

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE  
COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE  
COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

March 25, 2019  
Start: 10:17 a.m.  
Recess: 6:55 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
Chairperson

ANDY L. KING  
Co-Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ADRIENNE E. ADAMS  
DIANA AYALA  
INEZ D. BARRON  
VANESSA L. GIBSON  
MARK GJONAJ  
BARRY S. GRODENCHIK  
ROBERT F. HOLDEN  
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MARK LEVINE  
BILL PERKINS  
ANTONIO REYNOSO  
RAFAEL SALAMANCA, JR.  
RITCHIE J. TORRES  
MARK TREYGER

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COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

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

- Steve Banks  
Commissioner of New York City Department of  
Social Services, DSS
- Grace Bonilla  
Administrator of the New York City Human  
Resources Administration of the Department of  
Social Services, DSS
- David Hansell  
Commissioner of the New York City Administration  
For Children's Services, ACS
- Felipe Franco  
Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Family and  
Youth Justice at the Administration for  
Children's Services, ACS
- Julie Farber  
Deputy Commissioner of Family Permanency Services  
At the Administration for Children's Services,  
ACS
- Jacqueline Martin  
Deputy Commissioner of Preventative Services at  
The Administration for Children's Services, ACS
- Jose Mercado  
Chief Financial Program Officer at the  
Administration for Children's Services, ACS
- Rosemarie Sinclair  
First Vice President of CSA Council School  
Supervisors and Administrators
- Lisa Caswell  
Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care Council of  
New York
- Ralph Palladino  
Second Vice President Clerical Administrative  
Employees Local 1549
- Sophia Gurley  
Victim of Homelessness and ACS

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

Dominique Tatom  
Participant in Fair Futures Program

Sade Collington  
Forgotten Family on CBS2 News, Homeless Shelter  
Resident

Kevin Nicholson  
Husband of Sade Collington

Sarah Chiles  
Executive Director of the Redlich Horwitz  
Foundation

John Sentigar  
Member of the Advocacy Team at Covenant House New  
York, CHNY

Brendan Cheney  
Associate Director at Gateway Housing

Reed Vreeland  
Representing Housing Works

Michelle Jackson  
Deputy Executive Director for the Human Services  
Council

Gregory Brender  
Representing United Neighborhood Houses

Chelsea Goldinger  
Government Relations Manager at the LGBT Center

Ariel Savransky  
Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA Federation of  
New York

Catherine Trapani  
Executive Director of Homeless Services United,  
HSU

Kristina Coleman  
Program Manager over the Way to Success Program  
At Children's Village

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

Michelle Yanche  
Associate Executive Director for Government and  
External Relations at Good Shephard Services

Danielle Brown Fuller  
Director of Youth Development at Forestdale

Raysa Rodriguez  
Associate Executive Director for Policy and  
Advocacy at Citizens Committee for Children, CCC

Jess Dannhauser  
President and CEO of Graham Windham

Dawn Saffayeh  
Executive Director of HeartShare St. Vincent's  
Services

Dareth Ogle  
Recently Discharged out of Foster Care After 22  
Years

Georgia Boothe  
Vice President for Child Welfare at the  
Children's Aid Society

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

everybody. I'm Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of the Council's Committee on General Welfare and I want to thank you all for joining me for the fiscal 2020 preliminary budget hearing for the General Welfare Committee. Today we will hear, hear from three agencies; the Human Resources Administration, HRA, the Department for Homeless Services, DHS, who will be testifying as one under the umbrella of the Department of Social Services, DSS as... and we will be hearing from the Administration for Children Services later each on their proposed fiscal 2020 budgets. The city's proposed fiscal 2020 preliminary budget totals 92.2 billion dollars of which approximately 15 billion will fund HRA, DHS and ACS. Funding for these agencies is a bit more than 16 percent of the city's total preliminary expense budget for fiscal 2020. With each social services agency here today, we will be asking how new needs, various funding and head count adjustments, performance indicators and new policies will impact and enhance each city's ability to serve the most vulnerable populations in New York City. This morning we will begin with the testimony

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from the Department of Social Services which encompasses the Human Resource Administration and the Department of Homeless Services. As the largest social services agency in the country, HRA provides cash assistance, emergency food assistance and SNAP, HIV/AIDS support services, also referred to as HASA, legal services, anti-eviction services, rental arrears, rental assistance through the FHEPS program and many other public assistance programs to aid low income New Yorkers and prevent homelessness. DHS provides transitional shelter for homeless, single adults, adult families and families with children in accordance with New York City's right to shelter mandate. DHS also helps clients to exit shelter and move into permanent and supportive housing. Since the adoption of the fiscal 2019 budget, HRA's fiscal 2020 preliminary budget has grown by 96.3 million dollars or approximately one percent to 10.2 billion. Overall HRA's proposed fiscal 2020 preliminary budget reflects a vision that shows a continued commitment to helping low income New Yorkers and provide them with meaningful and impactful services. This administration and HRA's Commissioner, Steven Banks or the DSS's Commissioner, Steven Banks continue to

2 tackle some of the city's most complex issues  
3 including homelessness, support services and housing.  
4 HRA's fiscal 2020 preliminary budget reflects a  
5 financial commitment to addressing these issues. New  
6 needs totaling 120 million dollars in the agency's  
7 budget include bringing in the allowance rate up to  
8 the 2016 fair market rent with two percent annual  
9 increase thereafter for HASA scatter site housing,  
10 implicit bias training for 17,000 HRA and DHS staff  
11 in response to the Jazmine Headley incident this past  
12 fall, funding for the rollout of the Fair Fares  
13 program which provides half price metro cards to low  
14 income New Yorkers and was a priority of our Speaker,  
15 Corey Johnson and the Council in last budget, and the  
16 Thrive funding to train staff and screen for mental  
17 health at NYCHA job plus program sites. Since the  
18 adoption of the fiscal 2019 budget, DHS's fiscal 2020  
19 preliminary budget has grown by 44.2 million dollars  
20 or approximately two percent to 2.1 billion dollars.  
21 Overall DHS's proposed fiscal 2020 preliminary budget  
22 is largely comprised of the cost to providing shelter  
23 to the over 60,000 individuals a day that are in New  
24 York City's shelter system. One new need of 25  
25 million dollars was added to the DHS preliminary,

2 preliminary budget for the street solutions program  
3 which works with the particular... with the  
4 particularly vulnerable street homeless population.  
5 This funding will increase the number of safe haven  
6 beds and add two new drop in centers as well. Even  
7 with these impactful investments more can and should  
8 be done and we need to think more deeply about where  
9 we can effectively allocate our city's resources. I'm  
10 especially concerned with the shelter census that has  
11 continued to increase despite investments in  
12 preventative services, rental assistance vouchers and  
13 after care services. There has been no meaningful  
14 decrease in the number of people in shelter each  
15 night and in fact it continues to rise as does the  
16 average length of stay. Annually DHS spends 376  
17 million dollars on shelter hotels and 65 million  
18 dollars on cluster sites, but that money could and  
19 should be sent... spent on affordable housing to  
20 permanently move people out of shelter. This past  
21 fall the LINC rental assistance programs were  
22 collapsed into the new PHEPS program, we... but we are  
23 concerned with the efficacy of this program and the  
24 ability of voucher holders to find and sustain  
25 housing placements. There are also potential funding

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2 cuts that are of concern. The state proposed a  
3 detrimental ten percent cut in TANF funding that  
4 would reduce funding to DSS by 125 million dollars  
5 impacting shelter spending and cash assistance. If  
6 this proposed state cut were to be enacted difficult  
7 decisions would have to be made at DSS on how to fill  
8 this budget gap and we are concerned on how it could  
9 impact the services provided to the city's most  
10 vulnerable populations. In addition, HRA and D, DHS  
11 have a combined PEG target of 50 million dollars  
12 which would be reflected in... which will be reflected  
13 in the executive budget, we'd like to hear more about  
14 that today. Other areas of concerned... areas, areas of  
15 concerns that we would like to discuss during this  
16 hearing include DSS's model budgeting, which has been  
17 slow and challenging for providers leaving many with  
18 very delayed payments and the city's dependency on  
19 commercial hotels and cluster sites, the need also  
20 for more after care and preventative services and the  
21 lack of transparency in the DSS budget which only has  
22 two unit of appropriations for a budget in excess of  
23 two billion dollars. Lastly, I did want to point out  
24 the general difficulty that the Council has had with  
25 getting timely, meaningful reporting and responses to

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2 questions from DSS. Legally required reports are  
3 routinely issued well past their due dates in  
4 difficult to read formats with the manner in which  
5 the data is displayed often changing from reporting  
6 period to reporting period. As part of last year's  
7 budget negotiations with the council, DSS promised to  
8 provide a monitor's package report to the Council  
9 with each financial plan within two weeks of the plan  
10 being released. The first report related to the  
11 November plan was received on March 3<sup>rd</sup> after several  
12 requests and reporting for the preliminary plan was  
13 sent to the Council this past Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at  
14 3:50 p.m., less than one business day before this  
15 hearing. Obviously, we were unable to incorporate  
16 that information into the briefings for Council  
17 Members for this hearing. In order for the Council to  
18 do our due diligence to analyze 16 percent of the  
19 city's total budget we need this information in a  
20 timely manner and presented in such a way that is  
21 organized and easy to synthesize. We would like the  
22 agency to commit today on the record to provide this  
23 reporting going forward on time, complete and in the  
24 mutually agreed upon easily readable format.  
25 Additionally, we would like the agency to commit to

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1  
2 be more reliably and expeditiously responsive to  
3 questions from the Council on matters relating to  
4 budget and program operations. Before I welcome the  
5 Commissioner and the administrators and staff, I  
6 would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are here  
7 today; Council Members Adrienne Adams and Barry  
8 Grodenchik of Queens and Council Member Antonio  
9 Reynoso of Brooklyn. I'd also like to thank the  
10 General Welfare Committee Staff for their amazingly  
11 hard work in, in preparing for today's hearing and  
12 providing the Council Members with... and the public  
13 with information that is essential for our  
14 understanding of how these agencies operate and, and  
15 there, their work is really incredible and I want to  
16 thank them Dohini Sompura, Unit Head; Regina Poreda  
17 Ryan our Deputy Finance Director; Julia Haramis our  
18 Finance Analyst, Aminta Kilowan, Senior Counsel and  
19 Tonya Cyrus and Crystal Pond, Senior Policy Analysts  
20 for putting this hearing together, again really  
21 amazing work, thank you. I'd also like to thank my  
22 Chief of Staff Jonathon Boucher and my Legislative  
23 Director Elizabeth Adams and now Commissioner Banks  
24 our counsel will swear you in and anyone that is  
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2 testifying today so if you could all raise your hands  
3 please.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell  
5 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth  
6 before the Committee today and to respond honestly to  
7 Council Member questions?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Yes.

