immigrant populations, and I don't,  
6 you know, just looking, just hearing all the  
7 testimonies, I didn't hear the word Queens that often  
8 for all the programs. I'm hearing, you know,  
9 Brooklyn a lot. I hear the Bronx. I have a very  
10 diverse population, and I'm just worried that we'll  
11 miss the—the boat on the—the 3-K that some—many of my  
12 families' immigrant populations will not be served by  
13 3-K, and their kids will go out of the—out of that  
14 areas and there—if there is—you know, they're one or  
15 two-years old now that we're going to miss the boat.  
16 So, I just want—is there a plan on when to roll this  
17 out, and—and is there a plan on districts so I can  
18 know in advance and tell—tell my population and my  
19 constituents that you'll get 3-K 2019, 2020-'21 Do  
20 we have a plan on that?

21 JOHN TRITT: Thanks, Council Member. We  
22 certainly do have a plan on that. Well, I first want  
23 to say—start off by saying we're happy to note that  
24 one of the 3-K districts that is online for the  
25 coming school year is District 27 in Queens, so we do

2 have one—one of the first school districts to have  
3 Universal 3-K program is in Queens, and it's  
4 absolutely the mission to make this a citywide  
5 initiative and expand and go into all five boroughs.  
6 So, as far-as far as the plan for what districts are  
7 coming online over the next few years, we'd be happy  
8 to make sure that your—your team and your staff has  
9 all the information. It's online right now, but  
10 encourage anybody who has a question who—who wants to  
11 see the districts, you can just go to [nyc.gov/3-K](http://nyc.gov/3-K) and  
12 it lists all the districts and what year they're  
13 coming online. As far as identifying which districts  
14 were chosen first, there was a bunch of  
15 considerations. You know, we would like to make this  
16 happen--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]

18 Yeah.

19 JOHN TRITT: --as fast as possible, but  
20 in order to make the Universal 4's Program, Pre-K for  
21 All possible it required a tremendous amount of  
22 space, and so that's a big consideration in terms of  
23 the rollout over these next few years is making sure  
24 that we have space available when it's announced and  
25 for each district. So, that was one consideration,

2 and then you know, like in the first two districts  
3 that were announced, District 7 and 23 they had the  
4 Single Shepherd Programs, which was an initiative  
5 that would pair a social worker with a family  
6 throughout their education continuum, and that was  
7 one of the factors to—to make 3-K success from the  
8 beginning to have that program aligned with it. And  
9 so, you know, space making sure there's funding,  
10 making sure that the, you know, that roll-out  
11 happens, is—is what's been considerations, but it's  
12 happening in Queens for the coming school year.  
13 We're taking applications in District 27 right now  
14 until May 11<sup>th</sup>, and the goal and the plan absolutely  
15 is to make this citywide.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And—and the  
17 strategy behind only going within the district that  
18 means not and then I'm sure 3-K would help the  
19 immigrant population. Maybe you can target that—the  
20 immigrant population areas rather than by district.  
21 Like my School District 24, and I understand the  
22 hurdles. We're one of the most overcrowded. If not  
23 the most overcrowded in the city of New York.  
24 However, that kind of penalizes us again because we  
25 don't have the space that not only are we penalized

2 in the classroom with the larger class size or larger  
3 schools and lack of space, but then we don't get the  
4 Pre-K because of the space situation. So, I think  
5 that needs to be looked at, and—and certainly what  
6 I'd like to talk to you bout, and I'll go to that  
7 site and see when 24 gets online, but it just seems  
8 that in Queens cultural programs and—and other areas  
9 are we're—we're the last to get them, and—and I  
10 really—and this is—this is what I'm concerned about,  
11 and—and by the way, I want to applaud the mayor for  
12 Pre-K. I think it's a great idea. It—it certainly  
13 gives us some hope. I—I just—I'm just concerned  
14 about the families that will miss the boat on it,  
15 but—so, I would recommend that some of them—maybe  
16 there could be a pilot program and target the—the  
17 immigrant population and really help them out because  
18 they have certainly the most—the most hurdles, and 3-  
19 K would—would be great in—in those areas. So, I  
20 would look at that. I also want to push the dual  
21 language because I—program, which I think all our  
22 kids should be exposed to not only—you know, I think  
23 if English is your first language, you should be  
24 exposed to a dual language program, and I didn't hear  
25 Polish in that in any of the testimony. Is Polish--?

2 Because I have a large Polish immigrant population  
3 that they would certainly benefit from a dual  
4 language program. Is that being considered in DOE?

5 MAITE JUNCO: I'm—I'm not sure whether  
6 it's already there, whether it's already a program.  
7 So, I—I, you know, I have to check. I did—did want  
8 to come back just for a second for something you say  
9 earlier that even though it's on—it's in District 27  
10 the 3-K program is not zoned, and so families can  
11 apply to the seats that are in District 27, right,  
12 John? Is that--

13 JOHN TRITT: I have a little piece of 27.

14 MAITE JUNCO: Okay. [laughs]

15 JOHN TRITT: This is a very small piece.

16 MAITE JUNCO: Right and I think Lorelei  
17 wanted to add something, but policy (sic) check maybe  
18 while I'm here someone will check and I'll let you  
19 know.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Yeah,  
21 I just wanted to add we have a good number of seats  
22 in Queens that are Early Learn seats. So, those are  
23 seats that are reserved for—

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] How  
25 many?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: I  
3 don't have the number off hand, but we can certainly--

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Can  
5 you get that me, both of those if you--

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS:  
7 [interposing] Yeah, we could certainly--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN:

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and figure out  
10 how we can just get on phones and ask?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS:  
12 [interposing] Yes, we can certainly get that number  
13 for you. We have both.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
15 just to-the-so just to be clear, the-the numbers for  
16 the Queens seats, and then whether or not we have  
17 Polish. That would be great, too.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Yes,  
19 and I-I-to the Polish question, I just wanted to  
20 share that ACS is going to be coming up in this  
21 Fiscal Year 19. We are actually translating all of  
22 our documents into Polish. So, we're adding that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: There we go.  
24 Bingo. Okay.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS:

3 [interposing] That would be great.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: We are doing one—  
5 we are doing an experimental program in dual  
6 language, Polish in TS71, which is in my district. I  
7 went out there. 125 parents were in the room, many  
8 of them Polish, but there were a lot of people who  
9 just wanted to, you know, there kids to learn another  
10 language and I think most countries do that. They  
11 actually teach multiple languages, and this country  
12 and certainly New York City should lead the way in  
13 this, we should teach all our children two languages,  
14 at least two languages and—and when is the best time  
15 to do that, right. Until—under the age of 5 is—is  
16 best. So, if we can work that as—as a program within  
17 every school, and I know it's a challenge, but I  
18 think we could at least offer it and most parents I  
19 think many parents would—would—would be thrilled. So,  
20 again like I want to appreciate—I appreciate the  
21 Mayor's and by the way, a shout out to Commissioner  
22 Hansell. He's doing—doing a wonderful job at ACS.  
23 Turned that—that around. I appreciate it, and gave  
24 great testimony at our committee last month, 20 pages  
25 of testimony, which was wonderful, but it was just—it

2 was great. That guy must be exhausted, but he's—he's  
3 done a terrific job, and I want to commend him for  
4 turning that whole agency around, and really doing an  
5 outstanding job. I—I-I just—in the—because, you  
6 know, were the last—24 for was also one of the last  
7 to get the—the Pre-K. We had—We had the challenges  
8 of space. So, I think we really need—if I could sit  
9 down with—with DOE and—and work out possible sites  
10 that we can identify, we do some areas that we could  
11 expand the DOE and possibly 3-K because I'd—I'd like  
12 to plan for the future, and not wait, and then we're,  
13 you know, we—the rollout I just have a feeling that  
14 we might be down on list, and I—I don't—unless you  
15 have access to that, I'd—I'd like to work with you  
16 guys to about finding locations for—for 3-K.

17 JOHN TRITT: We'd be happy to have that  
18 meeting with to sit down.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Great.

20 JOHN TRITT: I'll connect you with the  
21 Expansion Team and the Early Childhood Division, and  
22 also in the meantime, you know, during that meeting  
23 and setting it up and afterwards, I want to make sure  
24 that you have all my contact information so team can  
25 assist your constituents now, and connecting with

2 programs that might be available, and certainly Early  
3 Learn programs that are available in the community  
4 now if they're eligible. We want to make sure that  
5 those families can get connected. So, happy to make  
6 sure that happens, too.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But just a  
8 question on-on district. Would you consider some-  
9 some pilot size? Let's say you're going to roll out  
10 in the district, you-you tend to-I mean I'm looking  
11 at the map, and there tends to be-they're clustered  
12 really tight, and I understand that where the 3-Ks  
13 are now or plan to be, but would you consider-I mean  
14 is it-are you guys open to some just pilot programs  
15 line ore two in a-in a district at a time rather than  
16 the cluster that you have? I know that's the plan,  
17 but-I know-maybe you can't commit to that.

18 JOHN TRITT: I'll-I'll certainly take the  
19 idea back.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, okay,  
21 alright.

22 JOHN TRITT: I think we're-we're, you  
23 know, we like to think creatively, but I'll take--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing]  
25 Yeah.

2 JOHN TRITT: --any idea back for sure.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, thanks--  
4 thanks so much. Okay.

5 JOHN TRITT: Yep.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And also if you  
7 have--when you get the answers to those questions,  
8 we'll--we'll pause and--and get to them. I want to  
9 hand it over to the Council Member from Brooklyn,  
10 Kalman Yeger.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you, Mr.  
12 Chairman. I just have a few questions for ACS, not  
13 to pick on you, but I find you most interesting  
14 sometimes. You--you talked about that ACS has  
15 certified 180 U and T Visas in the last eight months  
16 I believe. I'm wondering if you can gives us a  
17 bigger understanding of the numbers more than just  
18 window over the last eight months, first of all. So,  
19 if you can give us like the last year, but secondly,  
20 can you sort of contrast that with what the number of  
21 applications for certification you've received so  
22 that we can understand what that 180 really  
23 represents. So, have you gotten 20,000 applications  
24 or 200 and then the third part of that I'm going to  
25 give it to you all in one piece--

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Okay.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: --because they may  
4 relate to one another is do you track these grants  
5 and certification for success? Because, you know,  
6 obviously we know that the immigration system is a  
7 little different perhaps in the last year and a half  
8 I think to say the least, and I'm curious if there's  
9 some kind of metrics that you can share with us  
10 whether or not these 180 that you've granted are  
11 working.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
13 all of your questions are a little out of my personal  
14 depth of knowledge, but we will certainly kind of  
15 come--come back to your office with answers to those  
16 questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, and please  
18 share them with our chair as well--

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Yep.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: --and that's  
21 something that I'm very interested in.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: I  
23 wanted to ask you about the Division of Child and  
24 Family Wellbeing work. You--you specifically  
25 mentioned it aims to engage families before they ever

2 reach the child welfare system. Does—does ACS have  
3 a system or a process in place to—when—when families  
4 come into the system whether they're already at an  
5 Article X proceeding or a little bit before that to  
6 make sure that they're getting the case worker who  
7 can understand the specific natures of different  
8 ethnicities, and different backgrounds and, because,  
9 you know, we know that, you know, New York City is  
10 the giant melting pot that people who are new here  
11 can have different ways that may not be understood  
12 by, you know, let's be frank, somebody who was born  
13 and bred in New York City, and got a great masters  
14 degree in social work that may just really not  
15 understand the nuances of particular upbringings and  
16 particular traditions, and whether or not there's  
17 some kind of way that you have to match case workers  
18 either by ethnicity or at least by an understanding  
19 of ethnicity.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
21 so, our case workers are based in—are borough based,  
22 and, you know, we—we try our best to reflect the  
23 communities that we're serving, and I would say that  
24 that's not just the case in the child welfare system.  
25 That's the case throughout ACS. So, for example, our

2 childcare programs that are based all across the city  
3 really for the most part are hiring from the  
4 community. So, you will almost likely always have  
5 people who speak the dominant language of that  
6 community. We also have community partnership  
7 programs and family enrichment centers that are also  
8 in embedded in the community and reflect the culture  
9 and the language of the communities—of the  
10 communities that they're serving.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay. My—my—and I  
12 appreciate all that, and I understand that, but my  
13 biggest concern, and I—I guess this is where I'm  
14 really targeting this question is when—when a case  
15 gets to the point where it's either immediately  
16 before an Article X or around that point, there's,  
17 you know, what's—what may sound like an Article X  
18 proceeding, and the way we're—we may look at it as  
19 New Yorkers may just be caseworker misunderstanding  
20 something, and not really getting it, and are we  
21 taking a second look when we know there's a language  
22 barrier, when we know there's an ethnicity barrier?  
23 If someone is a very recent immigrant, and they're  
24 coming from a place far away, they just, you know,  
25 may have different norms than we have, and different

2 cultural norms. Are we looking to make sure that the  
3 caseworkers—it's not just about whether or not  
4 they're from the borough or whether or not they know  
5 the community or whether or not they actually  
6 understand the different cultures.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
8 I'd like to give you kind of a very thorough response  
9 to that, and because I don't work on the child  
10 welfare side of ACS, I'd like to defer our response  
11 to give us an opportunity to come back to you with a  
12 very thorough response.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: I—I trust you all.  
14 No, thank you, and—and I believe you will, and I  
15 think that's a—that's—it's just important, and if you  
16 don't, then—and, you know, that's just something to  
17 look at you as you—as you develop ACS into a  
18 stronger—I know, you know, we've had challenges with  
19 ACS. So, in the 90s, you know, I always—always joke  
20 about our government has sort of two—two ways to deal  
21 with the crisis and management of agencies either  
22 combine them or rip them apart. In the 90s we saw  
23 ACS separate itself from—from--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS:  
25 [interposing] HRA.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: --from HRA, DSS  
3 and then we kind of see it getting back together and  
4 in the 90s it was called the Bureau of Child Welfare  
5 and it was a whole different entity, but it was part  
6 of the larger organization, and today we're seeing  
7 that the model may be putting it back as part of the  
8 larger organization. I don't know what the right  
9 answer is, but what I do want to make sure is that  
10 ultimately when--when families enter into that system,  
11 sometimes there's no exit, and that's a--that's a big  
12 concern of mine because frankly, these are--these, you  
13 know, that's--that's the last part of that fabric of  
14 the family that's being ripped apart, and by the time  
15 that the--the bureau the ACS is actually involved. It  
16 may not be--there may no longer be an ability to put  
17 it back together, and it may just really be  
18 misunderstandings that can be explained rather easily  
19 if somebody just quite frankly comprehends the  
20 different cultural norms. I wanted to talk briefly  
21 and very briefly. I'm just going to ask if you--if  
22 you know. You mentioned vouchers that parents may  
23 use to purchase care in a variety of settings.  
24 That's something that this Council long before I  
25 joined a little over 100 days ago has been pushing

2 for every year going back as far as Mayor Giuliani  
3 and Mayor Bloomberg. This mayor has been fantastic  
4 on it. There's always been this battle right. It  
5 doesn't show up in the Preliminary Budget. There's  
6 this whole give us, give us, give us and then, you  
7 know, it shows up, but Council Member Menchaca has  
8 been protesting on this for the last four years that  
9 he's been—been with the Council, and this is, you  
10 know, there's always this dance. So, my question is  
11 (a) I guess it's a several fold question. Number 1  
12 is does—does ACS recognize the importance of these?  
13 Obviously the answer for that is yes. So, it's  
14 rhetorical in nature, but is ACS looking to expand  
15 the use of vouchers for childcare, and the reason I'm  
16 asking specifically is because as you know and this  
17 is your profession, the provision of childcare is  
18 really that—that—that piece that enables a family to  
19 lift itself up out of complete and abject poverty  
20 into perhaps approaching the middle-class because if  
21 you don't have the childcare, you can't go out and  
22 get a job, and so, and there's—there's no options.  
23 Either the childcare or—or not having the childcare.  
24 So, if ACS would just, you know, notch up those  
25 vouchers a little bit and enable more and more

2 families to take advantage of it, we would see more  
3 people being able to get into professions and going  
4 out there and getting jobs, which is ultimately our  
5 goal, right? Because we don't want to hold their  
6 hands forever. We want to lift them up and put them  
7 out there on their own and let those families live.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
9 you are preaching to the converted right there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, well--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Ad I  
12 will tell you, you know, you said this is, you know,  
13 your profession. It is my profession and, you know,  
14 I am honored to work for an administration that  
15 really values early childhood the way this  
16 Administration does--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Very much so,  
18 thank God.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: --and  
20 have made significant investments in Early Childhood  
21 the way this Administration has. So, I will say  
22 that, you know, there is always thinking that's going  
23 on around what can we do better? What can we do more  
24 of? How can we change so that there's better access,  
25 and so there's always constant thinking around that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Okay, I mean I-I  
3 think—I think the record is very clear that this  
4 Administration did not—did not make the Council do  
5 the dancing that previous Administrations had done.  
6 The, you know, we're going to take it out, we're  
7 going to put it back in, we're going to yell about it  
8 and then, you know, think not. It was never going to  
9 be gone in the first place, but what the  
10 Administration can do is in addition to baselining  
11 into the budget so that there is never this dance,  
12 but just actually recognizing the numbers need to  
13 increase because you know what the numbers of people  
14 who do need the childcare are in the city, and maybe  
15 we can't get everywhere, but if we can up them by a  
16 couple of thousand a year to the point where we're  
17 actually being able to really address the problems, I  
18 think that would be important.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Thank  
20 you for that. I'll take that back.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you. Thank  
22 you, Mr. Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Council  
24 Member Yeger from—from Brooklyn, my neighbor, and—and  
25 I think that what—what—I want to start my line of

2 questions is that—in that respect or a real sense of—  
3 of kind of commitment to kind of removing this—this  
4 back and forth and really kind of getting down to  
5 understanding how we can actually make some  
6 differences without having to negotiate them. There  
7 are some things in the budget that are in negotiation  
8 right now. So, there are still somewhat of a dance  
9 in some ways, but what—what I want to do is really  
10 concentrate on our relationship with MOIA the Mayor's  
11 Office of Immigrant Affairs and, you know, we turn to  
12 MOIA for so much in this committee and in this  
13 Council for information for real understanding of  
14 what's happening, and as the of Mayor—the Mayor's  
15 Office, they get to work with you, and this task  
16 force was created for that, and they serve as a  
17 clearing house for this information, and so what I  
18 want to do is get a little bit more information about  
19 how these issues as each of you present today so  
20 beautifully on expertise on the ground doing this  
21 work, how—how that gets—how that gets related. I  
22 want to get a sense about how that gets related back  
23 to the Mayor's Office. Some of it I'm hearing is—is  
24 in moments of crisis or yes we have to solve a  
25 problem and problem solving, but where is it just the

2 natural sense of continued relationship and  
3 communication especially when the agency, your  
4 agencies present—get percent to the data that kind of  
5 spikes up as an issue. I'm thinking about higher  
6 rates of health concerns. Maybe you're seeing some  
7 stuff and-and requests for dual language. Whatever—  
8 whatever it is, how does that—how does work and  
9 percolate in relationship, and each-each of you can  
10 kind of talk a little bit about it, that would be  
11 great for us here at the committee.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
13 thank you for that question. I think one entity out  
14 of the Mayor's Office that we haven't talked about  
15 yet today, but really all our agencies have been very  
16 much involved with and continue to be involved with  
17 is the Children's Cabinet, which really brings the  
18 city agencies that are working with children, and  
19 this goes beyond the—the birth to 5 that we're  
20 talking about today to really coordinate a line and  
21 think both at the programmatic level—level, but also  
22 think systematically about what we're doing, and how  
23 we can do it better.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that's an  
3 existing cabinet of agencies that come together and  
4 talk about children.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: Correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Anybody  
7 else wants to kind of answer about how-how-again  
8 with-with the idea of-of like a trend spikes all of  
9 sudden that-that has to do with the immigrant  
10 community, what-what happens?

11 MAITE JUNCO: I'm trying to think of some  
12 of the examples, but for example when the person came  
13 out on the DACA right, saying like-basically say  
14 that, you know, it was likely to be an end to the  
15 DACA program in September, we immediately got in a  
16 call not only with the DOE but there were other  
17 agencies, of course, as we first want to, you know,  
18 step-by-step right, wanted to get out information to  
19 our families and to other families citywide what  
20 we're going to say sort run-what we're going to do  
21 and work very closely together. Together we decided  
22 to send a letter to parents, to send a letter to  
23 school parent basically saying we're aware of this.  
24 The letter was signed by both the MOIA Commissioner  
25 and the Chancellor, and as I said under the protocols

2 around immigration and about what we're going to do  
3 if an FAR agent—and—and immigration officer shows up  
4 in one of our schools. I just feel that the  
5 communication with us is very ongoing. It's constant  
6 and I work very closely with, you know, it can be  
7 done, and be done, right. (sic) Where you had a  
8 concern recently you went to them. We talked. We  
9 solved it. So, I think it's pretty close and we're  
10 looking forward to—to the gathering of the task force  
11 that is, you know, for the—get—that we're starting  
12 and I think that will provide just a more official  
13 setting, but I think the—the communication is really  
14 open between us.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Let's talk a  
16 little bit about stigma. So, some of the—some of the  
17 things that came up in testimony today and—and are  
18 just present in our communities especially immigrant—  
19 immigrant communities things like post-partem  
20 depression, things like mental health services and  
21 counseling needs, special education plans. There's  
22 stigma that exists within that category of—of concern  
23 public health and what—what are agencies kind of  
24 doing and in partnership with MOIA about—about those  
25 stigmas?

2 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: So, through ThriveNYC  
3 depression screenings are now a routine part of care  
4 for pregnant women and new moms at prenatal clinics  
5 at 12 New York City Health and Hospital sites  
6 including 11 hospitals and New York City Health and  
7 Hospitals Gotham Health, Gouverneur, a larger  
8 community health center on the Lower East Side, and  
9 your question about mental health services more  
10 broadly there are a number of fronts to address  
11 mental health treatment and healthcare access for New  
12 Yorkers including initiatives like the Mental Health  
13 Service Corps, which places early career social  
14 workers and psychologists and behavioral health in  
15 primary care settings and anyone in the city can call  
16 or text, chat NYC Well at 1-888-NYC Well regardless  
17 of age or immigration status, 24/7, 365 days a year  
18 to find services. NYC Well is free, confidential and  
19 available in over 200 languages.

20 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: So, a lot of this work  
21 sometimes happens somewhat organically. I'll share a  
22 quick story. I was visiting one of my program in the  
23 Bronx last week and, you know, the Director shared  
24 with me that, you know, immigration is the—is a—is a  
25 significant issue for the population there, and she

2 had a parent who just really passed out because she  
3 had to go to a federal office, and she was going  
4 there after she had dropped off her child, and she  
5 was afraid that she would never see her child again.  
6 These are very real issues that our families are  
7 dealing with every single day, and so, part of the  
8 work that we do, you know, in that conversation, I'm  
9 referring her to the resources and making sure that  
10 they're connected to the mental health resources and  
11 the Thrive funded resources that are available in  
12 their community. Also making sure that have access  
13 to immigration resources in their community, and then  
14 coming back and making sure that we incorporate  
15 language and access to those resources in the  
16 newsletters that we push to the programs because  
17 we're not—you know, I'm not out at every single  
18 program, but when I have those conversations, and  
19 these issues kind of bubble up, we want to make sure  
20 we know that other families are dealing with the same  
21 issues, and so we push that out in communication to  
22 our directors and other leaders in the community.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: The—so let's talk  
24 about that stress that's real, and I think it was in—  
25 in my opening statement you all referred to it as

2 well, the researchers at the center of—or for the  
3 developing the child at Harvard University have found  
4 that the toxic stress can have impacts on childhood  
5 development, and all we have to do is point out the  
6 federal government right now. Is DOHMH's earlier  
7 intervention program aware of this heightened risk of  
8 developmental delays? You know, is it integrated in  
9 the kind of work that you do in—in your—so your  
10 curriculum of—of understanding, and what are we—what  
11 are we doing about it and has it changed over time  
12 and if that—if this is at all impacting DOE or ACS  
13 I'd like to hear that, too. But really kind of  
14 thinking about any adjustments that DOHMH has—has  
15 made to ensure that immigrant communities received  
16 the kind of real appropriate assistance?

17 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: So, it most certainly  
18 is integrated into the work not only of our early  
19 intervention program, but other child and family  
20 facing services or programs and resources that we  
21 provide across the agency. It's—it's really an  
22 effort of the unit that I lead the Early Childhood  
23 Health and Development Unit, and so that's Here for  
24 You Campaign that we had last summer was really  
25 focused on helping to promote that information of

2 Parents Connect groups that I also reference in my  
3 testimony or another way that we really reach out to  
4 parents at a neighborhood level and, you know, those  
5 were formed based on feedback that we've received  
6 from them of wanting to have a space where they could  
7 come together, and individuals who could related to  
8 them that they can talk with one another. I think  
9 it's a real indication of the lack of supports that  
10 parents across the city feel, and we heard that  
11 across the city from parents, from all different  
12 types of backgrounds. And so, that idea of how do we  
13 integrate and how do we continue to provide that  
14 research that we know is most relevant. I think the  
15 other piece related to this that I think of is  
16 adverse childhood experiences, which some of my  
17 colleagues reference in your introductory remarks as  
18 well, and how can we really think about that as part  
19 of our work and really critical to our work and  
20 integrated across the work that we're doing.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: And  
22 I-I just want to add to that a couple of years ago  
23 through the First Lady's Thrive NYC Initiative, ACS  
24 implemented a model called Trauma Smart, and we are  
25 implementing that model over a four-year period. We

2 are training close to 100 programs annually over the  
3 course of four years, not only training them monthly,  
4 we're training, you know, the providers so the staff,  
5 all staff in those centers, and with them we're going  
6 on site and we're providing on-site coaching around  
7 creating a trauma-informed culture in our childcare  
8 centers, and so, you know, I want to thank the First  
9 Lady for recognizing the impact of toxic stress in  
10 our communities, and the value of creating a trauma-  
11 informed culture in our Early Childhood Centers. I  
12 also want to add that part of the new Division of  
13 Child and Family Wellbeing part of the goal of our  
14 work there is really to increase access to protective  
15 factors in our communities, you know, so that we are  
16 able to reduce A scores among children so that we are  
17 able to help parents mitigate stressors that they  
18 face because we think if we're able to do that, then  
19 we will come to a place where we're seeing child and  
20 family wellbeing.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Are you seeing  
22 trends being impacted by-by this work already?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
24 we-we-so the new division was launched in September  
25 of 2017. So, it hasn't even been a full year, but we

2 are—and, you know, we're focusing this work through  
3 our place-based initiatives, which are the Family  
4 Enrichment Centers, and the Community Partnership  
5 Programs and even through our Childcare programs.  
6 The work that we're—we've done with Trauma Smart, we  
7 have seen some very positive results. I mean what we  
8 see from the providers who have gone through the  
9 whole, you know, training, we just have one cohort  
10 who have done—who have done the whole thing. We're  
11 in year 2 now. So, we're not complete with year 2,  
12 but they have a better understanding of how to engage  
13 families, of how to change the question from what's  
14 wrong with you to what's happened to you? The  
15 immigration process itself can be a traumatic  
16 process, and living cautiously in New York City can  
17 also add trauma and toxic stress.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, the—and this  
19 is your second cohort for that one that one program.  
20 Are any of the providers here—are there any providers  
21 here who have gone to that program? Just curious. I  
22 don't think we have any providers here? Okay. I'd  
23 like to talk to some of them, too, just to get that—  
24 that sense because I think it's a pretty powerful re-  
25 re-structuring of—of delivery of services. We—so

2 speaking of trauma, one of the bigger traumas that-  
3 that we're experiencing everyday and especially for  
4 our high population-high immigrant population  
5 districts are deportation, deportations and members  
6 in our community that find themselves in a  
7 deportation proceeding. Yes, we have services, legal  
8 services. Thank you to the city of New York and its  
9 partnership really offering everyone legal services  
10 if they find themselves in a deportation proceeding,  
11 but what happens now to the family that is now in the  
12 middle of that deportation proceeding, and if you can  
13 think about through your agency lenses, what are-what  
14 are you all doing to support those families in that  
15 moment or they lose one of their-the parents? Mainly  
16 and mostly they're losing the breadwinners of the  
17 family thinking about rapid response, thinking about  
18 advance safety planning, long-term support. How-how  
19 are each of you thinking about those-those questions  
20 and-and that-that impact to the family?