9 GRACE BONILLA: I do.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: You may begin.

11 STEVEN BANKS: Good morning. I would like  
12 to thank the City Council's General Welfare Committee  
13 and Chair Steve Levin for giving us this opportunity  
14 to testify today about the Department of Social  
15 Services' Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget and our  
16 reforms to improve benefits and services for low-  
17 income New Yorkers. My name is Steven Banks and I am  
18 the Commissioner of the New York City Department of  
19 Social Services. In this capacity, I oversee the  
20 Human Resources Administration and the Department of  
21 Homeless Services. Joining me today are the DSS First  
22 Deputy Commissioner Molly Murphy, HRA Administrator  
23 Grace Bonilla, DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter, DSS  
24 Chief Program and Planning and Financial Management  
25 Officer Ellen Levine, and DSS Chief of Staff Scott

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2 French. The FY 20 Preliminary Budget reflects the  
3 ongoing reforms and initiatives that we have been  
4 implementing over the last five years to address past  
5 policies that did... that for many years had not served  
6 our clients well. During the past five years as the  
7 HRA Commissioner and the last three heading DHS as  
8 well as HRA as the DSS Commissioner, we have been  
9 focused on addressing the underlying structural  
10 barriers our clients face and improving the ways in  
11 which clients interact with our agency and access the  
12 benefits and services they need. The reforms and  
13 initiatives we are implementing are taking hold,  
14 despite prior decades of underinvestment in  
15 affordable housing and the ongoing affordability  
16 challenges in the rental market. From 2005 to 2015,  
17 median rents increased almost five times as fast as  
18 household income, with rents going up nearly 19  
19 percent and incomes increasing less than 5 percent.  
20 And, to make matters worse, our city lost  
21 approximately 150,000 units of rent-regulated housing  
22 between 1994 and 2012. The New York City Housing and  
23 Vacancy Survey reported recently that the vacancy  
24 rate is less than 2 percent for low-cost housing and  
25 less than 1.1 percent for housing at the lowest-cost

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2 level, 800 dollars or below. These are the hard  
3 realities that our clients and our agency confront  
4 every day. As I will outline in our testimony today,  
5 the funding for our FY 20 Preliminary Budget supports  
6 our continued commitment to improve our policies,  
7 programs, and operations to reduce income inequality,  
8 fight poverty and homelessness, and help New Yorkers  
9 in need get back on their feet with dignity. The FY  
10 20 HRA/DSS Preliminary Budget is 10.16 billion,  
11 consisting of 7.78 billion in City funds. The FY 20  
12 DHS Preliminary Budget is 2.11 billion, consisting of  
13 1.21 billion in City funds. The HRA headcount for FY  
14 20 includes 11,183 City-funded positions and another  
15 3,500 non-City funded positions. DHS headcount for FY  
16 20 includes 2,613 City-funded positions and another  
17 approximately 50 non-City funded positions, most of  
18 which are added to the budget once the fiscal year  
19 begins. The Preliminary Budget maintains our funding  
20 for our core missions and provides some important  
21 additions including baseline funding for the street  
22 solutions expansion, rent increases in the scatter-  
23 site housing program for clients with HIV/AIDS,  
24 funding to provide implicit bias training to all of  
25 our combined DSS staff and funding for body-worn

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2 cameras for our Peace Officers, both of which we  
3 described in our testimony last month, and 106  
4 million for the Fair Fares program in FY 20 that we  
5 will discuss today. As the Mayor announced when the  
6 FY 20 Preliminary Budget was released last month, we  
7 are working with the Office of Management and Budget  
8 to develop savings for the FY 20 Executive Budget.  
9 These savings will build on efficiencies that we have  
10 already achieved over the last five years. For  
11 example, during my first year at HRA, we implemented  
12 a plan to repurpose more than 500 central  
13 administrative staff lines to enhance the provision  
14 of front-line client services. Let me talk first  
15 about reforming social services policies and access  
16 to benefits. Over the past five years, we have made a  
17 number of significant reforms to transform the client  
18 experience that are supported in the FY 20  
19 Preliminary Budget. Consider, for example, these  
20 policies we have changed to benefit our clients;  
21 clients used to have to "work off" their benefits in  
22 the Work Experience Program or WEP at City and not-  
23 for-profit agencies, we eliminated the WEP program  
24 and replaced it with new opportunities in subsidized  
25 jobs, more diverse internship and community service

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opportunities, and education and training programs to help clients move forward on a career pathway. Participation in four-year college was not permissible employment activity for clients, we successfully advocated for a change in State law to permit clients to obtain college degrees that greatly enhance their ability to earn a living wage. Clients who were subjected to punitive sanctions for missing WEP assignments received appointments at the Intensive Services Center number 71, and if they missed those appointments the entire family would be denied assistance, we closed Center number 71. Clients used to be subjected to durational employment sanctions for Cash Assistance if they were charged with violating a program rule, we successfully advocated for a change in State law as applied to New York City to give clients an opportunity to "cure" a violation at any time and avert a durational sanction and we also successfully advocated for a reduced State sanction period for SNAP/food stamps. That means people do not have to lose their housing, go hungry or forego buying clothing for their children because of a durational sanction. As part of the transformation process for Cash Assistance to reduce

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2 unnecessary office visits, clients can now submit  
3 recertification questionnaires online, and submit  
4 documents from a smartphone through the ACOMMITTEE  
5 CLERKES HRA the ACOMMITTEE CLERKES HRA portal,  
6 clients can open an account to gain access to over  
7 100 case-specific points of information for Cash  
8 Assistance and SNAP in real-time, including  
9 application and case statuses, upcoming appointments,  
10 account balances, documents requested for eligibility  
11 determinations and clients can make changes to  
12 contact information, view eligibility notices  
13 electronically, request a budget letter, and opt into  
14 text message and email alerts all designed to avoid  
15 unnecessary visits to our offices. Clients used to be  
16 subjected to churning due to unnecessary case  
17 closings which required clients to request State fair  
18 hearings to reopen their case, we put in place new  
19 protocols to prevent unnecessary case closings, and  
20 State hearing challenges decreased by more than 47  
21 percent as a result, clients have access to the  
22 benefits they need, and the City is no longer subject  
23 to a potential 10 million dollar annual State  
24 financial penalty for unnecessary hearings. To  
25 prevent both unnecessary case closings and

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2 unnecessary sanctions and resulting unnecessary  
3 hearings, before an adverse action is taken, we make  
4 sure that all required client support services like  
5 childcare and carfare are in place, reasonable  
6 accommodations were honored, mailing addresses were  
7 correct, and notices were sent in the correct  
8 language. And now conciliation appointments are  
9 scheduled at CareerCompass and YouthPathways  
10 employment providers, rather than at Job Centers, so  
11 that we can re-engage clients immediately and avoid  
12 unnecessary extra appointments at our offices.  
13 Clients recertifying for Cash Assistance used to be  
14 forced to reapply if they failed to return a mail  
15 questionnaire or submit requested documentation.  
16 Missing paperwork shouldn't mean someone loses their  
17 benefits and we now make it easier for clients to  
18 continue their assistance if they submit what is  
19 needed within 30 days of a case closing. All homeless  
20 clients used to have to travel to a single HRA Job  
21 Center in Queens, we stopped that practice and  
22 homeless clients can now seek assistance at a Job  
23 Center in their home borough. All seniors used to  
24 have to go to a single HRA Job Center in Manhattan,  
25 we changed that and now seniors can receive services

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2 at a Job Center in their home borough. Previously,  
3 clients only received a Center ticket that did not  
4 list the purpose of their visit. In 2017, we worked  
5 with the Urban Justice Center's Safety Net Project to  
6 implement the Universal Receipt, the "Confirmation of  
7 Contact with your Center" form, to provide an  
8 individual who completes a visit to a Job or SNAP  
9 Center with a document that indicates the nature and  
10 date of the visit or contact, and a copy of the  
11 receipt is also available at Access HRA. This receipt  
12 process is now codified into Local Law as a result of  
13 legislation sponsored by Speaker Johnson. We improved  
14 Access HRA with a client benefits portal so that SNAP  
15 applications, re-certifications, and renewals can all  
16 be done online without having to go to an HRA SNAP  
17 office, now SNAP clients conduct 87 percent of these  
18 transactions online and documents can be submitted  
19 via our mobile app on a smartphone. Clients used to  
20 have to conduct SNAP eligibility interviews by phone  
21 within a rigid four-hour window, now interviews are  
22 conducted at the client's convenience by phone and  
23 the percentage of completed telephone eligibility  
24 interviews increased from 29 percent in 2013 to 95  
25 percent in 2018. This change helps clients access the

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2 benefits they need to purchase food. Clients  
3 classified as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents  
4 or ABAWDs were limited to SNAP/food stamps benefits  
5 for only three out of 36 months if they could not  
6 find work for at least 80 hours a month because New  
7 York City refused to accept a federal waiver of this  
8 rule that every other county in New York State and  
9 most other States accepted, we reversed this policy  
10 and accepted the waiver that covers areas of New York  
11 City with high unemployment so that more clients can  
12 retain their SNAP benefits and now we are fighting  
13 back against the Trump Administration's efforts to  
14 drastically reduce the scope of ABAWD waivers. Rent  
15 arrears checks used to be processed at each  
16 individual HRA Job center, we streamlined the system  
17 by instituting a centralized rent arrears processing  
18 unit to ensure that rent arrears payments are issued  
19 by the required due date. New York City Housing  
20 Authority rent payments used to be issued in paper  
21 checks, now we have streamlined the system for making  
22 these rent payments electronically, and we are  
23 developing a similar payment system for private  
24 landlords. Moreover, using ACOMMITTEE CLERKES HRA,  
25 clients can confirm that the rent was paid to their