21 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: I would say one of the  
22 beauties of the Home Visiting Programs that we have  
23 through DOHMH is that they-the home visitors whether  
24 they're nurses or home visitors in our Newborn Home  
25 Visiting program they developed tremendous

2 relationships with families and really connecting  
3 them with additional supports that go above and  
4 beyond what is provided in the context of the program  
5 themselves, and so I think, you know, really thinking  
6 about the critical nature and the importance of those  
7 relationships, and the connections have been also  
8 those programs have with others in the community who  
9 can provide that ongoing connection and support and  
10 additional support and resources as necessary is  
11 really critical.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: We at  
13 ACS connect our families with free high quality  
14 immigration legal services via provider partners.  
15 So, those provider partners can include Legal Aid,  
16 the Door, Sanctuary for Families, Lawyers for  
17 Children to ensure that they have access to services  
18 to help them through that process. You know, I'll  
19 share kind of another anecdote, In visiting one of  
20 my providers who is in Chinatown they were—they made  
21 sure to launch a Know Your Rights Campaign and they  
22 were educating families around their rights in case  
23 someone showed up at their door, and they were  
24 connecting families who were engaged in that process  
25 with legal support.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, that's the  
3 legal stuff right? That's what we're all working on,  
4 the legal stuff, but I guess I'm talking about  
5 everything else that is within the purview of your  
6 agency are there plans on the Rapid Response Plans?  
7 I guess I was looking more—for more than just legal  
8 services.

9 MAITE JUNCO: I'm just writing (sic)  
10 those things, but I just wanted to say that we saw  
11 some of these and some of the advocates raise this to  
12 us that in the letters that we give to families we  
13 ask them to update the information, their contact  
14 information to our people beyond the parents because  
15 we have heard anecdotes also of parents being afraid  
16 that if something happens to them and who's going to  
17 pick up their children and to create a plan of  
18 support to pick up their child—right who is going to  
19 pick up their children to make sure that there was  
20 some sort of continuity, right, if they were—if  
21 something like that happened to them. I think for us  
22 so that was important to us information. It's been  
23 very important to let parents know here are their  
24 resources to let principals know, to let educators  
25 know these are the things that are going through this

2 family's mind, the child might be, you know, the  
3 rest—the city's fine, but the parents are not, and  
4 they sort of what's in—in every—it's in everyone—a  
5 family's mind, and so that's why also we did a Know  
6 Your Rights Forum, which is more legal, but also  
7 other supports are offered to that, and—and also well  
8 when it comes to something more legal, we, of course,  
9 refer to MOIA and MOIA then what we were just talking  
10 about here in our—we also, of course, have our social  
11 workers in our schools that deal with these smaller  
12 traumas as it comes.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And—and I think  
14 what-what—just to kind of finish this set of  
15 questions, but I want to—I want to really follow-up  
16 with all of you. I'm thinking about how and when we  
17 engage our families at different points that might  
18 start with a house visit that is a planned visit for—  
19 a planned visit that is for a kind of review of any  
20 kind of special education needs, but could offer an  
21 opportunity for at that moment in that touchpoint. An  
22 issue that just happened the day before or a mother  
23 or father is picked up by ICE, and what happens and  
24 our—our people who are constantly engaging ready to  
25 respond. Even if they're not trained to fully go

2 through a—a need that they can alert, understand be  
3 able to respond. We're touching our communities in  
4 so many different ways at all times, and we're  
5 missing the opportunities and I think that's—that's  
6 what I want to continue this conversation around is—  
7 is how do we mention to anyone who ever walks into an  
8 immigrant family home can be ready to understand and  
9 connect, and that—that is—that would be the—the—the  
10 secret magic sauce of what we do in multiple  
11 agencies, and what we're going to be pushing MOIA to  
12 start thinking about as our clearing house for  
13 information, and that's why I'm just really sticking  
14 here just to really understand where—where we're—  
15 we're—where we have blind spots that are just  
16 inherent because we do the work that we do, but where  
17 we can start braking those walls, and start thinking  
18 about bridging and training all the frontline agents  
19 of our city to go and be able to be the best servant  
20 possible.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: I  
22 think that that point is—is really well taken, and,  
23 you know, I—I think that one of the most critical  
24 things that we're able to do through our work is to  
25 create safe spaces for these families, and

2 relationships are critical because without the  
3 relationship, a families is not going to open up and  
4 ask for help and ask for support, and so ACS'  
5 commitment through the new division particularly with  
6 our family in Richmond Centers and particularly  
7 through our Community Partnership Programs, which are  
8 embedded in the community, which are really relying  
9 on the community to tell us what do you need? What  
10 are your needs? What can we--? What services can we  
11 bring to you? Not these are the services that you  
12 need, but what do you need from us, is an effort and  
13 I see it as an investment in relationship building in  
14 these communities. We see the same thing in our  
15 childcare centers. Our childcare centers are safe  
16 spaces for families. Our childcare centers are  
17 places where a family feels comfortable coming in and  
18 talking whether it's with the Director or the teacher  
19 or whomever she's built a relationship with to say  
20 this is happening to me, and I need help, and I need  
21 support. And so, you know, we--our job is to make  
22 sure that the people who are facing those families,  
23 the people who are facing communities are armed with  
24 the knowledge that they need and the support that

2 they need to make sure they can connect these  
3 families to the resources that they need.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Well, and—and I'm—  
5 and to that point on the mental health services, a  
6 question from one of the advocates is—is really is  
7 there a list of resources that immigrant and  
8 uninsured, you know, immigrants that there's no issue  
9 with status can access mental health services. Do  
10 you have a list? Is that something that exists that—  
11 that can be shared across-across the board for—for  
12 the people that we serve everyday?

13 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: Right. So, I would say  
14 NYC Well is the primary resource to—to get that kind  
15 of information and that's available to everyone to  
16 call text, chat 24/7 365 days a year. So, that's an  
17 opportunity, and certainly we can follow up with  
18 other resources that are available for the—

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Does that work? I  
20 mean I'm just—I'm asking a very real question. I'm  
21 just thinking okay so you go to an organization and  
22 you say, okay, go to NYC Well, and then it just  
23 doesn't-it-what does that mean? Like is that-is  
24 from-help me understand that?

2 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: Right. Well, so this  
3 is—this is outside of-of my division and my work.  
4 So, we will have to get back to you about the  
5 details. I know that there are details. You know,  
6 there's a huge public awareness campaign to promote  
7 NYC Well that many people in this room may have—may  
8 have seen either, you know, public service ads or on  
9 the subways the—the ways that we promoted the  
10 services as an agency that we have available, but we  
11 can certainly follow-up and provide more detail about  
12 the utilization of NYC Well.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, we—we want  
14 to get to that—to you on that because I think the way  
15 the organization is back to how do we ask them what  
16 they need. Organizations are asking us for a list  
17 of—of a short list of—of providers, and then we're  
18 going back and saying well there's a clearing house.  
19 So, start here and I think whether or not that works  
20 is another question, but I want—I want to come back  
21 to you and—and really kind of work with you and some  
22 other organizations that are asking for that.

23 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: Okay.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And then on a—on a  
25 note around the—the number of people, how many people

2 are immigrants who are actually accessing vouchers,  
3 specifically on the kind of thinking about  
4 transferred with-trends is the question actually, but  
5 how are we making sure that-that-that we  
6 understanding that-that immigrant communities are  
7 being served with vouchers, and how-how do we make  
8 sure that we-we're serving everybody so that everyone  
9 has access?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So, I  
11 think you know-

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
13 Language, et cetera.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Yep.  
15 So there are regulations particularly with the  
16 childcare block grant dollars that we receive from  
17 the state and the state receives them from the  
18 federal government, and there are regulations around  
19 that, and immigration status. So, you know, that I  
20 think continues to be challenges. However, we're  
21 fortunate to have Head Start a pretty significant  
22 Head Start Grant in this city, and our Head Start  
23 programs, which again are spread throughout the city  
24 do not require any type of disclosure around  
25 immigration status. I think also this is where, you

2 know, the Mayor's vision around 3-K and Pre-K is so  
3 significant because there isn't a requirement around,  
4 you know, documentation of citizenship with 3-K and  
5 Pre-K. So, unfortunately some of the services are  
6 tied to federal regulations around that information.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I think what's--  
8 what's--what this hearing is kind of unveiling is a  
9 real understanding of--of how--how we're actually  
10 impacting our--our immigrant families and how we're  
11 able to both protect them. I think we're doing so  
12 much right now to--to protect our immigrant--immigrant  
13 families by privacy and confidentiality, and ensuring  
14 that we give access to them, but really how--how to--  
15 how--and what percentage do immigrant communities  
16 access our health services, our school services, and--  
17 and can you give us a texture of what that--that that  
18 is from each of your kind of agency perspectives?

19 MAITE JUNCO: I mean I'll just say our  
20 schools are open to all families to all parents  
21 regardless of immigration status, and so I--I--

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
23 Right, so let me on that--

24 MAITE JUNCO: --mean that's sort of the  
25 board big picture. I mean like where are you--

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] So,  
3 that's the policy, right? That's like we're open--

4 MAITE JUNCO: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and then so then  
6 how do we--how do we measure, how do we--how do we  
7 understand that--that--that our Pre-K programs? I  
8 think you heard some of the Council Members saying  
9 that--that they might not even be aware that there's a  
10 deadline, there's--there's a lot of barriers. How are  
11 we measuring that--that feedback and response?  
12 Because it's one thing to say we're open to  
13 everybody--

14 MAITE JUNCO: [interposing] I think we  
15 have a lot of the things to say.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --and when  
17 everybody comes is a--is a question.

18 MAITE JUNCO: I mean I think we're very  
19 proud, right of the expansion of Pre-K and then the  
20 families who sign up, but I think John can and it's  
21 really this because the outreach has been so far out,  
22 and so culturally appropriate. I mean they are--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
24 so how--how do you--how do you measure that success?

2 JOHN TRITT: Yeah, I mean one of the  
3 things—I mean we—there's a whole—we understand that  
4 there are barriers that people might perceive when  
5 applying to a Pre-K program. I mean not the least of  
6 which for all communities across New York is the fact  
7 that we're dealing with the youngest children, right?  
8 Like this is the first time most are, you know,  
9 their—their child is entering like if they had been  
10 on a daycare or something else prior to this they  
11 might have been in a center based program, but for  
12 many, many families this is the first time they're  
13 entering the school system, and so for immigrant  
14 families and all families across New York City  
15 communities there's—there's, you know, some nerves  
16 tied to it in a lot of cases, and that's  
17 fundamentally why our team still exists post the 2014  
18 expansion. So, the outreach team was put together to  
19 help get the word out about pre-K initially when Pre-  
20 K became universal, but then the administration took  
21 a look. Afterwards, we had to make a decision.  
22 We're at this point now where okay we feel like we've  
23 hit expansion, you know, we're ready for the next  
24 year. We have this great on-line central application  
25 process with a website like do we need to keep

2 having, you know, 40 plus human beings out across the  
3 city, and because of this issue and some other—

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Yes.

5 JOHN TRITT: Yes, so, yes. I will also  
6 say yes, but—but that's—but that—this issue was one  
7 of the paramount issues and making sure that  
8 immigrant families did not face a barrier and—and so  
9 we recognize that there's fear out there. We hear it  
10 anecdotally as individuals on the team. We worked  
11 very closely with advocates who kind of hear things  
12 out in the community as well, and—and we try to have  
13 this close relationship as possible to share that  
14 information. We partnered with other city agencies  
15 to ensure that we're getting all the most up-to-date  
16 information from one and then from other folks, and  
17 we're constantly evaluating what we're doing, how  
18 we're doing it, what messages are we putting out  
19 there, what languages are we putting it out there. So  
20 in a robust paid media campaign this year, we were  
21 targeted like we picked particular bus shelter  
22 languages specifically based on language data that  
23 any language data we could get across the city we  
24 used that to try to aggregate like where should we  
25 put like a Chinese language bus shelter ad? And we

2 got down to like even though we did hundreds of bus  
3 shelters, we picked individual bus shelters based on  
4 that information. And so, you know, we—we look at  
5 whole post of data just to measure our success.  
6 We're trying to get, you know, more and more kids  
7 every year, but, you know, I mean and in short we  
8 recognize that this is always going to be, you know,  
9 no matter what the future looks like federal  
10 government or other things we recognize this will  
11 always be a challenge that we need to be addressing  
12 on a human level on the ground person-to-person.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And thank you for  
14 that. I think that kind of shows the—not only the  
15 commitment, but the—the kind of—the robust nature of—  
16 of and the longevity of that robust nature and  
17 outreach for UPK and then now 3-K. Is there—is there  
18 something that you can tell us a little bit about  
19 what—what's causing the delay in 3-K? Just kind of  
20 talk to us a little bit about what—what exactly is  
21 happening to the slow rollout for 3-K?

22 JOHN TRITT: I mean just in short I mean  
23 there's—there's two issues and we—we certainly  
24 support the—all the Council Members support of  
25 citywide 3-K program and, you know, it is very

2 popular. You know, we are seeing lots of families  
3 out in the--the--in the New York City are chomping at  
4 the bit to get it citywide. Really I mean there's  
5 two things. We need to make sure that we're fully  
6 funded, and so that requires not just city funding,  
7 but state and federal funding. So, we need to make  
8 sure that happens, and we need to ensure that we're  
9 thoughtful about citywide space. You know, we want  
10 to--when we roll it out citywide and say this is  
11 universal citywide we need to ensure that we have  
12 like Pre-K we can guarantee for the 4-year-olds if  
13 you apply to Pre-K you're going to have a seat. It  
14 might not be your first choice or your second choice,  
15 but we can guarantee you that we will connect you to  
16 a seat. We want to be in the same position for a  
17 citywide 3-year-olds program, and we have to be very  
18 thoughtful about making the space. I'd say, you  
19 know, the--the two-year rollout--I mean the--excuse me--  
20 the 4-year rollout, you know, it's--it's--it's  
21 certainly we want it--we want to make it city--we're  
22 going to make it citywide. We want to make it  
23 citywide. We appreciate the support of the members  
24 to--to--to back that up and support that and make it

2 happen, but it's really just a matter of the funding  
3 and being thoughtful about the space.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And I'll just—I'll  
5 make my participation—my participatory democracy  
6 pitch right now. I think—I think everything that you  
7 just said and I'm glad there's a lot of awareness  
8 from the agencies from all of you about how—how we're  
9 doing that, how we're creating the safe spaces, how  
10 we're making sure that everyone is trained and—and  
11 what--=what's really amazing, too, is if you think  
12 about District 38 and there are 27 plugs for  
13 participatory budgeting, there are 27 members this  
14 year that participated voluntarily in a participatory  
15 budgeting project that allows for communities to make  
16 decisions about how they spend capital dollars in  
17 their neighborhood from schools, which is a very  
18 popular thing. Parks and streets, and—and security  
19 cameras with NYPD on—on corners on corridors, and—and  
20 this is where we're learning, too, about how we  
21 engage communities who—who don't speak English and so  
22 in my district the majority of the ballots that come  
23 back are—are—are—are ballots in Spanish, Chinese and  
24 Arabic, and we're—so, we're—we're—we're—we're  
25 deliberate about that work that we do out there, and

2 we're getting a lot of feedback, and so those are  
3 that we should not hold—we should not—we should take  
4 advantage of that, and spread all this messaging—all  
5 this messaging we just got here today. I didn't know  
6 half, to be honest, half of the things that you just  
7 presented on. I don't—I just don't know that. We've  
8 got to solve that. That's—that's solvable, that's  
9 easy. How do we get all their members to know  
10 everything you're working on because we are partners,  
11 and so that any time I'm in a home doing a  
12 presentation on Know Your Rights, or participatory  
13 budgeting, then the lead information in your language  
14 and can offer an opportunity for one of you to come  
15 out in your teams and do the presentation. That's  
16 the synergy that I think needs to happen more and  
17 more so we can get more information out into our  
18 communities. Is that a bell for me? Is that on my--?  
19 [laughter] And so that I think is important that—that  
20 we really focus on being intentional about, and just  
21 force ourselves into rooms, which is why I'm talking  
22 about the task force, a lot, which is why I'm  
23 understanding how you feed information to each other,  
24 and how we can get that information to the City  
25 Council Members who have district offices in every

2 district, and this—and working with the CCs and  
3 working with the Community Boards. So, anyway,  
4 there's a lot. I think there's a lot there. We need  
5 to hit—or we need to discuss I should say the  
6 Maternal and Infant Health Work, and—and so tell us a  
7 little bit about what those issues are. Just drill a  
8 little bit deeper about what—what that—what that  
9 looks like for the agencies specifically, and—and  
10 there's some really high rates.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: Can  
12 I show my Queens data before the Council Member  
13 leaves?