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2 landlords pursuant to a reform now codified in State  
3 law to provide this information. This makes the  
4 process easier for clients and gives them one less  
5 thing to worry about as they pay their rent. In 2014,  
6 90 clients per year received reasonable  
7 accommodations, in settling the 2005 Lovely H. class  
8 action lawsuit, we began working with expert  
9 consultants to develop tools to assess whether  
10 clients need reasonable accommodations as the result  
11 of physical or mental disabilities, now 46,000  
12 clients annually receive reasonable accommodations.  
13 Clients with HIV used to have to wait until they were  
14 diagnosed with AIDS to receive HASA assistance,  
15 working with Speaker Johnson when he was a Council  
16 Member and Housing Works, we ended that  
17 counterproductive policy so that we can ensure that  
18 clients have the services and housing assistance they  
19 need. Let me now turn to reforming homeless policies  
20 and services. As we reported previously, homelessness  
21 increased 115 percent in our city from 1994 to 2014,  
22 and we have implemented a comprehensive plan that  
23 broke this trajectory of growth. We know we have much  
24 more work to do, but our initiatives are beginning to  
25 take hold; keeping the shelter census flat over two

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2 years for the first time in a decade; doubling down  
3 on preventing homelessness, evictions are down 37  
4 percent since 2013; providing more permanent housing,  
5 enabling more than 109,000 children and adults to  
6 move out of shelter or avoid shelter altogether;  
7 bringing people off the streets and out of the  
8 subways, since HOME-STAT began in April 2016, our  
9 street teams have helped more than 2,000 people come  
10 off the streets and subways and remain off; and  
11 transforming the City's approach to shelter, closing  
12 more than 180 substandard shelter sites and siting 42  
13 new borough-based shelters to offer help as close as  
14 possible to the anchors of life like jobs, schools,  
15 health care, houses of worship and family and support  
16 networks. Funding in the FY 20 Preliminary Budget  
17 will support these four key pillars of the Mayor's  
18 Turning the Tide plan that was released just two, two  
19 years ago with these results so far; the first pillar  
20 a prevention first approach, progress; evictions down  
21 37 percent. We have provided emergency rent arrears  
22 benefits to over 50,000 households each fiscal year  
23 since FY 15, helping rent-burdened New Yorkers at  
24 risk of eviction stay in their homes. We have  
25 expanded, expanded free legal assistance for New

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Yorkers in danger of eviction, increasing funding for legal services for tenants exponentially, from roughly six million to 166 million at full implementation in FY 22, evictions have dropped by 37 percent and more than 100,000 New Yorkers were able to stay in their homes from 2014 to, to, to 2018. We're phasing in over five years the funding necessary to provide universal access to legal services for all New York City tenants facing eviction in housing court or NYCHA termination of tenancy cases, a first-in-the-nation initiative of the Administration and the Council that will benefit more than 400,000 New Yorkers annually at full implementation in FY 22 with 166 million in annual funding for tenant legal services. Second Pillar; rehousing to alleviate homelessness, progress; more than 109,000 New Yorkers rehoused. In 2011, the City and State cancelled the Advantage rental assistance program, resulting in a 38 percent increase in homelessness in just three years, between 2011 and 2014. We stepped in to fill the gap, creating new rental assistance programs as well as reinstating rehousing programs, which all together have helped more than 109,000 children and adults move out of

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1  
2 shelter or avoid shelter altogether since 2014, with  
3 the majority exiting shelter into housing. Third  
4 pillar; transforming the approach to providing  
5 shelter, progress; shrinking DHS's shelter footprint  
6 by nearly 30 percent. Our plan calls for shrinking  
7 the DHS shelter footprint by 45 percent by ending the  
8 use of 360 "cluster" shelter and commercial hotel  
9 locations citywide while opening a smaller number of  
10 90 borough-based shelters across the five boroughs.  
11 Through these strategies, in just two years we'll  
12 reduced the shelter footprint by nearly 30 percent  
13 citywide, getting out of more than 180 shelter sites  
14 that did not meet our standards, including already  
15 ending use of 70 percent of the units in the  
16 Giuliani-era cluster program and to help us do so,  
17 earlier this month we announced the conversion of  
18 cluster units to permanent housing in 17 buildings  
19 that will enable 1,200 homeless children and adults  
20 to be permanently housed with rent-stabilized leases  
21 and upgraded apartment conditions in buildings that  
22 will be owned by reputable nonprofit housing groups.  
23 As we phase out the old haphazard, band-aid approach  
24 to providing shelter that built up over the past 40  
25 years, we have sited 42 new high-quality borough-

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1 based shelters, 23 of which are already open,  
2 offering families and individuals the opportunity to  
3 get back on their feet closer to their support  
4 networks and the communities they called home. At the  
5 same time, while we have held the overall DHS census  
6 flat for the last two years for the first time in a  
7 decade, we've also made progress driving down the  
8 number of families experiencing homelessness and  
9 residing in shelter on any given night, with the peak  
10 number of individuals across families declining by  
11 nearly 3,000 between 2014 and 2018, even as we have  
12 provided shelter and services to more than 550  
13 evacuees from Puerto Rico who the Trump  
14 Administration abandoned. The fourth pillar;  
15 addressing street homelessness, progress; more than  
16 2,000 New Yorkers off the streets. In 2016, we  
17 launched HOME-STAT, the most comprehensive street  
18 outreach program in the nation, with outreach teams  
19 canvassing all five boroughs 24/7/365 days of the  
20 year, engaging New Yorkers experiencing homelessness  
21 and encouraging them to accept services and  
22 transition indoors. Thanks to a doubling in our  
23 funding for and the size of those outreach teams and  
24 doubling and soon to be tripling, our Safe Haven and  
25

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1  
2 stabilization beds, our HOME-STAT program has helped  
3 more than 2,000 individuals come off the streets and  
4 subways and into transitional and permanent settings  
5 and continue to remain off the streets and subways.  
6 New initiatives, fair fares NYC. In January, we  
7 officially launched Fair Fares NYC. The program will  
8 provide thousands of New Yorkers at or below the  
9 poverty level with access to affordable public  
10 transportation, easing the financial burden of  
11 commuting to work and a wide range of essential tasks  
12 that require travel. The Fair Fares NYC Metrocard  
13 allows participants to purchase unlimited weekly and  
14 monthly passes at a 50 percent discount at MTA  
15 vending machines. The City also worked with New York  
16 City Transit to phase in a pay per ride option, which  
17 was launched on March 15, 2019. Starting on the  
18 launch date, DSS/HRA began contacting New Yorkers who  
19 are working and receive Cash Assistance, and who do  
20 not already receive transportation assistance from  
21 HRA or New York City Transit, to inform them of their  
22 eligibility and invite them to visit the nearest Fair  
23 Fares NYC location to pick up their Fair Fares  
24 Metrocard. In February, DSS/HRA began contacting some  
25 working SNAP/food stamps recipients as well.

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1  
2 Additional mailed notices, reminder phone calls and  
3 texts were, and continue to be, made to eligible  
4 individuals who have not picked up their discounted  
5 card. Eligible individuals and those with questions  
6 can also call 3-1-1 and HRA Infoline for assistance  
7 in receiving the Fair Fares Metrocard. In the first  
8 week of March, we launched a targeted digital  
9 advertising campaign to inform eligible individuals  
10 about the program and encourage them to pick up their  
11 discounted Metrocard. Beginning next month, DSS/HRA  
12 will expand eligibility to all working New Yorkers  
13 with incomes at or below the federal poverty level  
14 who are receiving Cash Assistance or SNAP/Food stamp  
15 benefits and do not already receive transportation  
16 assistance. As we are making it... and we are making it  
17 even easier for participants to get enrolled and  
18 receive their Fair Fares cards. Next month, eligible  
19 clients will be able to enroll in the Fair Fares  
20 program online using ACOMMITTEE CLERKESS HRA and  
21 receive their card through the mail without any need  
22 to come into an office. Planning is underway to  
23 expand the program in the Fall of 2019 to more low-  
24 income New Yorkers, such as those served by the City  
25 University of New York, the New York City Housing

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1 Authority, and veterans. In January 2020, we plan to  
2 launch an open enrollment process for all eligible  
3 New Yorkers at or below federal... the Federal Poverty  
4 Level who don't have discounted transportation  
5 assistance from HRA or New York City Transit. In the  
6 Preliminary Budget, the Fair Fares program was funded  
7 with 106 million in, in FY 20, the second year of  
8 implementation. Future funding for the program is  
9 subject to a budget discussion. We greatly appreciate  
10 the leaders... the leadership of Speaker Johnson and  
11 the Council and Speaker Johnson's continued  
12 collaboration on this initiative, as we continue to  
13 enroll more New Yorkers. The State and Federal  
14 landscape. Finally, our FY 20 Preliminary Budget has  
15 been released against a background of significant  
16 challenges at the State and federal levels that  
17 imperil our progress and our reforms. The State  
18 Executive Budget, for example, proposes to cut New  
19 York City's reimbursement for Family Assistance,  
20 funded at temporary... funded by the Temporary  
21 Assistance for Needy Families or TANF program by 10  
22 percent annually. This cut would mean... amount to a  
23 125 million dollar cut in annual public assistance  
24 and family shelter funding. Given the impact of this  
25

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1  
2 potential 125-million-dollar budget gap on our  
3 reforms to improve client services, we appreciate the  
4 support of the Council to prevent this cut from being  
5 enacted in the final State budget that is being  
6 negotiated right now. On the federal level, the Trump  
7 Administration is using the regulatory process as an  
8 end-run around the compromise reached by Congress in  
9 the 2018 Farm Bill. As described earlier in my  
10 testimony, in May 2014, New York City accepted the  
11 federal Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, ABAWD  
12 waiver which provides individuals who are unemployed  
13 or underemployed with an exemption from the work  
14 requirement limitation so they can receive ongoing  
15 SNAP/food stamps if they cannot find at least 80  
16 hours of work per month. Otherwise, they would be  
17 limited to receiving SNAP benefits for only three  
18 months in any three-year period unless they qualify  
19 for a different exemption or are able to find enough  
20 hours of work each month. In the 2018 reauthorization  
21 of the Farm Bill, Congress rejected the Trump  
22 Administration's attempts to significantly roll back  
23 the availability of the ABAWD waiver. However,  
24 circumventing Congress's determination to limit the  
25 Trump Administration's ABAWD waiver rollback, the US

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2 Department of Agriculture has released a proposed  
3 rule that would restrict ABAWD waivers to areas where  
4 the unemployment rate is higher than the seven  
5 percent compared... than seven percent compared to the  
6 current unemployment rate threshold for ABAWD waivers  
7 of 10 percent. This attack on unemployed and  
8 underemployed low-income single adults will  
9 exacerbate food insecurity. Should this rule be  
10 adopted, it will result in many New Yorkers losing  
11 their SNAP benefits if they are not able to find 80  
12 hours of work in a month. We will be opposing this  
13 proposed rule, and we hope we can count on the  
14 support of the Council to fight this draconian  
15 proposal. Thank you again for this opportunity to  
16 testify and we will continue to work with the Council  
17 to keep moving forward with our reforms of these  
18 important programs. We welcome any questions that you  
19 may have.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
21 Commissioner and I want to acknowledge Council Member  
22 Ben Kallos who is here as well. So, I might jump  
23 around for a little bit, so I apologize for that but  
24 being that we have both HRA and DHS here that's going  
25 to be expected. So, the first issue I wanted to ask

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about was kind of some housekeeping here but around  
that monitor's report... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and getting timely  
data. As I said in my opening remarks the Council's  
finance staff was given information late and not  
within the agreed upon timeframe of two weeks after  
the release of the financial plan and that the data  
provided for that, that hearing... this hearing was  
provided for the January plan just on Friday and so  
when we were preparing for this hearing we were  
relying on data that went up to October of last year  
and that is outdated and then the format was not  
conducive to any type of analysis and included very  
little budget information. Obviously this is not  
acceptable, we are a co-equal branch of government  
and we cannot effectively do oversight and represent  
the public's interest if we don't have clear  
information so I was wondering if you could speak to  
that issue and reiterate your agency's commitment to  
providing this Council with timely information that  
is in an easily readable format so that we can do our  
job?

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STEVEN BANKS: Right, our... that is our  
commitment, as you know we... you and I meet quite  
frequently and our... your finance staff works very  
hard and work together with OMB finance staff and the  
agency finance staff this is the first of, of the  
agreed upon monitoring reports and I think we're very  
committed to making sure that you get it in a timely  
fashion. I think in terms of the information and the  
content there are some challenges in our... in our  
ability to provide it in all of the areas that you're  
looking for but we will keep working with you to be  
able to make sure that we can give you as much  
information as, as we can so that you can perform the  
required... requirements of, of your role and we can  
work collaboratively with you. As I said I think when  
I testified here last month in going through all of  
the reforms that have been implemented many of them  
have been implemented in partnership with you and  
your leadership of this Committee and certainly the  
Speaker... the Speaker's leadership has been very  
important to our making the reforms that we're making  
and we're very committed to getting the information  
that you needed and I'm sure we can work through the

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2 issues that arose in this first report as we go  
3 forward with future reports.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, it was... this  
5 was the, the second report because the first one was  
6 the November plan and the... and the first one... and  
7 the... and the, the second one... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: I... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...was the preliminary  
10 budget.

11 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I think as you know  
12 though the November plan is a much more limited  
13 document than the preliminary budget and I know that  
14 we will continue to work with you to meet the... meet  
15 the time frames that we agreed to, we want you to  
16 have that information and we appreciate the  
17 collaboration with you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, do we... I mean  
19 do we have to renegotiate the... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: I don't think we do.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I wanted to ask  
22 about model budgets...

23 STEVEN BANKS: Yep.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Our understanding is  
25 that ten model budget amendments have been registered

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2 and there are 48 that are pending, obviously this has  
3 been going on for a long time, can you speak a little  
4 bit about the process there and why there are so many  
5 that remain unregistered, I mean how long has this  
6 taken?

7 STEVEN BANKS: So, I think it's  
8 important for the sake of the record to draw a  
9 distinction between registering contracts and the  
10 model budget process which those are really two  
11 separate processes...

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

13 STEVEN BANKS: The registration of  
14 contracts involves the ongoing registration of  
15 contracts, when I first conducted 90 days reviews  
16 there were as you know backlogs of registered  
17 contracts going back for a long period of time, the  
18 model budget is adding additional money to those  
19 contracts and I can report... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But they're through  
21 amend... through contract amendments?

22 STEVEN BANKS: Through, through contract  
23 amendments, that's what I want to... wanted to make  
24 that distinction, I appreciate that you made that  
25 distinction. In terms of where we are with

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1  
2 registration of contracts, we'll come to amendments  
3 in a moment, for FY 19... FY 19 98 percent of the FY 19  
4 contracts are registered, there were three... I'm, I'm  
5 sorry, there... 98 percent of the FY 19 contracts for  
6 DHS are registered and active, there are six  
7 outstanding FY 19 contracts three of which are  
8 registered and pending provider budget submissions  
9 and three of which are pending registration. For HRA  
10 90 percent of the contracts are registered, there are  
11 nine outstanding legal services contracts that are  
12 currently at the financial control board and we  
13 expect to be able to move those through and I think  
14 that addresses the issue that first confronted us  
15 when we integrated the agencies regarding the simple  
16 registration of contracts period. In terms of model  
17 budgeting, there are currently... let me... there are 126  
18 contracts that needed to be negotiated, they were  
19 subject to the model budget process, 104 of the  
20 providers submitted the information that we needed on  
21 time or less than six months late, 22 providers  
22 submitted them over six months late or never  
23 submitted them at all. Of the 104 that we've got  
24 timely materials... timely budget materials on, 63 of  
25 those have all gone through the OMB process and are

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moving through the process and the rest of them we are working through with providers. I think one of the challenges of the model budget, budget process is we didn't present them as a take it or leave it process and we gave a lot of time for back and forth, having said that we're committed to achieving the commitment that the Mayor made of getting all of these completed by, by the timeframe during this fiscal year and we're really to the point where when negotiations have reached an impasse we're going to have to proceed with the... with the amendment because we want to be able to deliver on our commitments to you and the commitments that the Mayor has made in terms of completing this process.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm sorry, so, so the number that have been registered though you... I'm sorry, you cited that, that they've gone through the OMB process, but I don't know where that... where that leaves them in terms of their registration as amended?

STEVEN BANKS: Right, there are 12 that have been registered by the Comptroller and another 65 that are in state of the process that will be... I'm

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2 sorry, 53, I did the math wrong I apologize... [cross-  
3 talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: ...65, that's roughly 50  
6 percent of the total number that we had are either  
7 registered or on their way to moving to be at the  
8 Comptroller in a timely fashion so that they're  
9 registered during this fiscal year.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Are they... okay, I'm  
11 sorry, so, so there are 53 that are... that are at the  
12 comptroller or on route to the Comptroller... [cross-  
13 talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: On, on the process as you  
15 know there are multiple oversights that contracts  
16 have to go through but... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What's after OMB and  
18 before Comptroller?

19 STEVEN BANKS: There are... there's the  
20 financial control board, there's MOCS, there's the  
21 law department... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...I know that this has been  
24 the subject of a lot of conversation about the  
25 contracting process... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

3 STEVEN BANKS: ...but I want to again  
4 reiterate that the Mayor made a commitment not just  
5 for our agency but for contracts across multiple  
6 agencies to get these amendments and processes  
7 completed before the end of this fiscal year and  
8 we're on track to do that.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: To get all... to get  
10 100 percent of the contracts?

11 STEVEN BANKS: No, there are 22 that were  
12 either submitted over six months late or never  
13 submitted, we're not going to be able to get those  
14 through... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: And we've got more...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many... how many in  
19 total are there, I'm sorry?

20 STEVEN BANKS: 126, we started off  
21 seeking... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 126... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...to have 126 model budgets  
24 completed with... [cross-talk]

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

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2 STEVEN BANKS: ...providers... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And 65 you said are  
4 either registered or in the process of... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: Yep... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...going to the  
7 Comptroller, that leaves... and then there's 22 that  
8 was submitted late and that leaves a difference of...  
9 there's another... I don't know... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: Another 30... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 40... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...30, 30 to 40 in that...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what's the status  
15 of those?

16 STEVEN BANKS: Those are ones where we're  
17 still trying to come to some agreement with the  
18 providers... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: The providers are, are...  
21 have been great partners for us and we want to bring  
22 those conversations to a conclusion.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay and so the  
24 expectation is that for those 30 or 40 that didn't  
25 submit six months late but are not on their way

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2 already to the Comptroller's Office that those will  
3 be... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: That's, that's... [cross-  
5 talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...registered by the  
7 end of this fiscal year?

8 STEVEN BANKS: That's what our... that's  
9 what our commitment is to achieve.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because in  
11 order... okay, so how long does it... I'm sorry, how long  
12 does it take between being approved by OMB to  
13 registered? So, those, those intermediate steps of  
14 the financial control board, MOCS, Comptroller...

15 STEVEN BANKS: There are... as, as I know  
16 you know from the overall focus on the procurement  
17 process there are a number of steps that... let me just  
18 finish please... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, yeah... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: ...there are a number of  
22 steps and any particular contract that can... that  
23 vary, the thing that we know for certain is the  
24 Comptroller has 30 days to register a contract, so we  
25 work... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

3 STEVEN BANKS: ...back from that in terms  
4 of making the commitment that the Mayor made and that  
5 we are committed to, to achieve and the Comptroller's  
6 been very helpful in this process, we expect to get  
7 the contracts we can to the Comptroller in a timely  
8 fashion and each one of them is on a path to get  
9 there but again I want to go back and reiterate what  
10 I said at the beginning of, of this series of  
11 questions, we have registered contracts that are  
12 active and paying providers, the model budget process  
13 is a process about giving providers more money than  
14 they have gotten previously because of a  
15 determination that we have made that we think that a  
16 greater investment in our providers will be better  
17 for the clients and better for the providers. I think  
18 sometimes when this topic is talked about it's talked  
19 about as if there's no money being paid, that I think  
20 does a disservice to the providers and a disservice  
21 to the process. Having said that, we're very focused  
22 on the second part of the process which is completing  
23 the amendments so that we can increase the value of  
24 the contracts for the providers having made a  
25 judgement that we think it's in our client's interest

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2 and helpful to the providers to provide the  
3 additional funding through the model budgets.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: If you were to speak  
5 to... what are some of the... because honestly... this has...  
6 this has gone on for quite some time now and you know  
7 the expectation probably at the outset was that by  
8 March of 2019 these, these contract amendments would  
9 have been... would have been negotiated and registered,  
10 I'm just wondering what was the... you know if... in, in  
11 retrospect what, what led to this delay?