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes, absolutely.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VARGAS: We have  
16 Queens data. Oh, I think you've had it out. I'll  
17 share it anyway.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Please share.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: So,  
20 we have 51 Early Learn Centers in Queens.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: 51.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: 51--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Great.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: --

25 Early Learn Centers in Queens. They serve—

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I'll text it to  
3 you. (sic)

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ATALIE-VARGAS: --  
5 close to 3,400 children. In addition, we have three  
6 Family Childcare Networks which serve close to 1,000  
7 children.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for  
9 that.

10 ABIGAIL VELIKOV: So, since you asked  
11 about infant and maternal health data, I think  
12 probably something that's at the forefront of  
13 everyone's mind we know it's been a lot of press, is  
14 around infant mortality. So, just some background  
15 data. In 2016, New York City had an infant mortality  
16 rate of 4.1 infant deaths per 1,000 live births,  
17 which is a slight decrease since 2015, and due to a  
18 small number of deaths the rate will fluctuate from  
19 year to year. The infant mortality rate has declined  
20 24% since 2007 when it was 5.4 per 1,000 births.  
21 However, we know that the infant mortality rates for  
22 blacks was 8.0 per 1,000 live births. So, we're very  
23 much aware of the disparities across the city and  
24 there is concerted effort by the Health Department  
25 around birth equity, which is how we like to frame

2 this work that really speaks to the issue of toxic  
3 stress for women along with what that means both in  
4 utero, along with when the child is actually hearing  
5 the supports that we have in place primarily through  
6 our Home Visiting programs.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for that  
8 report, and I think that is something we want to work  
9 with you as well in thinking about how we bring  
10 outreach to immigrant communities, and—and look at  
11 barriers and remove them. So, I think that's it's  
12 for me right now, and I want to—I want to offer the  
13 advocates to—to kind of give us their—their testimony  
14 today. Will you be leaving members of your team and  
15 staff here? [background comments] Okay, great. Thank  
16 you so much to the Administration, and we look—we  
17 look forward to working with you and—the-[pause] and  
18 as you—as you walk out, I—I would say that we're  
19 really looking forward to the soon part of your  
20 meeting with the MOIA Task Force and looking forward  
21 to getting some data and understanding from that as  
22 well. Thank you. Okay. Thank you all for—for—for  
23 staying and we have—we have—we have a few panels. We  
24 want to get through as many as possible. I believe  
25 there are two parents here who made it, Nicole Wren

2 and Michong Chu. [pause] On that same panel we want  
3 Ernie Collette, the Mobilization for Justice and  
4 Casey Akbar. [background comments] Hey, 'cause,  
5 yeah would you like to—yes, that's fine. That's  
6 fine. Make sure, make sure—what's your name?

7 KATHY HENDERSON: [off mic] Kathy  
8 Henderson.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Kathy Henderson.  
10 Okay. [background comments] Okay. Can we—can we  
11 just have—have you come over. [background comments]  
12 Please, then thank you so much. [pause] Our youngest  
13 New Yorker. [background comments, pause] Just make  
14 sure you're speaking into the mic and it's red.  
15 Ling, make sure that they can—we'll have the parents  
16 go first, and—and Ling will Translate.

17 NICHOLE JEN: Okay. Speaking Chinese]

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Can we—can we  
19 pause there, so—so Ling can—can translate?

20 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon, everyone.  
21 My name is Nichole Jen (sp?), and right now, I have a  
22 2-year-old who is in a daycare. I pay \$700 a month  
23 for the daycare because I can't—we don't know how to  
24 apply for the government subsidized daycare. My  
25 husband works for a restaurant, and I work part-time

2 and pretty much most of my earnings goes to the  
3 daycare.

4 NICHOLE JEN: [Speaking Chinese]

5 TRANSLATOR: I'm very excited to hear  
6 that the Mayor plans to—plans to make UPK3 a reality.  
7 Because my son is two years old I hope he can be in—  
8 he can be enrolled in Pre-K-3 next year and then we—  
9 it will be a great relief to our family finance  
10 because right now pretty much most of what I earn  
11 goes to his daycare, and—but I'm very worried at the  
12 same time about whether we'll be able to get a seat  
13 or not because I live in Sunset Park, and the  
14 application for UPK in our district is crazy. I  
15 haven't applied, but I have seen pictures circulating  
16 in the community social media where people were—where  
17 the parents were waiting like starting a mid—starting  
18 at 3:00 a.m., waiting for 10 hours just to get an  
19 application for—for the UPK lottery, and I want to  
20 say that please—please help me, please help my family  
21 to ensure that we could get a seat—that we can get a  
22 set. [background comments]

23 NICHOLE JEN: [Speaking Chinese]

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

25 Appreciate it. [laughter]

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: [Speaking Chinese]

3 TRANSLATOR: Hi. I have my 2-year-old  
4 with me today because I—I don't know—she has always  
5 been with me because I don't know where to find  
6 affordable daycare. I'm a resident of Upper East  
7 Side around 120 Street. I have looked. I don't  
8 speak English. There are some Chinese resident like  
9 me who don't speak—immigrants who don't speak English  
10 live in—in the Upper East Side now. [baby chattering]  
11 So, contrary to the popular belief, Chinese people do  
12 live outside, you know, Chinatown, Flushing and in  
13 Sunset Park, and I've looked into daycare in  
14 Chinatown. They cost anywhere from \$700 to \$1,000,  
15 which we cannot afford, [baby yelling] and subsidized  
16 daycare and then near us there's no subsidized  
17 daycare. There used to be one, but they closed down.  
18 So, I don't know where to turn to. Whatever  
19 information I try to look near where I live, they're  
20 either in English or Spanish. I don't have anything  
21 in Chinese, and then as you can see, the—I cannot go  
22 anywhere without my child with me, even to this  
23 hearing I have to bring with me because there's no  
24 one else that I can leave her with, and it's a—it's a  
25 blessing, but it's a huge burden, too. At times it's

2 very stressful. I want to say please, everyone help  
3 us. We-we-I'm trapped. It's-I-I don't want to be a  
4 sad-a lot of people in [bell] our situation they send  
5 the baby back to the home country to make them-  
6 they're called satellite babies. I don't want my  
7 daughter to. I almost took that path, but I-in the  
8 end I decided not to because I don't want to be  
9 separated with my child. I want to raise her with  
10 whatever I can, but I need help.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Thank  
12 you to the two parents and for Ling for translating  
13 both of those testimonies. I just want to double  
14 check. Is MOIA still here? Can you raise your hand?  
15 Thank. The Department of Education. Is anybody here  
16 from DOE? Yes, thank you, and the also ACS. Great.  
17 Thank you, thank you and DOHMH? Is DOHMH in the  
18 house? Okay, thank you.

19 KATHY HENDERSON: Chairman Menchaca,  
20 thank you for inviting me here today. I want to  
21 introduce myself. My name is Kathy Henderson. I'm  
22 the Regional Manager at Footsteps to Brilliance. I  
23 was joined here today by Casey S. Akbar, a  
24 kindergarten teacher at PS197 Queens, but she had to  
25 leave because she had to pick up her daughter. So,

2 in any case, but I want to talk about the  
3 transformative work that we've been doing in five New  
4 York City schools this year, and we've been  
5 leveraging the mobile devices that families own to  
6 scale early literacy. So, we have—we're an app.  
7 We're an early literacy app with thousands of books,  
8 games and resources in both English and Spanish.  
9 Part of our solution is incorporating families into  
10 the solution. So, for every student licensed,  
11 there's a family license and families are part of our  
12 professional development, and we encourage them to  
13 use as resources with their children at home there,  
14 and when we work with districts outside of—when we  
15 work with districts outside of New York City, when we  
16 work with district initiatives, we build the—the work  
17 out with—throughout the community and we work with  
18 other agencies to again scale these early literacy  
19 resources because our mission is to have every child  
20 kindergarten ready. So, we have testimonies from the  
21 teachers and the principals, from these pilot schools  
22 we've been working with this year, and we would love  
23 the opportunity to share the resource because what  
24 we're looking for is our New York City contract to be  
25 able to really—to really scale the work citywide, and

2 to bring economies of scale to that pricing to really  
3 make this a good resource for your New York City  
4 schools.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Thank  
6 you for that testimony and I have your—I have the—the  
7 testimony here as well.

8 KATHY HENDERSON: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much.  
10 [background comments, pause]

11 ERNIE COLLETTE: Thank you. Good  
12 afternoon, Council Member Menchaca. Thank you very  
13 much for the opportunity to be able to testify here.  
14 We're going to take this—no, it's a little bit of a  
15 separate route, but it also still applies to what I  
16 think a lot of immigrant families need access to.  
17 So, before I start, my name is Ernie Collette. I'm a  
18 staff attorney at Mobilization for Justice.

19 CLAIRE THOMAS: And my name is Claire  
20 Thomas and I'm a Professor at New York Law School,  
21 and I direct our Asylum Clinic there.

22 ERNIE COLLETTE: So, we have two topics  
23 that we'd like to discuss with you today. One that  
24 we think that the City Council should be aware of and  
25 another one that we are fairly sure the City Council

2 knows of through actions that could potentially have-  
3 be taken by the federal government. The first one I  
4 want to talk about is access to public benefits, and  
5 the second topic is proposed public charge  
6 regulations. So, recently for immigrant families,  
7 access to benefits is-is-it's of myriad. It's very  
8 difficult sort of a conversation to have in a-in a  
9 three-minute conversation, but I wanted to focus on  
10 there is a recent case that was brought up to the New  
11 York Superior Court that effectively instituted the  
12 State Agency for-for Public Benefits, the Office of  
13 Temporary and Disability Assistance to issue an  
14 effective, a directive effective immediately that  
15 would allow for asylum-some applicants children  
16 derivatives to be able to receive Safety Net  
17 Assistance, which is a federal-which is a state  
18 provided assistance for public benefits. It allows  
19 for a cash grant and a shelter allowance. There's a  
20 discrepancy, and the reason why is because it allowed  
21 like with the sound applicants. They were then  
22 designated by OTDA to be designated as PRUCOL, which  
23 is permanently residing under the color of law. It's  
24 a determination that allows individuals to receive  
25 State funded benefits. There's a discrepancy in the

2 fact that special immigrant juvenile children, SIJ  
3 kids have not been afforded that designation, that  
4 PRUCOL status. As a result, claimants are  
5 individuals that actually have very similar  
6 situations that could apply for both asylum and/or  
7 Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, have access to one  
8 benefit, cash assistance, but may not because of the—  
9 just simply because of their immigration status, and  
10 that would definitely affect a household. Every  
11 little helps as we've seen here today. So, having  
12 access to that and encouraging the State and the City  
13 to—to take a look at this could meet a need.

14           CLAIRE THOMAS: Exactly, and some SIJ  
15 petitioners, some applicants for SIJ are young  
16 parents, and that's what our agencies have seen and  
17 many of the other agencies in the room as well where  
18 these petitioners could have their own children be  
19 U.S. citizens or immigrant children as well who might  
20 in turn be eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile  
21 Status or asylum, but are extremely vulnerable and  
22 are left out of this gracious safety net that has  
23 been given to asylum applicants, but not to these  
24 quote/unquote SIJ kids, and their derivative SIJ  
25 kids. So, the second part of our testimony today

2 that we wanted to draw your attention to are the  
3 upcoming changes to the public charge regulations.  
4 These proposed changes with the Federal Office of  
5 Management and Budget to expand the type of public  
6 benefits that would designate a recipient as a  
7 quote/unquote "public charger". So, if after notice  
8 and comments period these draft changes are  
9 implemented, the recipients of such non-cash  
10 assistance programs such as Supplemental Needs  
11 Assistance Program, SNAP formerly known as Food  
12 Stamps, Medicaid, WIC and Child Health Plus, Low-  
13 Income Home Energy Assistance Program as well as the  
14 Earned Income Tax Credit will face public charge  
15 grounds on inadmissibility. So, this may prevent  
16 non-citizens from obtaining lawful permanent  
17 residents here in the United States and it would have  
18 huge impacts on those families as well.

19 ERNIE COLLETTE: It's a-it's a matter of  
20 also a mixed-status household. So, you have families  
21 obviously that have U.S. citizen children that have  
22 access to these particular benefits. Obviously,  
23 regarding so their immigration status because they're  
24 U.S. Citizens, and so it potentially, again  
25 potentially because we don't know the final rule yet

2 and we still have a 60-day notice and comment period  
3 and could potentially make a family have to decide  
4 whether or not they want to get benefits for their  
5 children, food stamps or medical insurance provided  
6 by Medicaid or-or CHIP or not have to go through  
7 those benefits with them. It potentially, it drains  
8 their resources. You'd have, you know, it's-more  
9 reliance on food-food kitchens and soup pantries.  
10 Sorry, soup pantries and food kitchens. You'd also  
11 have reliance on free lunch programs and basically  
12 [bell] on the fact that the families who have to make  
13 that decision. So, we just wanted to draw that to  
14 your attention.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you both  
16 for-for walking us through that, and if we can follow  
17 up on-on some of the work that we can do in  
18 preparation, and hopefully we will get a good ruling,  
19 but you-you point out some really kind of incredibly  
20 important things that the city should be looking at  
21 now, and not wait until the end. So, really thankful  
22 for all you testimony, and I want to thank the  
23 parents for-for here-for being here. I think  
24 they've-they've already left, but it's not always you  
25 can get parents here. So, it's always a special

2 moment and having a young 2-year-old child here to be  
3 witness to this is-is important as well, and so thank  
4 you. Thank you to them. Thank you for this panel.  
5 The next panel we have Kim Sykes and Aracelis Lucero  
6 from MASA, Mary Chang and Amy Torres from Chinese-  
7 American Planning Council; Diana Noriega. [pause] I  
8 think we just have one more panel after that. So, if  
9 you have not yet given us your appearance card,  
10 please do so. Do you want to begin? Please  
11 introduce yourself. Thank you. [pause] [background  
12 comments]

13 MARY CHANG: Okay. My name is Mary Chang  
14 from Chinese-American Planning Council, and I want to  
15 thank you, Chair Menchaca for-and the members of the  
16 City Council for the opportunity to testify today.  
17 The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council  
18 CPC is to promote social and economic empowerment of  
19 the Chinese-American community, immigrant and low-  
20 income communities, as well. CPC was founded in 1965  
21 as a grassroots community-based organization in  
22 response to the end to end of the Chinese Exclusion  
23 Years, and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act  
24 of 1965. Our services have expanded since our  
25 founding, and to include four key program areas:

2 Development Services, Education and Career Services,  
3 Community Services and Senior Services. CPC is the  
4 largest Asian-American Social Services organization  
5 of the U.S. and providing vital resources to more  
6 than 60,000 people per year through more than 50  
7 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn  
8 and Queens. CPD employs over 700 staff whose  
9 comprehensive services are linguistically accessible,  
10 culturally sensitive and highly-effective in  
11 reaching low-income families and immigrant families  
12 in the community. To that end we are grateful to  
13 testify about the issues that impact individuals and  
14 families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council  
15 and their leadership on these issues. Personally, I  
16 was also a Director of Early Childhood Program. I  
17 taught and Early Childhood Program and now I oversee  
18 all of the Early Childhood and school age programs  
19 under CPC. To be able to do that, I think really  
20 speaks to the demand and the need of services within  
21 the community for that. So, today we will present  
22 the issues identified through Early Childhood  
23 Education, and our Asian childcare service-resource,  
24 the referral programs. We have found that our  
25 immigrant families have major concerns that fall

2 under enrollment, language access and cultural  
3 competency, and discrepancies in community  
4 organizations versus the Department of—Department of  
5 Ed sites. So, first off, I think the two parents who  
6 were in here previously who were testifying, I really  
7 wanted to speak with them in terms of clarifying  
8 services. There is a lot of confusion about the  
9 services that is provided, and how to access it, and  
10 there is also a lot of myths that come out. So,  
11 there was in the—

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: You said myths?

13 MARY CHANG: Myths about how to apply and  
14 what are the standards of applying. So, I think it  
15 has to be very transparent, and I think a lot of  
16 families come in with that confusion that, oh, if I  
17 come into a subsidized site, they're going to have a  
18 spot right on for me, and the truth of the matter is  
19 we have to follow departmental guidelines. [bell]  
20 There's ratios that we have to meet. As for also  
21 applying for UPK, so that enrollment process is very  
22 confusing for a lot of families regardless of if  
23 you're immigrant or a new family with a child who is  
24 3, 4 gifted, and wants to apply for the gifted and  
25 talented—talented program because each one of them

2 have—have an enrollment—sorry—I'm a little nervous  
3 today, but each one of them has an enrollment  
4 process. So, if you come in and you say I want to  
5 apply for 3-K, then you have another process at 3  
6 years old. At 4 years old you have to apply again for  
7 Pre-K, UPK. Then the 5-year-olds you also have to  
8 apply for kindergarten, and each of those processes  
9 is another process especially for immigrant families  
10 that they do not know how to access, and the  
11 Department of Ed doesn't really support in the way  
12 that they need to support the program. It requires--

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] What  
14 do you need in support?

15 MARY CHANG: I think that it needs to be  
16 very clear-cut for a lot of these families when they  
17 have to access every single year into the portal,  
18 which is not clear on what they have to do, how do  
19 they find the codes? How do they find the district  
20 zones? For immigrant families it's not an easy  
21 access for them, and even when I have to go and  
22 access online, a lot of the time is that if you  
23 access it online in English, it does not look the  
24 same so I gave you a sample of it. When I click on  
25 for the Chinese translation, I don't know how to

2 figure it out for them either. So, what happens is  
3 that I do an orientation for them for general to—for  
4 all of the parents, and then for each of the families  
5 that need services, I have to go with them one by one  
6 through the process, and so that relates—relies a lot  
7 on manpower, and a lot of times it's just the  
8 director and bookkeeper in the site, and how do you  
9 have that manpower to do that? But we have to. We  
10 have to make the time for it. It cuts into our day,  
11 but it's also a need that we see that parents do  
12 really require and understanding the zoning and  
13 addresses and how that applies to them. Why is  
14 there—the district confined to, and they don't  
15 understand that process as immigrant families.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Got it, and the  
17 agencies don't do anything to create that—that space  
18 for understanding and education.

19 MARY CHANG: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay. Thank you.  
21 I have some questions for you, but I want to—I want  
22 to get to the panel and we'll come back. Thank you  
23 so much for that. A very enlightening experience  
24 from the CPC point of view. Thank you.

2 ARACELIS LUCERO: Thank you very much.

3 My name is I'm the Aracelis Lucero. I'm the  
4 Executive Director of MASA [Speaking Spanish] which  
5 means thank you in Mayan (sp?) the indigenous  
6 language of Mexico and so my MASA part is with  
7 Mexican and Latino immigrant children youth and  
8 families the South Bronx to develop strong learners  
9 and leaders who fully contribute to the broader  
10 community. We envision a community that is civically  
11 engaged, empowered and educated. MASA is a very  
12 grassroots organization that was started in 2001 to  
13 meet the needs of specifically undocumented students,  
14 and very quickly, we realize the—the need to start as  
15 early as possible. We fortunate enough in 2013 to  
16 partner with Parent Johnson (sic) program and with  
17 Deutsche Bank on an initiative to target the Mexican  
18 community, and why this is really important for the  
19 organization is because the community that we serve  
20 is really what people consider hard to reach  
21 vulnerable undocumented predominantly immigrant  
22 families. Over half of the people that we serve have  
23 less than a primary school level education. Over a  
24 quarter speak an indigenous language as Mixteca (sp?)  
25 and the majority have less than \$30,000 or less

2 annual income. When we took a snapshot of the actual  
3 families that we serve that have children 0 to 5.  
4 Those statistics actually are far worse, and they are  
5 facing a lot more challenges, and so—

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Can  
7 you repeat that again from 0 to 5.

8 ARACELIS LUCERO: Yes, so we took a  
9 snapshot—

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]  
11 Okay, that's—that's important.

12 ARACELIS LUCERO: So, we took a snapshot  
13 of the 0 to 5, and what we found is that most of them  
14 are much more recently arrived than the general  
15 population that we have. So, about ten years or  
16 less. So, 24% of those parents in comparison to 17%  
17 for our general population while 25% of our general  
18 population speaks an indigenous language. For the 0  
19 to 5 over 40% of the parents where children ages 0 to  
20 5 speak and speak an indigenous language, and the  
21 average household size is bigger. So, the average  
22 for the general population at MASA is four members  
23 and for 0 to 5 it's five members, and they have  
24 similar incomes, which is \$30,000 or less. So, you  
25 have more people, less resources for the family, and

2 so that's just to give you a snapshot, but really  
3 what I've been hearing throughout the day is that  
4 there's really a need to focus on specific  
5 communities who is being left behind. This idea of  
6 like everything for all is not working for all, and  
7 so what I would like to say is that, you know, we  
8 really need to look at ways in which people who are  
9 already trusted in the community can provide these  
10 types of supports. So, the Parent-Child Home Program  
11 we're already looking to have partnered with a lot of  
12 people, and we're very grateful for that opportunity  
13 because [bell] because it has allowed us resources to  
14 address the needs of our community, but it has been  
15 very intentional, and it's something that you've been  
16 talking about a lot today is that there has to be  
17 more effort to address the needs of particular  
18 communities. There's so much I wanted to say, but I  
19 know I don't have a lot of time. I echo everything  
20 that Mary has said. One of the biggest challenges is  
21 just general confusion, and quite frankly, clarity  
22 around like who is actually eligible for what and  
23 when, and there's a lot of confusion right now  
24 especially with the merger coming on of Early Learn,  
25 Head Start. There are really not a lot of seats.

2 There's confusion, and they have to go to the actual  
3 sites. Some people just don't even answer questions  
4 and say, you know, we're just closed already. We're  
5 full, and so they don't even get any answers to their  
6 questions because they just get shut down. People  
7 don't have time. The other thing that I would say is  
8 that we're focusing a lot on 3-K and Pre-K, but 0 to  
9 2, there is not a lot out there for 0 to 2. There  
10 is—actually, I'm going to focus on the South Bronx  
11 because that's where I am and the—when Early Learn  
12 came on in 2012, approximately 17% of the seats of  
13 the—of homebased childcare providers dropped, and  
14 that was just in general in New York City. For the  
15 South Bronx in certain areas about 50% of the child—  
16 of the homebased childcare providers dropped and why  
17 is that important? Because culturally speaking even  
18 me, my child right now is being taken care of either  
19 by his grandma or a family members. Culturally, it  
20 is really important and we—and even when we talk to  
21 families about the barriers entering 3-K, there's  
22 trust. When we talked about their experience going  
23 the first couple of days into Pre-K, there was a lot  
24 of confusion around like, you know, people were just  
25 told drop off your children, and leave, right. This

2 immediate separation, and so some parents after we  
3 successfully enrolled them in 3-K we were—we're in  
4 District 7 and we were fortunate to be one of the  
5 first districts that started last year. A couple of  
6 parents took their children out of the program a  
7 couple of months into it because there is just not a  
8 lot of sensitivity around, you know, the transition  
9 between being with your child all the time and then  
10 just automatically, you know, being told you can't be  
11 there. It isn't your job any more.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Now,  
13 you used the word sensitivity. Is that also a kind  
14 of cultural competency item--

15 ARACELIS LUCERO: [interposing] Yes, yes--  
16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: --to bridge that  
18 sensitivity.

19 ARACELIS LUCERO: --yes, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

21 ARACELIS LUCERO: Definitely. The other  
22 thing that I would like to say is that when this  
23 whole—MASA actually applied for UPK in 2014. We  
24 didn't get it, which is understandable because we had  
25 never had a site, and the city wanted to make sure

2 there was a decision to use current licenses. So, I  
3 get it, but we were trying to do a Pre-K for  
4 indigenous speaking families, and what I would say  
5 about that also is that we shouldn't be encouraging  
6 people who already trusted—who are already trusted  
7 community brokers to also be included in this process  
8 because they're there, there is programs that can  
9 help. You know, CHCF I know has training. The  
10 Parent-Child Home Program has the Family-Childcare  
11 model. There's way to have homebased—to increase the  
12 homebased childcare providers, but also train them,  
13 right. So, it's a matter of trust, it's a matter of  
14 giving them more support. There are existing  
15 programs. So, how do we also focus on the 0 to 2,  
16 and make sure that we're starting as early as  
17 possible because a lot of the families that we serve  
18 they have very young children are not entering the  
19 workforce or looking for the opportunities because  
20 they simply don't have any childcare, and sometimes  
21 there a turnoff at 3-K and even Pre-K and so really  
22 you have these moms that want to access  
23 opportunities, other opportunities who can't and  
24 further, you know, making things equal and accessible  
25 to all. I have lot more information here, but I want

2 to make sure that my colleagues get to speak, but the  
3 last point I would say is we have a lot of horror  
4 stories around the Special Education services from  
5 families, like people realizing last minute that they  
6 needed bilingual evaluators who are very scarce to  
7 families having evaluators asking them to meet them  
8 in the car to do the evaluations, and then just a lot  
9 of misconceptions around language development, and  
10 discourage professionals from pediatricians to  
11 teachers to other professionals really discouraging  
12 families from, you know, their primary language. I  
13 don't think there's enough support of education.  
14 They just tell them you have a--your son has a lag  
15 because he speaks two languages. He's behind, right,  
16 and there's no explanation around like well that's  
17 really--like that's natural right? He's going to be  
18 fine. It's just left at that point until parents  
19 speak out and they stop, you know, talking with their  
20 children in their primary language. So, I have a lot  
21 more data and information if you would like, but I  
22 will stop right there because I want to let my  
23 colleagues--

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
25 I would like all of that, and--and I think what--what

2 I'll say now really quick is to say that we are  
3 committed. We've had this the first time ever public  
4 hearing like we do with all the other—we've done a  
5 lot of firsts in the last four years, is to follow  
6 up. We've built a task force that we want to hear  
7 from, and built a relationship with that task force  
8 that's supposed to kind of be doing this within the—  
9 within the agencies. Since, we want to bring that  
10 in, and the more clear that you can be about that  
11 kind of bridge and support, the—the best. That—that—  
12 that's the kind of best information that we want to  
13 be able to bring your voice and—and do this  
14 altogether. So, that's—that's my commitment to you  
15 all. Thank you.