12 STEVEN BANKS: I think... I don't... I don't  
13 want anything I'm about to say to minimize the  
14 importance of what I view as engagement with the  
15 providers, I think we did not take a take it or leave  
16 it approach, we took a negotiated approach and that  
17 it is not a cookie cutter approach when you're  
18 talking about shelter, every location has different  
19 issues. They're doing physical requirements in terms  
20 of security, there are different rents at different  
21 shelters, there may be different staffing needs for  
22 non-security depending on the way that the, the size  
23 of the shelter and how it's configured, we did not  
24 take a cookie cutter approach and we believed in  
25 negotiations and input and back and forth with our

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2 providers. I think that that is a stronger, healthier  
3 process than to a year ago to say here's the amount  
4 of money take it or leave it.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Were there providers  
6 that did not... that refused... that, that have refused  
7 to participate, I mean you said there was 22 that  
8 were late, I mean how many... of those 22 how many are  
9 late and how many are not, not participating?

10 STEVEN BANKS: I mean from our purposes  
11 if we don't have anything from them or, or they're  
12 simply late we didn't have the ability to engage them  
13 in the way that we want to engage them, I can give  
14 you a breakdown of those 22 but we had sat last  
15 November as the cut off point to be able to complete  
16 the registration of these amendments this fiscal year  
17 and we gave a number of opportunities for people to  
18 provide us. Again, I do not want anyone to, to, to  
19 see this as an adversarial process between the  
20 providers, they're not... they're great, we value them  
21 greatly, they've been a, a very important part of the  
22 performance we've been making and providing them with  
23 additional funding is an important priority of ours  
24 but the first task at hand was making sure that they  
25 go into fiscal years with registered contracts which

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2 we now have which we didn't have at the time of the  
3 90 day review.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I've had a number of  
5 questions around kind of transparency and data that,  
6 that we were able to get but along.. with this line of  
7 questioning around the model of contracts, we, we at  
8 the Council don't have any aggregate data on DHS's  
9 budget in terms of how much shelters are spending on  
10 rent or social workers or case managers or, or any,  
11 any budget lines, we, we see.. you know I'll.. we'll..  
12 I'll get to unit of appropriations in a minute but,  
13 but we have no clear picture of how much shelters are  
14 spending on various budget codes, can you work with  
15 our staff to, to come up with a, a framework so that  
16 we can analyze how shelters within your contract  
17 budget are, are, are determining their budgets?

18 STEVEN BANKS: I mean we can certainly  
19 review the model budgeting process, I always want to  
20 say yes, let's sit down and try to work it through  
21 but I'm.. I want to just have the caveat that I raised  
22 with you a little bit earlier which is there is  
23 variation based upon size, based upon... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

25

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2 STEVEN BANKS: ...location, based upon  
3 physical configuration and I don't want to be  
4 misleading in saying yeah, we can come up with a  
5 construct of a work, but we can certainly... I  
6 certainly will commit to providing information and I  
7 think it's commitment I've made at prior hearings  
8 which is to say we'll, we can show you budget  
9 functions and I think we've done that before in other  
10 areas particularly legal services but yes, I commit  
11 that we can sit down and try to work through how we  
12 do budget functions and I think that will give  
13 greater insight to you and to the finance staff about  
14 where we're ending up with the model budget process.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean I... we  
16 can proceed after this hearing but I, I... we have no...  
17 if it's... I realize that there's a challenge with  
18 aggregating the data because of the, the fluctuation  
19 or the, the difference between different shelters but  
20 we have... I mean we would like to see as specific  
21 information as... air data as you have and if that's  
22 shelter by shelter we would be interested in looking  
23 at that as well because we just... we don't know how  
24 much is, is spent on various aspects of the shelter  
25 system and again unit of appropriations being that

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2 there are two unit of appropriations for the entire  
3 agency, PS and OTPS that's a real challenge for us.

4 STEVEN BANKS: Right, so I think that a,  
5 a meeting would be very helpful because the  
6 information I think you're looking for is in budget  
7 codes that are named as a general matter but for each  
8 individual shelter we register a contract it's got  
9 that kind of information and I think... I think our  
10 staffs could sit down and come up with a way to look  
11 at... [cross-talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: ...information that's  
14 currently available on a shelter by shelter basis  
15 because as I said as part of getting the contract  
16 registered we need to have exactly the information  
17 you're offering... asking me about and obviously you  
18 could add it all up across the system, I'm just  
19 reacting to could you get a construct, I think that  
20 that is difficult given the shelter by shelter issues  
21 that come up frankly in the model budget and why it  
22 takes, takes more time... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

24 STEVEN BANKS: ...than if it was a cookie  
25 cutter approach but we'll... lets have our staff sit

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2 down and, and look at the budget codes that do exist  
3 in terms of budget functionality and let's look at  
4 the budgets for the 100, 126 shelters.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean one  
6 thing just about... and this is just a, a... I think  
7 something that I've been thinking about that comes up  
8 when you... when you mentioned the, the kind of  
9 difference between shelters in terms of, of their...  
10 the type of programming they have in some sense  
11 that's a disparity between shelters in... if, if, if a  
12 family shelter... if a tier two family shelter can't  
13 be... is, is wildly different from another tier two  
14 family shelter or... then, then isn't... then, then isn't  
15 it... doesn't that indicate that there's not a standard  
16 level of service that families are getting because if  
17 one shelter is negotiating for social workers and  
18 other staff lines that could support families and  
19 children in shelter and another one isn't and  
20 negotiating more for rent and saying well we're going  
21 to... you know isn't that... doesn't that... doesn't that  
22 indicate that there's some disparity within the  
23 system?

24 STEVEN BANKS: If, if that were true you  
25 would be correct but that's actually not what the

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2 situation is. So, for example, social workers, we  
3 have... we have a one to 25 ratio and we have been,  
4 been funding that through this initiative but the  
5 model budget actually eliminates disparities because  
6 when we begin a 90 day review shelter providers talk  
7 to me about how much you got paid depending on when  
8 you brought the shelter online, the model budgeting  
9 process eliminates that. What I was referring to is  
10 if you've got a four story shelter versus a two story  
11 shelter versus a five story shelter that has  
12 different implications for your staffing, that's not  
13 about service delivery that's about being able to  
14 manage the size of your... the contours of your  
15 building and that's why again it's not simply a  
16 cookie cutter approach... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: ...and we certainly looked  
19 at, you know mental health shelters, employment  
20 shelters, families with children shelters versus  
21 single adult shelters, we... that's, that's what the  
22 model budget process did its brought rationality to  
23 budgeting that was missing for decades but you're,  
24 you're purposefully zeroing in on something I said

25

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2 that had to do with the configuration of the shelter  
3 not the service delivery.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

5 STEVEN BANKS: And that's why you can't  
6 have it be a cookie cutter approach, again rents  
7 could vary, the rent may be different for a shelter  
8 in... you know where you or I... you and I live than in a  
9 shelter in a different borough. In the past that  
10 would have resulted in a rejection of the shelter  
11 budget because of the desire to have the lowest cost  
12 versus the value that we have in the Turning the Tide  
13 plan which is to give people an opportunity to be  
14 connected to the anchors of life like schools, jobs,  
15 health care, houses of worship, family and friends  
16 that's going to mean rent will vary depending on  
17 where the shelter is sited, depending upon the  
18 configuration, the security needs will be different  
19 that's why it's not a cookie cutter.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I want to  
21 ask about unit of appropriations. So, we have two  
22 unit appropriations in DHS, the Council has  
23 previously asked in, in prior budget years for a PS  
24 unit of appropriation, OTPS unit of appropriation for  
25 each of the DHS program areas as outlined in the

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2 budget function analysis, we have gotten rebut from  
3 OMB numerous times on that, it's very frustrating for  
4 us to be able to examine the budget when we can't...  
5 when there's, you know essentially two unit of  
6 appropriations for a 2.1 billion dollar budget.

7 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I thought that we  
8 had come to an agreement in the last budget process  
9 to look at budget function, functions and  
10 functionality but obviously in all processes it's an  
11 ongoing discussion with you and we'll continue to  
12 work with you on what we think is a way that makes  
13 sense for us in the way we run the program which is  
14 to look at budget functions. Again I come back to the  
15 legal services discussion in which there was a  
16 request to say hey we'd like a special unit of  
17 appropriation and we said actually then you lose all  
18 the efficiencies and economies of scale of putting  
19 the Office of Civil Justice within a large  
20 functioning agency so that personnel and legal and  
21 the finance management all those services are coming  
22 from other units of appropriation and let's work with  
23 you on budget functionality and we'll continue to  
24 work with you to give you the, the transparency that  
25 you're looking for without giving up our ability to

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2 get efficiencies and economies of scale with these  
3 larger units of appropriation.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have you... has DHS's  
5 budget staff been in conversations with OMB  
6 concerning the Council's request on unit of  
7 appropriations?

8 STEVEN BANKS: I mean OMB and our agency  
9 work closely as we do with Council finance staff and  
10 I'm sure there will be ongoing discussions about what  
11 we can provide to you that makes sense for what you  
12 need and also makes sense for our ability to get  
13 economies of scale in a larger agency. If every piece  
14 of the agency is broken into its... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: ...a small unit of  
17 appropriation you lose the, the, the economy that you  
18 get by putting many parts of complex service delivery  
19 systems into a large agency.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean I just  
21 will say that there have been so many instances where  
22 our finance staff is not getting the information that  
23 they need that, that... I mean I will move on from here  
24 but I, I think that there's a level of frustration  
25 with our staff not being able to get the proper and

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2 timely information and so whether that's... we don't  
3 want to hamstring your agency or create cumbersome  
4 inefficiencies but at the same time our goal is  
5 transparency and if we... if we are saying its un-  
6 transparent I hope that you will take that at face  
7 value that it's un-transparent. If, if, if we're  
8 saying that we can't... we don't have the information  
9 that we need I just... I, I would hope that the  
10 agency's response is okay we'll get you that  
11 information.