16 DIANA NORIEGA: Good afternoon. Than you  
17 for having us. Actually this—we all work together  
18 very closely so we know each other well. So, I'm  
19 Diana Noriega, and I am the Chief Program officer  
20 with the Committee for Hispanic Children and  
21 Families. CHFC is a non-profit with a 35-year  
22 history. We combine education, capacity building and  
23 advocacy to strengthen the support system and the  
24 continuum or learning from—for children and youth and  
25 the Early Childcare sector, and then the K through 12

2 sector. We are one of New York City's four childcare  
3 resource and referral agencies. That includes  
4 Chinese-American Planning Council, and we hold the  
5 vantage point to address the challenges of access to  
6 quality childcare and opportunity for vulnerable  
7 populations, and because we do direct service, we  
8 actually end up being a unique voice in the room  
9 often time with policy makers. So, CCR&R is we're  
10 going to advocate for four particular points. (1)  
11 Investment in family childcare providers and CCR&Rs.  
12 CCR&Rs ensures family childcare providers provide  
13 high quality programming and that families can gain  
14 access to those programs. Family childcare providers  
15 ensure the safety of our children, establish  
16 children's developmental foundation, and contribute  
17 to the city's economic engine by allowing parents to  
18 participate in the workforce. SEC providers can give  
19 more individualized care to meet the needs of working  
20 families. We know that they say 3-K is all day, but  
21 it ends at 3:00 whereas we know family childcare  
22 providers are usually open 'til 6:00 or 7:00 in the  
23 evening. So, family childcare providers also help  
24 foster emotionally secure and interpersonal  
25 relationships for everyone involved. So, often we're

2 talking about the alarita (sp?) who's used to taking  
3 care of children, and has grown accustomed to being  
4 the caretaker. For vulnerable families that are  
5 facing a multitude of challenges such as immigration  
6 status, language barriers, job and housing  
7 insecurity, family childcare providers are really the  
8 consistent force in the midst of that chaos and they  
9 do not get paid well. So, they do this work as heart  
10 work. So, we know that their best position to ensure  
11 that the support and services that these children  
12 need they have access to. However, there's a  
13 consistent inability on the city and state level to  
14 invest in this workforce and there's additional  
15 threat posed by the local business owners with the  
16 expansion of Universal Pre-K, which prioritizes  
17 center based programs, and have a devastating impact  
18 on family childcare providers because you're removing  
19 3-year-olds from their actual ability in the voucher  
20 system to work with. Second, in the FY18 Federal  
21 Funding, included in its founding 80% increase to the  
22 Childcare Development Block Grant. It's actually one  
23 of the largest increases we've ever seen. OCFS is  
24 currently drafting the Funding Plan for New York,  
25 which is set to be released before May 1<sup>st</sup>. It's

2 imperative that we pay attention to the strategic and  
3 timely use of these funds to ensure that the quality  
4 of programming continues and that there's equitable  
5 access. I want to say equitable, which is very  
6 different than just access, to support some services  
7 to that it expands across New York State for working  
8 families particularly our most vulnerable  
9 populations. We currently know that only a small  
10 percentage of families who are eligible to receive  
11 vouchers [bell] are in the program, and I want to  
12 mention really quickly the DOE/ACS talked about the  
13 Family Resource Centers. There are only three. We  
14 now, though, that when we're talking about effective  
15 and efficient work we're talking about scaffolding  
16 that kind of intervention to involve parents in the  
17 conversation, which is also why family childcare  
18 providers are uniquely positioned to do this work  
19 because they're from the communities, they know the  
20 parents, and they're—if you equip them with the right  
21 skillsets, could be the appropriate gateway between  
22 the different communities. And then I want to end on  
23 one final thought—point. New York State is the third  
24 largest state with the—with a number of children and  
25 immigrant families. So, we really also—we didn't

2 talk about the DOE transition to Early Learn, but we  
3 have very real concerns about that transition, and  
4 the aggressive timeline that is being put in place  
5 and the lack of consistent and clear communication  
6 across state and city agencies and the different  
7 regulations and requirements between those entities,  
8 and how confusing that can be for a family childcare  
9 provider let alone a family member who's accessing  
10 different voucher points.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for—for  
12 that. I think I want to work with my partners, a few  
13 other chairs on Education and ACS and—and let's—I'm  
14 sure this is not the first time that you've kind of  
15 presented these to the City Council [bell] but we are  
16 committed here to ensure that the immigration  
17 component—the kind of—the sensitivity and cultural  
18 competence in our immigration is taken into  
19 consideration. And then the other question—well,  
20 I'll come back with questions. Thank you.

21 KIM SYKES: Okay, good afternoon  
22 everybody. My name is Kim Sykes. I'm the Director  
23 of Education Policy at the New York Immigration  
24 Coalition, and just want to say thank you so much,  
25 Chairman Menchaca for giving us all this opportunity

2 today. Most of you—a lot of you know the NYC we're  
3 an umbrella policy and advocacy organization, and we  
4 do a lot of work fighting for English Language  
5 Learners. Young English language learners to adults  
6 to make sure they have access—access to a quality  
7 education, and I want to talk today about a new  
8 project that we launched this year because I think it  
9 holds a lot of promise for how we--

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] The  
11 youth or new?

12 KIM SYKES: New projects.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: New projects.

14 Okay.

15 KIM SYKES: It does involve youth Spoiler  
16 Alert. I think it holds a lot of promise for how we  
17 leverage resources that we already have and in order  
18 to identify systematically and better connect  
19 immigrant families with the Pre-K and 3-K programs  
20 and a long way to identify the barriers that they are  
21 facing, we started a new initiative called the  
22 Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood  
23 Education or LIFE project, and MASA is a key part of  
24 that project. We funded four member organizations to  
25 go out and do work in their communities, working one-

2 on-one with immigrant families to help them go  
3 through the application and enrollment process if  
4 that was right for them. In addition to MASA, we're  
5 working with LSA Family Health Service. They're  
6 working in East Harlem, and with Fifth Avenue  
7 Committee in Sunset Park and thank you to you all. I  
8 know you've been connected with—with them and to  
9 support the initiative, and we're also working with  
10 CEYDA Albal (sp?) which is providing input from  
11 Queens from the Brazilian Community there, and these  
12 groups have gone out. They've done workshops to help  
13 introduce families to programs. They've done  
14 canvassing in the neighborhood. They have helped  
15 families learn how to use email addresses and really  
16 just taking them soup to nuts through the whole deal  
17 providing support every step of the way, application  
18 clinics, and what we've seen is that there is an  
19 enormous need to echo my colleagues' points, there's  
20 a huge need for this kind of support. Our groups  
21 have done outreach to more than 20,000 immigrant  
22 family members, and at this point have helped 82  
23 families enroll in Pre-K or 3-K here in New York City  
24 and many of those families are amongst the hardest to  
25 reach as is evidenced by the fact that two out of

2 three families said that they would not have  
3 submitted an application without that help, and we've  
4 been working in close partnership with the Department  
5 of Education, and they've provided training, and some  
6 technical assistance to really make this partnership  
7 possible. So, we're appreciative of that, and along  
8 the way [bell] we've identified a few key barriers,  
9 and I just want to—Aracelis, Mary, and Diana have  
10 mentioned a lot of like common themes, and I want to  
11 touch on one point that didn't get emphasized as  
12 much, and that is anxiety and fear related to  
13 immigration status particularly in this climate, and  
14 I think we're seeing families hesitant to provide  
15 information having a lot of questions about whether,  
16 you know, it's safe to go to programs and just really  
17 needing more information about that, and I think in  
18 some cases this fear has been heightened by what's  
19 happening with Public Charge, which was already  
20 testified about. So, that's another layer in this  
21 dynamic, and it's important to know, and—that and  
22 there are settings where families applying for Pre-K  
23 or 3-K are asked about their child's immigration  
24 status, and that was touched on earlier as well, and  
25 that comes up because programs are bringing together

2 funding streams including Federal Childcare funding,  
3 which--

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
5 you're talking about UPK programs?

6 KIM SYKES: Yes, there are families who  
7 if they're applying to Pre-K or 3-K there are  
8 situations in which families can be asked to provide  
9 more information, and sometimes it's requirements  
10 related to, you know, income and there are situations  
11 in which—in which a status question does arise. So, I  
12 think, you know, that factor, you know, all of these  
13 factors coupled with all of the questions, and it is  
14 a—you know, it is a complex thing for families to go  
15 through particularly when they don't have the level  
16 of systems background or familiarity with technology,  
17 that other families do have, and I think this is, you  
18 know, really underscores the need for a partnership  
19 like what we're doing where we're leveraging the deep  
20 connections and resources in our community based  
21 organizations, and using that capacity to expand and  
22 extend the DOE's outreach capacity, and I think that  
23 needs to be something that, you know, the City  
24 Council and DOE can think about institutionalizing  
25 moving forward, and I also think we're seeing a need

2 just to be really clear and articulate what the  
3 protections are for immigrant families in Pre-I and  
4 3-K just to combat some of the, you know, questions  
5 and anxieties we're seeing and to just be super clear  
6 and purposeful about that. There's only one other  
7 thing that I'd really love to mention. You touched  
8 on quality earlier, and we talked about dual  
9 languages programs, and those are wonderful, but we  
10 also are I a city where there are like 180 languages  
11 spoken, and you have many programs where there are  
12 lots of different languages spoken within that one  
13 classroom, and I think we need to work more from like  
14 a programmatic side building capacity for how we  
15 support all of those kids when they're not in a dual  
16 language program, and it's much more a super diverse  
17 setting.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: That's a lot and  
19 this whole panel I think really kind of outlined a  
20 lot of---in a lot of ways the first panel just kind  
21 of kicked it off, and--and kind of created a--a real  
22 sense of urgency and need, but as providers you're on  
23 the ground. You're seeing this, and so I--I'm  
24 thankful that we were able to kind of hear from you.  
25 There's some stuff that's super urgent that I--we want

2 to get to like the fact that there's--there's a  
3 multiple stream of--of programs that are requiring a  
4 status question in that it just--this shouldn't  
5 happen. So, I'm going to follow up with you on that  
6 offline and talk about that, but as far as continuing  
7 the conversation we--we could stay here for--for hours  
8 and kind of work through that, and I do want to dig  
9 down in the space where we have DOE, and MOIA and  
10 some others to--to listen so we can follow up. I am  
11 confident that the new Chancellor Cadenza will  
12 understand and hear this with some fresh eyes, and  
13 some commitment that he's already started making on  
14 the ground as he--as he meets in the communities, and  
15 that's because he's--he's a Mexican brother, but  
16 because he really understands I think the--the  
17 commitment that the city is making in these big  
18 gestures, and just to kind of get on the ground, and  
19 that's where we want to just bring him into the  
20 neighborhoods to understand. So, that's another kind  
21 of commitment that I want to make that we--we will  
22 offer that opportunity as soon as possible to get  
23 into these spaces to--to deal with. The crunch time  
24 for the transition is--is major, and we're--we heard it  
25 from some of the parents that there's a lot of

2 confusion. The whole thing is already confusing.

3 Now, you're kind of pressuring all this to happen

4 quick, and that's the problem. It's happening-it-it-

5 Yeah, I can talk forever on this. I'm going to stop

6 here. Let's keep talking and the other final moments

7 are ideas like--

8 KIM SYKES: Just can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes.

10 ARACELIS LUCERO: KIM SYKES: Just one

11 thing that I want to make sure we also keep in mind

12 that you--and you keep on emphasizing is how do we

13 provide the full around support supports to immigrant

14 families in this fear of deportation, detention, and

15 so one thing that I want to highlight is that there

16 are people who are thinking about it. Montefiore and

17 MASA are partnering to figure out how we support

18 children. MASA piloted actually with Little Sisters

19 of the Assumption a support group for children ages 5

20 to 9 years old and partnering with parents on how to

21 talk to their children about what is happening, and

22 so it is on the City Council's proposal docket. I

23 don't know where it's moving or not.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: You're referring

25 to Budget.

2 ARACELIS LUCERO: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes, also.

4 ARACELIS LUCERO: And so—and so part of  
5 that work is for the psychiatrists and psychologists  
6 in Montefiore to train support staff and to have CBOs  
7 like MASA to Know Your Rights trainings and emergency  
8 planning with clients, but that has to be, you know,  
9 right, that has to be taken into these other settings  
10 as well that also serve in the community. So, I just  
11 wanted to highlight that.

12 DIANA NORIEGA: I just wanted to note  
13 that we've found the—the DOE's outreach team to be  
14 quite receptive to hearing input about barriers  
15 families are facing, and I think we've seen through  
16 all of the work that we've done with the DOE that  
17 there is a real value to sitting at the table  
18 together for long periods of time, and kind of  
19 hammering things out together, and we're looking  
20 forward to working more closely with ACS and with  
21 other divisions of the DOE to address these issues,  
22 too.

23 KIM SYKES: Right, I know you mentioned a  
24 task force potentially happening, and we definitely  
25 would love to—

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]

3 Well, but law it's passed, and it-it was already  
4 supposed to happen, and it hasn't happened yet. So,

5 DIANA NORIEGA: [interposing] Well, we  
6 hope we've got-

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] -but  
8 it's supposed to happen, a task force that MOIA leads  
9 with all the agencies that are impacting immigrants,  
10 and they're all supposed to kind of meet, talk,  
11 understand and kind of report back to us. So, that's  
12 what I'm talking about. So, there's already  
13 something in motion that we want-that we want to  
14 impact that we want to be a part of.

15 DIANA NORIEGA: I think it would be  
16 helpful if advocates were also involved in that  
17 conversation because I think often times when we're  
18 in front of a lot of these agencies, we're getting  
19 very different messaging. Oh, that's interesting.  
20 We'll get back to you, and while we appreciate kind  
21 of working-having the conversations, it's really  
22 helpful to if there were-were one room where all the  
23 folks could really kind of say but that's not  
24 pragmatic or tangible or efficient and effective  
25 because that's not how it's working on the ground,

2 and I think that's a part of the disconnect that  
3 we're seeing. So, there is a DOE 3-K Transition  
4 Advisory Group that we are a part of and several  
5 organizations on this panel are. The problem is that  
6 DOH is not in that room. The problem is that the-  
7 OCFS is not always in that room. Sometimes they are,  
8 but when you're talking about streamlining these  
9 systems, which is where a huge portion of the problem  
10 comes from is that they're not integrated seamlessly.  
11 You have folks, you have empty Head Start seats,  
12 programs actually being forced to potentially like  
13 shut down because the DOE's assigning of kids who  
14 could be eligible for Head Start into 3-K. So, this  
15 is what I mean by there needs to be a more  
16 comprehensive conversation about systems integration  
17 so that we're actually not turning down money from  
18 the federal government because we can't fill Head  
19 Start's needs, but when we go, advocates go to the  
20 DOE and say that, we don't know what the follow-up is  
21 around how do we really integrate to make sure that  
22 DOH is talking to DOE is talking to ACS and there's  
23 one system that's tracking all of these providers and  
24 vouchers.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And that's where  
3 we—we started today, alright, because the first time  
4 they kind of got into the room and started talking  
5 with us, and—and I'm a big—I'm a big supporter and  
6 believer in spending three hours talking about it  
7 just putting everything out there. So, everyone  
8 knows and has the same information and then we can  
9 kind of move forward. I think agencies are resistant  
10 to that because we ask them to do a lot of reporting.  
11 I think so. I think it's—it's our prerogative to  
12 understand, but these conversations are going to be  
13 very, very important and, and we're going to be  
14 asking for that, demanding it. So, thank you to this  
15 panel, and we have one more panel. The panel to close  
16 us off will be Jessica Gorelick from Human Rights  
17 First; Amy—Amy Pence with the—with HASAN—oh, this is  
18 Legal Rights Society. Yes. So Legal AID society has  
19 two representatives and the Interfaith Center of New  
20 York, the Reverend Dr. Corey Briar, and the Committee  
21 of 100 to Make the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens Free  
22 Again. This is Constance Lesso(sp?) and you can come  
23 up here as well, and that will—did I miss anyone?  
24 Yes, okay. [background comments] Yeah, definitely  
25 come up. [pause] Thank you all. So, you will close

2 us off or close our-our hearing, and I know we've  
3 talked-we've talk about a lot of different things,  
4 and if we can-if I can ask you to concentrate on any-  
5 any specific ideas, recommendations especially things  
6 that have yet to be spoken about that's-that's what  
7 I'm looking for in this panel to-to get us through.  
8 Should we start on-to our right? Do you want to  
9 start? Do you want to kick us off? Please-please  
10 introduce yourself. Thank you.

11           CONSTANCE LESSO: My name is Constance  
12 Lesso, and I am very delighted to be here today to  
13 represent the new group forming, the 100-the  
14 committee of a 100 to make the Botanic Garden in  
15 Brooklyn Free Again. I saw some puzzled looks out  
16 here as why in the world we would get here. [laughs]  
17 So, I think I'll start off right by saying why I'm  
18 here. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden was free for an  
19 entire century. When in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>  
20 Century the country was full of immigrants, and they  
21 really used Prospect Park, the Botanic Gardens other  
22 places, which were totally free and in other boroughs  
23 also, of course, and then during the World War I, the  
24 Depression, World War II, the Botanic Gardens  
25 remained free. Only in the '90s when we were

2 supposedly a rich city, did the Botanic Gardens start  
3 to put on fees. The philosophy perhaps in the  
4 background was that people appreciated things more if  
5 the paid for it. [coughs] That can be argued. The  
6 Botanic Gardens, as I say were put on in the '90s and  
7 one of the Caribbean City Councilmen of that period  
8 said and it makes me cry to remember it because I was  
9 there when he said it at press conference at the  
10 Gardens that this would be the first generation of  
11 Caribbean children not to have a free Botanic Garden.  
12 At that--so, it was that--it was that important to him  
13 that he came to the BBG to say that. [coughs] I was  
14 on the Board at that time of the Haitian-American  
15 Daycare Center located in--several of them in Crown  
16 Heights. We certainly thought it was important. In  
17 fact, we though it was so important that we had our 3  
18 to 5-year-old children lined up to attend the  
19 International Conference of Children's Gardens in  
20 Botanic Gardens all over the world, and those  
21 children from the Haitian-American Daycare Center  
22 delivered petitions from children and adults in Fort  
23 Greene so that it would be known. It wasn't just the  
24 ones that lived next door that cared. Too, Judy Zook  
25 was then President of the Botanic Gardens--[bell] and

2 Judy Zook said Connie, Connie (sic), this is not the  
3 time or the place. Well, we thought it was. The  
4 children knew what they were doing. They were five  
5 years old. They delivered the petitions. I wish that  
6 I had known of this ahead of time because I would  
7 have brought you the pictures of them. I know I  
8 don't have much time left, but our committee is made  
9 up of people who have been deeply involved with the  
10 Gardens. They have been volunteers. They have been  
11 teachers who have brought children to the Gardens.  
12 They have been artists who took pictures in the  
13 gardens. Myself whose family is very involved in the  
14 healing aspects of the gardens, in fact, my son  
15 through all of the educational aspects. The gardens  
16 has educational, healing, artists of every kind--

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] Now,  
18 it's open.

19 CONSTANCE LESSO: Just let me say for the  
20 children who still need it from immigrant communities  
21 for those reasons and they're not getting it, and our  
22 committee is made up of people of all different  
23 backgrounds and neighborhoods, and all different  
24 economic levels and we would love for you to join us.  
25 We have had our first every Friday morning from 8:00

2 to 12:00, which is the only free time now. Most  
3 people don't know it. They—if they know it at all,  
4 they knew it was Tuesdays and Saturday mornings and  
5 Fridays for seniors. You have no free time in the  
6 Brooklyn Botanic Garden now except from 8:00 to 12:00  
7 on Fridays, and we—every Friday morning, we are  
8 taking a group of our members through, and deciding  
9 how to approach this problem. The—the President of  
10 the Gardens make sure he met us on our first visit.  
11 We were happy to have him join us, and we had a  
12 discussion and I would just finish off by saying that  
13 he is concerned about these issues, and I would  
14 recommend you to reach out to him. He's thinking  
15 about can we give free passes to people on Welfare or  
16 at least we suggested that, or the people with some  
17 of the special programs that you mentioned before.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Right.

19 CONSTANCE LESSO: We—we cannot continue,  
20 though, to have these healing resources and  
21 recreational resources removed from our public, and  
22 our—so, please take it seriously to--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]

24 Absolutely.

25

2           CONSTANCE LESSO: --add Cultural Affairs,  
3 to your committees. Thank you.

4           CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

5 Constance, I-I want to say thank you for being here  
6 today. I think we'll look at-- The question that we  
7 put out for this committee was: What are--what are  
8 the needs of our--of our families--immigrant families  
9 with children 0 to 5, and I think you reminded us  
10 that we have so many needs in our communities, and  
11 our institutions go beyond DOE, go beyond ACS and  
12 DOHMH. They go into our cultural institutions, and  
13 so these are spaces where we can--sometimes we'll only  
14 have these spaces to go and be free and be with  
15 nature and be with--be with nature, and so I'm-I'm  
16 with you, and as a Brooklyn member of the Council, I  
17 want to--I want to work with you and think about this  
18 more for our immigrant communities. I want to talk  
19 to--to Scott Mabry (sp?). I've known--I've worked  
20 around Brooklyn for a while. I was at the Borough  
21 President's Office for a long time working on capital  
22 projects, and so he knows that there's a massive  
23 investment of city capital dollars in this  
24 institution, and--and there needs to be, there needs  
25 to be a bridge, an intentional bridge to our

2 communities especially our—our immigrant communities  
3 that are facing so much trauma, and these spaces can  
4 offer an opportunity for breath. I hear you. We're  
5 going to go through the rest of the panel, and we'll  
6 follow up afterwards. Thank you so much. [pause]

7 REVEREND BREYER: Yes, hello. My name is  
8 Chloe Breyer. I direct the Interfaith Center of New  
9 York and I'm an Episcopal Priest at Saint Philip's  
10 in Harlem. We are part of the Open Grassroots  
11 religious leaders around the city for 20 years from  
12 different faith and traditions and are partners with  
13 the new Sanctuary--the new Sanctuary Coalition. I  
14 just wanted to bring to the attention of the  
15 committee this---a small but important group of  
16 families of undocumented people, and those who are in  
17 sanctuary, in physical sanctuary in houses of worship  
18 around our city two of whom are publicly there and  
19 then Morales, Holy Rood there for almost seven  
20 months, and a newly arrived family also at our Fourth  
21 Universe List on Central Park. One of the demand is  
22 three children are under the age of five. What has  
23 been remarkable, and I think is worth considering in  
24 light as it—it—it shows up the problems of other  
25 families that are not in churches or in houses of

2 worship, but it has taken 150 volunteers or so in the  
3 case of Holy Rood to do the basic work of supporting  
4 Amanda and her kids, the cost of taking her family  
5 out of society has been that great. Everything from  
6 the food they eat to the parent-teacher conferences,  
7 the teacher—the head principal is gone over to meet  
8 with here in the church, but that's hardly an  
9 expected way of behaving. Likewise, emergency visits  
10 at nighttime, immunizations basic questions about—  
11 about health, education and most of all the stable  
12 and predictable world that children under the ages of  
13 zero to 5 no matter who they are require in order to  
14 be stable adults and contributing members of  
15 societies, and just as a final note the rights of  
16 passage of so many of our fellow New Yorkers often  
17 take place between zero and 5. I'm thinking of  
18 baptisms of circumcisions of so man different  
19 initiation rights that our religious community have  
20 that without a parent it's certainly not the job of  
21 the state to in any way support those things, and yet  
22 it's part of being human, and part of—of growing up.  
23 So, thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for  
25 that, and—and I know there's—there's a lot of work

2 ahead of us. There is a symposium that I have  
3 received an invitation for, and all the work you're  
4 doing with Robbie and the team. It's just  
5 incredible. So, thank you so much, and—and we'll  
6 look forward to working with you. I want to spend  
7 time with Amanda as well so we can kind get deeper  
8 into understanding about all those resources—  
9 resources that came together for—for this moment that  
10 should be—should not be permanent at all, and should  
11 be figured out and addressed, and confronted. So,  
12 thank you. Thank you.

13           AMY PUNT: Good afternoon. My name is  
14 Amy Punt and I'm a Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid  
15 Society in the Immigration Law Unit. Today, I'll be  
16 talking about three topics. First, the need of  
17 adults with children who are removal proceedings,  
18 families who are in removal proceedings with children  
19 under the age of five. Legal Aid's work helping non-  
20 citizen parents undertake planning in the event—for  
21 their children in the event of deportation or  
22 detention; Legal Aid's advocacy on shelter access for  
23 asylum seekers asylees and victims of trafficking  
24 with young children, and finally I know it was  
25 touched upon previously, but a small discussion of

2 the forthcoming regulations on the public bar to the  
3 adjustment status for non-citizens. So my work  
4 consists of primarily working with a vulnerable yet  
5 very resilient population of adults with children and  
6 families in removal proceedings. They are  
7 predominantly from Central America, and they have  
8 come escaping difficult violence, domestic violence,  
9 and have a severe trauma history. They have a great  
10 range of needs due to the trauma that they have  
11 suffered and the adjustment to a new country with  
12 young children. These needs include health and  
13 mental health services, education, affordable  
14 housing, accessing trustworthy and affordable  
15 childcare and most of all, assistance accessing these  
16 necessary services and other social and support  
17 services. One-one thing I'd like to highlight is in  
18 terms of accessing employment a major challenge that  
19 adults of children populations face is that they upon  
20 release from detention, they-from Immigration  
21 detention, they routinely have to wear ankle  
22 monitors, which makes it very difficult to find  
23 employment because these ankle monitors are  
24 uncomfortable, large, require constant charging and-  
25 and, therefore, make it difficult to find and return

2 employment. Just to go very quickly I wanted to also  
3 highlight what Legal Aid Society is doing in this  
4 climate to help non-citizen parents plan for the care  
5 and custody of their children. We included the  
6 Advance Planning Fact Sheet with the written  
7 testimony for your reference. The first is a form  
8 called the Designation of Person and Parental  
9 Relationship. This allows parents to allow a  
10 trusting adult to make health and education decisions  
11 regarding a child. Next is the New York State  
12 Department of Education Emergency Contact Form. So,  
13 in the event that ICE picks up a parent, someone in-  
14 someone can pick up the child instead of the  
15 Administration for Children's Services picking up the  
16 child. Additionally, there's a travel authorization  
17 form in the event that a parent wants to send a child  
18 abroad to live with the family in advance of  
19 deportation or to join the parent after deportation.  
20 This form allows a trusted adult to travel abroad  
21 with the child, and this form complies with the Hague  
22 Convention on Child Abduction. I spoke with my  
23 colleague at Human Rights First who will speak more  
24 about this, but I just wanted to highlight success  
25 that the Legal Aid Society had along with other

2 providers in advocating for better sheltered access  
3 for [bell] the asylees and trafficking survivors.  
4 And just one—this was also highlighted before, but I  
5 just wanted to note just something on the public  
6 charge grounds. We've already seen after the leak, a  
7 Columbia University study has already noted that  
8 there's been a 10% decline in accessing of SNAP and  
9 WIC benefits in immigrant-in counties that have a  
10 high percentage of immigrants, and some things that  
11 we just wanted to highlight is that we really are  
12 urging the city—urging the city to prepare for this  
13 eminent policy change, and we would expect that the  
14 Council would agree that the city needs to prepare to  
15 engage in advocacy such as comment writing to help  
16 stop this policy and consider other strategies.  
17 Additionally, provide outreach and access that will  
18 enable thousand of non-citizen households with  
19 immediate concerns about whether the rules—new rules  
20 apply to them. To get the answers they need even  
21 before the new rules become final, and then next  
22 provide alternative means of support for families who  
23 feel compelled to go—forego assistance, and then  
24 additionally, we respectfully encourage that the  
25 Council help to ensure that the city is prepared is

2 take the following steps: Ensure interagency  
3 communication and coordination; request a meeting  
4 with Office of Management and Budget and Office of  
5 Information and Regulatory Affairs, and monitor for  
6 the impact of those rule changes and finally continue  
7 working with community partners to best prepare for  
8 this—this change that is very daunting and a big task  
9 ahead. [background comments, pause]

10 JESSICA GORELICK: Thank you. I can  
11 lean. Thank you. My name is Jessica Gorelick and  
12 I'm a social worker at Human Rights First. It's a  
13 refugee representation program. We work with asylum  
14 seekers providing legal and social work services. I  
15 quickly wanted to start out with a very little  
16 anecdote from one of our clients. We met her back in  
17 late 2014 while doing screenings at the Adult for  
18 Children Docket at the New York Immigration Court, a  
19 docket that doesn't currently actually exist. They—  
20 she was there with her three kids. They were 3, 5  
21 and 12 at the time. She was on the verge of being  
22 homeless, which she ultimately did become homeless  
23 having a myriad of other issues accessing food,  
24 clothing, was confused about systems and education,  
25 and all sorts of things like that, and very much

2 needed legal intervention because she needed support  
3 with her asylum case. Thankfully, we were able to  
4 take on the case and provide legal services, free  
5 legal services and social services, and they  
6 eventually were granted asylum in August of this past  
7 year in 2017, which is wonderful, but also we can  
8 remember that there was nearly three years that the  
9 family waited in this sort of limbo while waiting for  
10 their day in court. So, also just to highlight a lot  
11 of the things that our clients are facing including  
12 these long wait times while they're waiting to  
13 receive status and be eligible to a lot of the  
14 services we've talked about today. Let's talk a  
15 little bit about the fact that at that time Human  
16 Rights First was working with other organizations.  
17 We were working to provide free legal help to  
18 unaccompanied minors with funding from the City  
19 Council, but unfortunately cases like this particular  
20 client and her children were not eligible for those  
21 services as a family. So Human Rights First comments  
22 the City Council for its initiative in providing  
23 legal representation and support for immigrant  
24 children in New York City, and it supports the  
25 decision to later expand and cover the cases of