12 STEVEN BANKS: So, you, you have been  
13 both an important supporter of our work and a  
14 constructive critic of our work and we will... we will  
15 work with you to try to adjust what your concerns  
16 are.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I will turn it  
18 over to my colleagues for questions. First up Council  
19 Member Grodenchik and we've also been joined by  
20 Council Members Mark Gjonaj of the Bronx and Brad  
21 Lander of Brooklyn and I already mentioned Ben when  
22 you were out of the room.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
24 Chair Levin. Good morning everybody.

25 STEVEN BANKS: Good morning.

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2

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Good to see

3

you as always. Commissioner it bothers me that we

4

are... the Mayor has talked about three quarters of a

5

billion dollars in a PEG, a program to eliminate the

6

gap and in your testimony today which went on for

7

seven pages and I know it's a very large... you have a

8

large bailiwick there is exactly two sentences about

9

how you plan on bringing efficiencies out of budget

10

that runs over ten billion dollars and I was hoping

11

that we could hear more from you because as the Chair

12

has said it is very difficult for us to do our jobs

13

for oversight of this enormous agency without having

14

compelling information that we can act upon and I

15

don't know if there's anything more you can tell us

16

this morning but I would appreciate some of your

17

insight into that?

18

STEVEN BANKS: Sure, I think what's

19

important to understand about our budget at HRA in

20

particular is that most of the budget is actually

21

made up of mandated entitlements for clients so

22

Medicaid is the largest part of our expenditures,

23

cash assistance benefits, food... and other... and other

24

benefits if you look at our, our pie chart most of

25

what our budget is, is actual direct mandated

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2 services for clients, similarly in DHS, shelter is a  
3 mandate so the PEG issue of the 50 million dollars is  
4 something that OMB and we are very much looking at, I  
5 think I highlighted to as in prior testimony when I  
6 first came to HRA we needed additional frontline  
7 client facing staff and we did that by repurposing  
8 five... more than 500 central administrative staff  
9 directly taking those lines... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I, I  
11 appreciate what's happened in the past, I'm worried  
12 about what's going to happen tomorrow and the next  
13 day and the next day and the next day.

14 STEVEN BANKS: You know what you took the  
15 words right out of my mouth because the part of my  
16 testimony that I want to really focus on today is the  
17 state PEG that is about to hit us in the next couple  
18 of days... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Hopefully  
20 not.

21 STEVEN BANKS: Well we need everybody's  
22 help to make sure it doesn't happen, 125 million  
23 dollar cut if it is enacted in the next several days  
24 will have a dramatic impact on our ability to keep  
25 moving forward with the reforms we have put in place

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2 let alone additional reforms. Any portion of that  
3 PEG, that state cut will have a dramatic impact on us  
4 because its not cuts in discretion it's a cut in  
5 mandated provision of benefits to clients, it's a cut  
6 in TANF benefits to which clients are entitled to  
7 receive and it's a cut in funding for shelter for  
8 which clients are entitled to receive. So, it's not  
9 an optional question for us to say alright, now I've  
10 got ten percent less in TANF money will you knock...  
11 we're going to provide only 90 percent worth of the  
12 benefits, these are things that actually people are  
13 entitled to receive from us so that means we would  
14 have to find up to 125 million dollars in cuts within  
15 our agency for services that everybody I think here  
16 believes were important things that we've put in  
17 place over the last several years. So, if someone was  
18 to say why don't you just cut your shelter budget and  
19 then tomorrow night where do we put the people who  
20 come in and look for shelter... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: No, I  
22 understand... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: So, so that's the context  
24 in which we have a very real PEG potentially hitting  
25 us in a couple of days, the Council has been very

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2 supportive of this of, of our effort to fight back on  
3 this and I appreciate that but I would encourage  
4 everyone to be very focused on this in the final  
5 budget negotiations because it would have a dramatic  
6 impact on all of the work we've been doing let alone  
7 the kind of work that, that you have been encouraging  
8 us to take on in addition to what we've been doing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I appreciate  
10 that and certainly I have been in touch with my many  
11 state elected officials that I overlap with. I, I  
12 have to say that I, I am again disappointed though  
13 that the, the number of people in the shelter system  
14 continues to be about 60,000, I know the work that  
15 you're doing but I must state that I am disappointed  
16 that we do not see the needle moving downward, I'm  
17 not going to ask you to comment on that but I do want  
18 to thank you though at the end of this for the work  
19 in eliminating the last budget dance and for, for the  
20 emergency food program and I know that Chair Levin  
21 and I and all the members of the Committee and really  
22 all the members of the Council from the Speaker on  
23 down are happy that we have eliminated that dance and  
24 I've heard from numerous providers citywide major  
25 providers that this has had a most positive... in fact,

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2 we even fed coast guard workers who were stranded so  
3 to speak when the federal government shut down.

4 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I'm done I  
6 guess, thank you Mr. Chairman.

7 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you for your  
8 leadership on the SNAP issue along with the Chair, I  
9 think it's a really important collaborative work  
10 together on that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
12 Commissioner.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
14 Member Grodenchik, if you have further questions,  
15 we'll do a second round.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member Adams.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you Mr.  
20 Chair, good morning Mr. Banks.

21 STEVEN BANKS: How are you today?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I'm doing well  
23 thank you. Just a couple of areas I'd like to touch  
24 on if, if time permits if not then we'll come back  
25 around again...

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I would be remiss  
4 if I didn't address once again my representation as  
5 one of three members representing Southeast Queens  
6 and the proliferation of shelters, the highest number  
7 of shelter positioning within the borough of Queens,  
8 we were instructed the other night at a community  
9 board 12 meeting by your representatives and the  
10 placing shall we say of new shelters coming up in  
11 Southeast Queens within the parameters of community  
12 board 12. I'd just like to hear from you to be on the  
13 record what exactly is the nature of the positioning  
14 of the shelters and also, I'd like to hear from you  
15 to address the inequity of this placement of the  
16 shelters in Southeast Queens.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you and I appreciate  
18 during my time in this position our good working  
19 relationship and I think that your focus on Southeast  
20 Queens is something that both administrator Carter  
21 and I are very much supportive of but I think as we  
22 have said all along about Southeast Queens when you...  
23 when we eliminate all the hotels which we will do  
24 there will... there is still a residual need for enough  
25 shelter in that part of the borough to make sure that

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2 we can deliver on our promise to give an opportunity  
3 for families with children and single adults to be  
4 sheltered near schools and jobs and health care. We...  
5 I think we've... similarly previously testified there  
6 are about twice as many people sheltered in that  
7 community board as come from it originally and our  
8 plan is to bring that number down but our plan as we  
9 close hotels is to make sure we have residual shelter  
10 to be able to offer the opportunity for families with  
11 children or individuals from that area to go there.  
12 We're opening a shelter there and taking down two  
13 hotels because it was always part of our commitment  
14 that we would be bringing down hotels as we were  
15 moving forward with the Turn the Tide plan and so in  
16 that particular community we're taking down two  
17 hotels and opening a, a shelter but again that  
18 commitment has not wavered from rightsizing the  
19 number of people that will be sheltered in that area  
20 when our plan is fully implemented citywide, I think  
21 as I've said in the general... in the earlier part of  
22 the testimony we've gotten out of 180 locations and  
23 we're sited already 42 new shelters, some in parts of  
24 the city that never had shelters before as part of  
25 the Turn the Tide approach but ultimately in the area

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2 you're concerned about we will be reducing the  
3 numbers of people sheltered in that community board  
4 to more closely approximate to the number of people  
5 that are in our system as we do that we'll be  
6 closing hotels and we will be opening a smaller  
7 number of shelters so that we end up with that right  
8 sized number. If you look at Queens overall there are  
9 approximately 8,000 people in the shelter system from  
10 Queens overall, once we close all the hotels in  
11 Queens we'll have enough shelter space for about...  
12 more than 5,000 people so you can see that there's a  
13 gap and we're going to be placing shelters as we have  
14 been across the borough, we've got shelters in parts  
15 of the borough where there hadn't been shelters  
16 before and we're committed to continuing to do that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I appreciate that  
18 candidly a lot of people that I represent see this as  
19 a shell game going on right now in the movement of  
20 displaced individuals from hotels into other  
21 facilities, other places, shelters just moving them  
22 from one place to another. With that said, what will  
23 happen to these hotels that these individuals are  
24 going to be moved out of, will these hotels be  
25 closed, do you have relationships with these hotels,

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2 are they going to be ghost hotels, what is going to  
3 go on with these hotels?

4 STEVEN BANKS: I mean I think that you're  
5 raising a... an important issue there but a number of  
6 hotels that have opened in recent years and we have  
7 just making... been making it very clear that we're  
8 getting out of hotels and that this isn't a business  
9 model that should be one in which someone says oh I'm  
10 going to have, have homeless New Yorkers housed in my  
11 hotel, we've been very clear we're getting out of  
12 hotels. Where we have exited other hotels we just  
13 exited one in Council Member Koslowitz's district for  
14 example, we can see that they go on and, and provide  
15 regular room rentals like any other operating hotel  
16 but to the extent that there are concerns that you  
17 have we're happy to, to see what other enforcement  
18 agencies in the city can deal with whatever issues  
19 might arise but I, I understand your question and  
20 it's a fair one.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you, I'll  
22 come back around, I'm very concerned because of the  
23 number of hotels in Southeast Queens and the number  
24 of homeless individuals within these hotels in  
25 Southeast Queens and the evacuation of these

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2 individuals into shelters in Southeast Queens, the,  
3 the prospect of all of this is, is a little  
4 frightening to me and we'll talk about it a little  
5 bit more.

6 STEVEN BANKS: I understand that and I  
7 want to just say this is a sea change in the way the  
8 city has been providing shelter for the last 40 years  
9 which is a... an approach that says we're going to end  
10 up with people sheltered in parts of the city  
11 including in Southeast Queens that gives them an  
12 opportunity to be housed close to the anchors of  
13 their lives that means in some places there will be  
14 fewer people sheltered in that area like in Southeast  
15 Queens then are currently sheltered and in other  
16 places there will be more people that are sheltered  
17 there because we're looking to in this borough placed  
18 plan to have where people are sheltered reflect  
19 where, where their community based needs were and  
20 are.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
22 Member Adams, Council Member Ben Kallos.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Good morning,  
24 first I want to start off with checking out NYC dot  
25 gov slash HomeStat and we're going to just pull that

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2 up right now. One question is how is the daily canvas  
3 going, I'm concerned that... well I'm, I'm curious  
4 whether or not you compare the, the HomeStat numbers  
5 to the 3-1-1 calls and have any quality control to  
6 see whether or not folks are... your canvassers are  
7 actually reaching folks because when I check out the  
8 HHomeStat sometimes I'm surprised to see some of the  
9 regulars in my community not being... not showing up  
10 and the reason we pulled this up in part is because  
11 it isn't working. So, if you scroll down on that  
12 page, if you can scroll down, yeah, the dashboard is  
13 missing so it, it isn't working on edge or chrome, it  
14 is working on my phone. The next piece I want to  
15 touch on is... [cross-talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: Excuse me Council Member  
17 so your, your question is... you... it's able to work on  
18 your mobile app but not on the... on the... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: It's not working...  
20 [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: I just want to make sure  
22 I'm understanding what the request is, we'll  
23 certainly look into it, I think... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I think the piece  
25 that I'm most interested in is comparing the

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2 canvassers to 3-1-1 calls and doing quality assurance  
3 that folks are doing the proactive outreach. The next  
4 question... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: But, but I answer that  
6 question?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Let me... let me  
8 stack on the, the two additional questions if I may..  
9 [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: Okay...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: In terms of  
12 families with children there are two... 12,418 as of  
13 3/22 which was Friday, how... what is the average size  
14 of those families, how large of, of an apartment do  
15 they need, do they need two bedrooms, three bedrooms,  
16 four bedrooms, five bedrooms and where are we on the  
17 Mayor's plan for housing and how many has been built  
18 and can we just say that the next 12,000 apartments  
19 that we're going to build will go exclusively to  
20 formerly homeless families period and along those  
21 lines the large number is total individuals as of the  
22 22<sup>nd</sup> is 60,315 in our shelters but when you talk  
23 about it you're really talking about 12,418 families  
24 and then 2,515 adult families and between those two  
25 that accounts for 43,000 people and then the, the

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2 individuals are such... much smaller piece so how can  
3 we prioritize to make sure and last but not least as  
4 I hear from my colleagues in other parts of the city  
5 where is the, the 20 or 50 or however many hundreds  
6 of millions of dollars that are necessary for land  
7 acquisition costs on the upper east side and what,  
8 what... how much money do you have or are you willing  
9 to ask for to build supportive housing and purpose  
10 built shelters in my district on the upper east side  
11 and will you do ULURPs to get it done?

12 STEVEN BANKS: That's a lot of questions  
13 in a lot of different areas so let me... let me do my  
14 best to try to answer them. So, in terms of street  
15 outreach again I know you, you have great respect for  
16 the not for profits to do the street outreach and I  
17 think we've, we've talked about this before, it takes  
18 on average of about five months to build someone's  
19 trust to help bring someone in off the street, there  
20 are other people that have been on the street for  
21 whom it's much more difficult to build trust so I  
22 don't want you to be frustrated by the work of our  
23 not for profit partners if you continue to see  
24 somebody that they are working with and trying to  
25 build that, that road off the streets. The 2,000

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2 people who have come off the streets and remain off  
3 the streets since the time when HomeStat began in  
4 April of 2016, I think is testament to the hard work  
5 of, of those not for profit providers and they're out  
6 there every day doing that work. I'll look into  
7 whatever the technology issue is that you're raising  
8 but we're very much... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Can... may, may I...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: ...focused on making sure  
12 people actually succeed in bringing people in off the  
13 streets.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If I may  
15 interject.

16 STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If I'm making a  
18 3-1-1 call which you know I do frequently because  
19 every time it doesn't end up being satisfactory you  
20 get an email from me, I imagine... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: I haven't gotten one  
22 lately, so I'm surprised about your question today.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: In, in all  
24 honesty it's because we're trying to work with  
25 individuals in the community particularly around the

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2 key station right near my district office and we're  
3 putting in the requests and for whatever reason the  
4 provider is unable to find the person even though I  
5 can look out my window and see them and we keep  
6 getting the not finding so I in all honesty kind of  
7 gave up a little bit but I'm hoping that if there's a  
8 person that there's an ongoing working relationship  
9 that they would be showing up on the canvass results  
10 every single day..

11 STEVEN BANKS: So, we're very concerned  
12 with quality control, it's the reason why we've had  
13 success with 2,000 human beings and we don't use the  
14 metric of bringing you off the street if you're going  
15 to go back on, it's off the street to remain off the  
16 street, I'd be interested and we'll have someone  
17 follow up with you or your staff about those  
18 particular facts so we can see what went wrong and  
19 make sure that we can deliver on our every day work  
20 to bring people in off the streets. You asked me a  
21 number of other questions about housing, I know  
22 there's an HPD hearing on Friday in which they  
23 testified with regard to the budget, I'm going to  
24 defer to, to their testimony regarding their funding  
25 and, and their programs. We're very focused on the

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social services programs that we operate and I, I want to defer to, to their testimony on Friday.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: For the 12,000 families what size units do they need, is it studios, one bedroom because we keep building those?

STEVEN BANKS: Well I think the average family size is three, its an adult and two, two children that's the typical family size. I would point out as I did in the primary part of the testimony that for families with children the number... the peak census in 2014 versus the peak census currently is about 3,000 fewer people in families with children and we're going to keep moving forward with our initiatives to move people out of shelter, you've been a supporter of supportive housing, you've been a supporter of shelter, I know we were at a ground breaking for a supportive housing facility in your district and I know that you've been talking to me about a few locations in your district and we're going to keep that... keep those conversations going.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And is there money in the budget to build the shelters in my district?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: If you can identify a site  
3 to open we will be able to proceed, I think there's a  
4 misunderstanding a little bit about how shelters  
5 open, shelters operate through reimbursement  
6 particularly families with children shelters,  
7 reimbursement from the state and the federal  
8 government that would be jeopardized by the 125  
9 million dollar cut that I raised earlier we'd be  
10 getting only a 90 percent reimbursement rather than  
11 100 percent reimbursement so I want to just reiterate  
12 again the point I made earlier we have a PEG coming  
13 at us from Albany in the next couple of days and I  
14 want to make sure all hands are on deck to, to help  
15 us with that.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
17 Member Kallos, Council Member Gjonaj.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair,  
19 good to see you again Commissioner, it just feels  
20 like Deja vu all over again, same rhetoric chasing  
21 our tails is basically what we're doing from scatter  
22 sites to hotels to the amount of money that we're  
23 spending on finding shelter for our homeless and not  
24 addressing the real issue which is keeping New  
25 Yorkers in their homes before they become hopeless,

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2 stop the bleeding and let's find permanent housing  
3 solutions. I keep reiterating this time, time and  
4 time again, borough of the Bronx 2016 Fair Share  
5 report, 41 percent more supportive housing units than  
6 Brooklyn, 13 percent more than Manhattan, 99 percent  
7 more than Staten Island and 100 percent more than  
8 Queens. The borough of the Bronx is continually  
9 dumped on inundated and we truly want to bear our  
10 share of the responsibility but we don't get the  
11 resources that are needed to accommodate these  
12 families that truly need more, the number of homeless  
13 children in our schools is beyond comprehension and  
14 we don't have the supportive services for them, for  
15 their families to help them get back on their feet  
16 from health care, education, policing, job training  
17 and it's a continuous merry go round that we go  
18 through. PEG cuts, do you... have you been in  
19 discussions with this administration where your 50  
20 million dollars in PEG cuts are going to be?

21 STEVEN BANKS: We're certainly in  
22 discussions with OMB about that 50 million dollar cut  
23 but I want to encourage you particularly with your  
24 former colleagues in Albany to focus on the 125  
25 million dollar state cut that is coming towards us

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2 which is going to make it very hard to continue the  
3 work that we're doing and the work you want us to do  
4 so I appreciate it... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: No, thank you  
6 Commissioner but I'm worried about your PEG cuts of  
7 50 million... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: That's why... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...before I worry  
10 about the states, this is being handed down to you by  
11 your administration, this administration and I'd like  
12 to know if you're partaking in dialogue with this  
13 administration on where those cuts are going to take  
14 place and if so we'd like to know?

15 STEVEN BANKS: We're, we're in dialogue  
16 about how to implement the 50 million dollar PEG cut  
17 but I with respect 125 million dollar cut is  
18 potentially going to hit us in a couple of days that  
19 will imperil all of the reforms that we've  
20 implemented and the things that you would like us to  
21 do so I'm going to urge you to reach out to your  
22 former colleagues to try to head that off and..  
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I'm reaching out  
25 to you to ask about your 50 million before I ask my

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2 colleagues in Albany about the 125 that may be coming  
3 down the pipeline and if we're going to get  
4 progressive on the issue let's talk about a looming  
5 recession that's going to slow the economy down where  
6 we're all going to have a world of trouble ahead of  
7 us but on the 50 million dollar PEG cuts that your  
8 agency is facing, have you... can you give us any  
9 insight on where that will take place?

10 STEVEN BANKS: Its... we're in discussions  
11 about how to... how to implement it and it will be part  
12 of the executive budget. We announced that we were  
13 going... that that was the amount of money that we're  
14 responsible for coming up with savings and we're  
15 working on a number of potential initiatives with OMB  
16 and it'll be a part of the executive budget but I do  
17 want to say that if the state cut goes into effect in  
18 the next couple of days when the budget is finalized  
19 that's 125 million plus 50 million that's 175 million  
20 dollars' worth of cuts.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: 93-billion-dollar  
22 budget, that's about four billion dollars more than  
23 last years budget and yet we're looking at cuts and  
24 we're about 125 million that's beside the point. A  
25 recent report came out today in the New York Post how

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unaffordable New York City is and the rising rents and the cost of living. For example, New Yorkers get the privilege of paying 42 percent more than the national average for milk, 47 percent more than the national average for bread, 55 percent more for eggs and when it comes to the luxuries of car ownership, 12 and a half percent more for fuel than the national average and according to that report is because of real estate taxes. In this budget alone we're looking at a 1.8 billion dollar increase in real estate taxes which is going to make rents less... more less affordable for New Yorkers and I can't help but bring up my tree bill. The only way we're going to stop the bleeding and the triage is by slowing down the number of families that are being forced onto the streets and the tenant rent increase exemption program will help the most vulnerable of New Yorkers, those earning under 50,000 dollars keeping them in their homes, not allowing them to be subjected to any more rent increases, we need to become proactive and not reactive and if you want to answer that I'm going stick around for a second round as well. Thank you Chair.