2 mother and children. The Unaccompanied Minors and  
3 Families Initiative in particular has made a  
4 tremendous difference for a large number of  
5 immigrants who fled violence in their home countries  
6 and now live in the five boroughs of New York City by  
7 providing them with free legal representation in New  
8 York Immigration Court. We all know that whether a  
9 person has legal representation is one of the most  
10 important factors in whether his or her immigration  
11 case is granted. However, there is still many  
12 immigrant families and individuals that are still in  
13 need of services. Human Rights First provides legal  
14 representation and social work support to our clients  
15 on a pro bono basis. We work with in staff and we  
16 provide legal services directly and through a large  
17 network of pro bono counselors throughout-throughout  
18 New York City, and we also—I'm trying to be succinct  
19 here. I'm taking longer. We also, as I mentioned,  
20 provide psycho-social support, and we win about 90%  
21 of our cases. So, kind of evidence of the importance  
22 of having legal representation. As we know, New York  
23 City base on our conversations today, it's been a  
24 great supporter of [bell] of immigrants. Many of our  
25 clients do become homeless during the life of they

2 asylum case. As my colleague here was mentioning,  
3 New York City is a right to shelter city. So, our  
4 clients can seek shelter from DHS, and we actually  
5 worked with a team of advocates through the Legal Aid  
6 Society, Safe Passage Project, the Feerick Center for  
7 Social Justice at Fordham University, and—and we  
8 worked with the NYC Department of Social Services,  
9 and MOIA to create a policy to identify and better  
10 serve asylum seeking and trafficker survivors,  
11 homeless families. Under this process, we provided  
12 multiple trainings to PATH staff, and this has  
13 resulted in families more safely and easily accessing  
14 shelter, and referrals for legal services from PATH  
15 to our organization. So, we actually have a number  
16 of clients, which is very exciting that we referred  
17 and are currently our clients, and it's been a huge  
18 boon in helping both us and I believe PATH better  
19 serve our clients, and while there are many struggles  
20 that our asylum seeing families do face, there are a  
21 number of New York City and state policies that exist  
22 to protect asylum seekers. They're eligible for  
23 health insurance, but they file—once they file their  
24 application, Safety Net Assistance or SNA, once they  
25 receive employment authorization, WIC, HIV-AIDS

2 services through HASA, and also educational services,  
3 but unfortunately, as has been highlight repeatedly  
4 today, that most of our clients and the vast majority  
5 of service providers including a number of city  
6 agencies are not aware of this eligibility and new  
7 asylum seekers are left to suffer in silence. It is  
8 crucial that all staff at New York City providing  
9 agencies learn about the unique challenges and needs  
10 of asylum seeking and immigrant families. Our  
11 clients frequently come to us reporting that they've  
12 been told they should learn English or are not  
13 eligible for any supportive services as asylum  
14 seekers because they are quote/unquote "illegal". We  
15 have had clients turned away from shelter even though  
16 they are homeless. We have had to intervene related  
17 to graveness of understandings and lack of cultural  
18 competency of staff at the Administration for  
19 Children's Services or ACS who all too often provide  
20 services in a punitive rather than educational and  
21 supportive manner. Our clients are nearly always  
22 told they're not eligible for Medicaid, recurrent, so  
23 we have to provide advocacy and teach city employees  
24 about the New York City and State policies--

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: And who is telling  
3 them that?

4 JESSICA GORELICK: Workers at various  
5 agencies. So, it's happened at PATH. It's happened  
6 with Health Navigators, it's happened with ACS  
7 workers usually on the ground staff, and it seems to  
8 be a lack of training.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Which is not only  
10 incorrect, of course, but like you said, lack of  
11 training, and I think this kind of points to this  
12 idea of how do we train more people to have a basic  
13 understanding about access to and access to services  
14 but also rights.

15 JESSICA GORELICK: Exactly.

16 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Every New Yorker  
17 should know about all our rights so that we can, you  
18 know, anyway, that's the dream and I can have it.

19 JESSICA GORELICK: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, awesome.  
21 Sorry, continue.

22 JESSICA GORELICK: No, no, no problem,  
23 and also just based on what you were saying, it also  
24 kind of kicks up all those fears we've been talking  
25 about because people have then if-if there's sort of

2 a punitive interaction or people are told you're not  
3 eligible, you're illegal, those types of words that  
4 are used, really make people extremely, you know,  
5 they cocoon right in and do not seek any more  
6 services.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Or, you're not  
8 going to give them the services because you've been  
9 convicted of a crime, and sort of a criminal carve-  
10 out, and the Mayor's attempt to remove due process in  
11 the city of New York. It ain't gonna happen.

12 JESSICA GORELICK: Thanks. So, we have  
13 ben able through our work to directly effect change  
14 for many of our clients, but we know that are  
15 thousands out there without any advocates that are  
16 deprived from key services, and facing re-  
17 traumatization because of the lack of training that  
18 we see. So, we--overall we believe that an expansion  
19 of programming that offers free legal and social  
20 services to asylum seeking families along with  
21 greater education and training for city employees who  
22 interface regularly with this community are key. So,  
23 thank you so much for your time. We really  
24 appreciate discussing this important topic with you.  
25 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Do you want to  
3 switch seats maybe with somebody.

4 JESSICA GORELICK: [off mic] Uh-hm. Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: That's okay.  
6 Thank you.

7 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: Yes. [pause] Thank  
8 you for the opportunity to discuss how New York City  
9 supports immigrant families and children under five.  
10 My name is Betty Baez Mellow. I'm an attorney, and  
11 I'm the Project Director of the Early Childhood  
12 Education Projects at Advocates for Children. For  
13 more than 45 years Advocates for Children has worked  
14 to ensure a high quality education for New York  
15 students who face barriers to academic success. We  
16 focus on students from low-income backgrounds. Every  
17 year we help thousands of families navigate the  
18 education system starting from the time they were  
19 born. We appreciate that the city is providing tens  
20 of thousands of children access to Early Childhood  
21 Education programs such as 3-K, Pre-K and Early  
22 Learn. Research shows that participating and high  
23 quality early education programs is particularly  
24 beneficial for dual language learners. The DOE has  
25 taken some positive steps to make Pre-K more

2 inclusive to immigrant families including opening 33  
3 new dual language programs, and also providing access  
4 to pre-K and providing access to phone interpretation  
5 services to all 3-3-K and Pre-K programs so that  
6 staff can communicate with the parents even if they  
7 speak a language other than English. However,  
8 despite these efforts, immigrant families face  
9 barriers to accessing Early Childhood Education.  
10 This has been delayed before, but depending on the  
11 funding source, certain programs inquire about the  
12 children's immigration status, and parents become  
13 worried and confused as they try to determine which  
14 programs they are eligible for based on their child's  
15 status. One enrolled, not all programs provide  
16 children and their panel-parents with adequate  
17 support in their language. The city should invest in  
18 additional dual-dual language programs as well as  
19 professional development for all 3-K, Pre-K and Early  
20 Learn staff so that they can support those dual  
21 language learners that are in their programs and have  
22 strategies and supports for engaging families. Now,  
23 throughout our casework, we have become very  
24 concerned about the barriers that immigrant families  
25 face in accessing pre-school special education

2 services. There was a parent who addressed this  
3 earlier today. For example, one of our case examples  
4 is that we assisted the mother of a Pre-K student who  
5 I will refer to as Amet. Amet's teacher expressed  
6 concerns about his development in the November  
7 meeting with his parent, and the parent requested  
8 that the DOE evaluate her child for special education  
9 services. The DOE responded by mailing the parent a  
10 list of approved evaluation agencies, for the parent  
11 to contact. Amet's mother began calling the agencies  
12 in December. However, because the parent speaks  
13 Turkish and English all the evaluation agencies said  
14 that they could not provide the evaluation. They  
15 turned her away saying that they could not conduct  
16 evaluations for children who speak languages other  
17 than English.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] And  
19 that was the Department of Education?

20 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: The Department of  
21 Education sent a list to the parent of evaluation  
22 agencies--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: An agency.

24 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: --and those agencies  
25 told her that.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: So, by proxy and  
3 through a subcontracted agency.

4 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: The--the agencies that  
5 were contracted said--

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay.

7 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: --that they could not  
8 provide the evaluation.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, we're going  
10 to follow up on that.

11 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: The evaluation  
12 packet--the evaluation packet that was sent by the DOE  
13 did not offer the parent any instructions for  
14 securing evaluations if the agencies refused. So,  
15 Amet's mother asked his Pre-K program for assistance.  
16 She also asked assistance for an agency in her  
17 borough [bell] that is on helping families of young  
18 children with disabilities, but they also didn't know  
19 how to get evaluations for this child. The parent  
20 then reached out to the Department of Education  
21 directly. However, instead of arranging the  
22 evaluations for a child, the DOE staff told her that  
23 she should find a friend to conduct--to serve as an  
24 interpreter for the evaluation. Now, besides the  
25 fact that the DOE has a legal obligation to provide

2 the evaluation, the parent had no bi-lingual friend  
3 that could serve as an—as an interpreter to accompany  
4 here to the multiple evaluation appointments.

5 Finally, the parent reached out to Advocates for  
6 Children. After we intervened, the Department of  
7 Education began evaluations in mid February with an  
8 interpreter, but needed additional time to complete  
9 the evaluation. Due to these delays, Amet did not  
10 receive special education services until May,  
11 essentially during the entire school year without the  
12 services he needed because his parent was an  
13 immigrant whose native language was a language other  
14 than English. And that experience—Amet's parent  
15 experienced these challenges even she speaks some  
16 English. Immigrant parents who speak only a language  
17 other than English face additional barriers. The  
18 DOE's Pre-School Special Education Evaluation Packet  
19 is available only in English, and the Evaluation  
20 agencies the family has called do not have access to  
21 phone interpretation services. The DOE must address  
22 these challenges, and ensure that they provide timely  
23 evaluations and services for pre-schoolers regardless  
24 of their families' home language. Thank you for the

2 opportunity to speak today. I'm happy to answer any  
3 questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I have one  
5 question in follow-up on-on the evaluation and I want  
6 to talk further on-on the case and just to give us  
7 some more information about how that happens and the  
8 kind of back and forth and the subcontractor, and  
9 asked to come in and-Remind me, is the-is that test a  
10 free test to a parent or does the parent have to pay  
11 for that after the list is provided to the parent?

12 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: The evaluations are  
13 free.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Paid for the  
15 Department of Education.

16 BETTY BAEZ MELLOW: Yes, that's right.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Right. Okay, and  
18 okay. Yeah, let's-let's talk afterwards. I want to  
19 have a little-a little bit more understanding on the  
20 case without going into-to more kind of specific  
21 detail. I do have a couple more comments for-for-  
22 specifically for Reverend Breyer. We-we did get your  
23 questions before this hearing about rapid response,  
24 and so if you-you heard during the hearing we tried  
25 to kind of get a better sense about what in general

2 agencies are doing, but we want to make sure that we  
3 push on the Administration to—to provide us, to  
4 create, to listen to us as a community including the  
5 new Sanctuary Coalition to understand how that rapid  
6 response has to actually happen. I have no doubt  
7 that if we tell the Administration to create a rapid  
8 response program they will. We're talking about all  
9 those programs that were created because we've asked  
10 them to, and sometimes it just—they fall flat.  
11 They're not culturally competent, they're not  
12 sensitive, they don't have the right resources, they  
13 don't have enough of them. There's always problems  
14 there, and I think one of the things that I want to  
15 do in closing this—this hearing is to say that we  
16 started this conversation with a few parents that  
17 were on the ground, and super not only motivated, but  
18 full of tools and education and resources and even  
19 they have some of the hardest times getting what they  
20 need for their kids. And the thing that kind of  
21 changes the dynamic is not parent advocating for one  
22 child, it's when a—when a community can come together  
23 and say this is what we need. Here's how we plug  
24 into what we have in the fabric of our neighborhood.  
25 Be it an immigrant community, be it a geographic

2 community, be it a school, be it a daycare center or  
3 whatever it is, that's the connection that we need to  
4 bring and that civic participation is what is going  
5 to drive this change at the Administration. They  
6 have to listen to it and to be in the rooms. We have  
7 to spend the two hours talking about all of that, but  
8 we will—we—that's—that's the work. That's the work  
9 that we have to do. So, I thank you for staying 'til  
10 what are we now? It's 5:00. We've had a long  
11 hearing today, but we've had some really good  
12 insights into what's happening from multiple  
13 perspectives, and I believe that we—we have—we have  
14 enough right now to really kind of set some stuff  
15 into motion with some pressure points that are real,  
16 not just the federal government that's coming down  
17 that our Governor, our Mayor and just the lack of  
18 response we're having from some of the agencies and  
19 kind of build on that and say we've got to change  
20 this. We've got to bring—bring you into communities,  
21 and in community we will find the answers, and we  
22 will find solutions, and so I—I feel hopeful. I  
23 don't know if you do. I know—I know a lot of the  
24 testimony revealed some of the harder hardships that  
25 we have in our—in our neighborhoods, but I feel—I

2 feel good. This committee supported by so many  
3 folks, but I want to highlight two in particular, our  
4 Counsel Indiana Porta who continues to just-not only  
5 to be the legal mind to this committee, but a true  
6 partner in so much, and so I hope you have continued  
7 access to her and the things that you have to bring  
8 to hear and the committee. Also, Elizabeth Cronk,  
9 our incredible Legislative Analyst who brought so  
10 much of this information to us before so we could-so  
11 I could come in as the Chair with a lot of  
12 understanding to give me a framework, and to be able  
13 to understand what's-what's happening that you all  
14 just helped bring more texture to it, and also my  
15 staff at-at the District Office. I want to thank you  
16 all because we're all-for all of the communications  
17 that we're going to be doing on this, bringing the  
18 conversations back into our communities. Ling  
19 specifically who's our outreach who translated for  
20 some parents and has really-been really work hard to  
21 build that relationship with the Chinese community,  
22 and like many immigrant communities, don't trust  
23 government inherently for whatever reason, and most  
24 of them are actually valid reasons. And so we're  
25 chipping away at that, and the victories that we I

2 think see in the front are in the-ahead of us are not  
3 just about changing-changing policies, but using the  
4 assets in our neighborhoods like our Botanic Garden,  
5 and think about how we change that. IDNYC has been  
6 one of those great bridge builders to organizations  
7 like the cultural institutions. There's no reason  
8 why we can't go back and knock on their door and say,  
9 you've got to do right by us. Let's work together.  
10 So, thank you. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon. I  
11 hope it's beautiful outside before we came in, and I  
12 look forward to working with you on this issue and  
13 other immigration issues. Thank you so much and this  
14 hearing is no adjourned. [gavel]

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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 May 23, 2018