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STEVEN BANKS: I, I couldn't agree with you more that prevention is a high priority that's why we've invested so much and been able to reduce evictions in New York City by 37 percent that means 100,000 people have remained in their homes over these last five years because of the joint initiatives of the administration and the Council to make tenant lawyers available, it used to be that one out of 100 tenants in housing court had a lawyer and now it's one, one out of three and with the full implementation of universal access there will 100 percent of low income tenants will have lawyers and you can see the, the metrics already of the 37 percent drop in evictions so I couldn't agree with you more about the importance of prevention.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Commissioner I just want to follow up... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I'm sorry, Commissioner when I say proactive let's stop the tenants from being taken to housing court for nonpayment of rent to begin with and we would be able to save the money that we're providing legal services too, it's about affordability.

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I agree that's why  
3 we think it's so important to get the Krueger Havesi  
4 bill passed which would give us the ability to pay  
5 additional rental assistance to people to help them  
6 stay in their homes and avoid evictions, I agree with  
7 that.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Commissioner I just  
9 want to follow up on the... on the PEG question...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: I'm sorry?

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The, the PEG  
13 questions, actually.. well, well about the state cut,  
14 has OMB indicated to you or the agency that they are  
15 or are not willing to back fill any state cut that  
16 comes down to TANF if its 125 or if it's something  
17 less has OMB... have you had discussions with OMB about  
18 this and have they indicated one way or another  
19 whether they are willing to authorize the city to  
20 allocate city tax levy to backfill because that's,  
21 that's... that cuts into direct service for clients?

22 STEVEN BANKS: Both OMB and we feel very  
23 strongly that the state shouldn't be transferring  
24 state obligations to us and in the remaining days  
25 we're 100 percent focused on that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh. Okay, so I  
3 guess we'll talk about that at exec if it goes  
4 through.

5 STEVEN BANKS: I know... I know you have  
6 been involved in this, I'm going to be in Albany  
7 tomorrow and I would encourage everyone to be very  
8 much focused on preventing this from happening, so we  
9 don't have to discuss it at exec. I don't want to be  
10 here testifying at the executive budget hearing about  
11 the impact of that cut and the services that our  
12 clients need.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to the  
14 city's PEG so just, just for the record we haven't  
15 had a round of PEGs with this administration yet but  
16 I was here for the previous administration that did  
17 do PEGs and my recollection is that we... they laid out  
18 PEGs in the preliminary budget so that there was an  
19 opportunity for the Council and the administration as  
20 much as we didn't like those PEGs that we could have  
21 a full airing of them and preliminary and executive  
22 budget hearings to go through those and as a city  
23 Council and Mayor's Office and the agencies  
24 collectively to determine what the appropriate course  
25 of action is. If we don't know what the PEGs are

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2 until exec it makes it a lot harder for the Council  
3 and other interested parties, advocates, providers,  
4 the clients to have a say in the matter and so this  
5 is not just directed at this agency or these agencies  
6 this is directed at the administration as a whole  
7 because this council is not able to do its job if we  
8 don't know, the Mayor comes and tells us at the  
9 preliminary budget announcement that there's going to  
10 be 750 million dollars of PEGs but guess what we  
11 don't know what they are and that was... you know many  
12 weeks ago that that was presented. So, frankly it  
13 just kind of seems like a delay tactic because you  
14 know and... so, I mean what's, what's going on here,  
15 do, do we not... do you not know what your PEGs are  
16 going to be because you've already gotten the  
17 directive from OMB to do that, do we not know what  
18 it's going to be?

19 STEVEN BANKS: We have not completed the  
20 process of identifying which PEGs work, part of the  
21 place that we're in is awaiting to determine what the  
22 impact of the state PEG is going to be but I think  
23 the fact that the PEG announcement was made when it  
24 was made reflects the fluid dynamic nature of the  
25 economic and budget situation but in terms of our

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2 agency and I appreciate that you're making a general  
3 statement not specifically to our agency we have a  
4 potential state cut of 125 million dollars that we  
5 are fighting to prevent depending on the impact of  
6 that we then have to deal with a 50 million dollar  
7 cut and so we have a lot of... a lot of work to do to  
8 prevent the 125 million dollar cut from happening..  
9 [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: ...and then depending on  
12 what happens with that we'll have to face the 50  
13 million dollar cut.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How was the  
15 percentage determined for it to be 50, 50 million  
16 dollars from these agencies because I, I... you know I...  
17 the, the agency that's going to be testifying after  
18 you ACS is looking at a seven percent cut in their  
19 CTL?

20 STEVEN BANKS: Right... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and that seems  
22 obviously wildly disparate and I don't understand why  
23 the agency that's tasked with protecting vulnerable  
24 children has a seven percent cut and other agencies  
25 have nowhere near that.

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STEVEN BANKS: I mean part of the

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challenge here is that Medicaid in our budget is, is

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exempt, that's part of the process and I think the

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other part of the process is that we have already..

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had already imposed limited hiring in parts of our

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agency previously as part of other efficiencies that

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we were seeking so I think for each agency they're in

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different places. For our agency.. out budget as I had

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testified a little bit earlier is not discretionary

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funding its entitlement funding and we had been

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implementing staffing.. we've been implementing

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controls in filling positions previously and so I

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think from a conversation about what to.. what to

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impose for a PEG it took into account the fact that

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we had already been exercising position control.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, actually

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that's.. I just want to follow up with one quick

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question here, I have heard that there's a, a hiring

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freeze for eligibility specialists in HRA, is that

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true?

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STEVEN BANKS: There's a citywide hiring

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freeze.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Citywide hiring

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freeze.. [cross-talk]

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Yes... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and that applies  
4 then to HRA housing... eligibility specialists, okay.  
5 Okay, I'm going to turn it over to Council Member  
6 Lander for questions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Mr.  
8 Chair and Commissioner and your team, it's, it's good  
9 to see you and I know that, that like me and like all  
10 of us you remain distressed at our inability to make  
11 bigger progress on combatting homelessness but I  
12 appreciate the way you get up every day and keep  
13 working hard to make it happen and kind of in light  
14 of Council Member Kallos's questions I know we have  
15 sited several shelters in our shared community and  
16 district in the... in recent years and that we will be  
17 siting some more there as well and that doesn't make  
18 anybody happy but it is the thing we are obligated to  
19 do together and I appreciate your team's work with my  
20 office and with our community to do it in the best of  
21 possible ways. I have two questions, one about  
22 placements in the NYCHA which is a perennial favorite  
23 of mine at these hearings and one about safe haven.  
24 So, on the NYCHA side and almost every year I ask  
25 this question at the hearing and I look at the

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2 numbers this year and it looks to me like we're on  
3 path to place fewer people out of shelter into public  
4 housing than we did last year and last year was fewer  
5 than the year before that and I still don't  
6 understand it, to me especially given the need to put  
7 more resources into NYCHA the obvious fact that we  
8 should develop a program that provides some  
9 additional subsidy to take families who are in  
10 shelter help them move into public housing, pay the  
11 costs to NYCHA of them having permanent housing, help  
12 NYCHA pay its bills, help more families get out of  
13 shelter just seems like a no brainer, it would not  
14 solve our homelessness crisis but I still don't  
15 understand why we're not doing more of it, it just  
16 seems so shortsighted and then second, on safe  
17 havens. This may relate to the Chair's issue of just  
18 like looking in the budget and having U of As and  
19 understanding what's getting funded and not funded, I  
20 can't find in the budget how I would know is there a  
21 growth in safe haven beds, I think there is but I  
22 don't see it in the budget so can you tell us what's  
23 going on there? I know a lot of work is going in  
24 there, it is my perception that even though as you  
25 rightly said sometimes it takes a long time to build

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2 trust and get someone to move in, that the lack of  
3 safe haven beds is a real constraint on moving people  
4 in when that trust is built and they are ready so  
5 what can you say about what the need is there to be  
6 able to meet it, what's in the budget to, to do it  
7 better?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, and thank you for  
9 your kind words and for your recent very kind words  
10 concerning the work that we're doing. Let me talk  
11 about safe havens first, so when we started there  
12 were about 600 safe haven beds and by safe havens we  
13 have both safe havens and something also called  
14 stabilization beds, some of you have been supportive,  
15 I know the Chair has been in terms of using church  
16 beds which are available to us throughout the day as  
17 opposed to you have to be out at... during the day so  
18 we can use those as stabilization beds. So, we've  
19 gone from about 600 to... we've more than doubled that  
20 number and the budget will allow us to actually  
21 triple the number that we started with. We too want  
22 to make sure that we have as safe haven resources or  
23 stabilization bed resources available as possible to  
24 help bring people in. One of the things that has  
25 become clear to us and to our outreach teams is, is

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2 not simply having the bed it's where it's located,  
3 it's sort of consistent with our Turning the Tide  
4 approach to shelter which is having an organizing  
5 principle for the provision of shelter makes a  
6 difference in terms of helping people get on their  
7 feet and be, you know near schools and jobs and  
8 health care and houses of worship so with safe havens  
9 having them as close as possible where people are on  
10 the street is a... is a... is a newer approach than  
11 simply having safe haven beds. I think we have the  
12 experience and I'm... and I know you and your staff  
13 have had the experience of somebody saying hey I'd  
14 come in but only if its right here and so that's what  
15 this additional funding is aimed at doing. I think as  
16 I said earlier from a functional budgeting point of  
17 view we can show you where it is but apropos of what  
18 I said to the Chair we'll, we'll certainly finance  
19 staff to agency staff and OMB staff sit down and see  
20 what we can do to make sure that you have the tools  
21 to do what you need to do. In terms of NYCHA, you  
22 know we move about 1,500 people out of shelter into  
23 NYCHA apartments, there were some prior years where  
24 we got different one-time allocations, but our basic  
25 number is, is to move 1,500 out... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: 1,500 in what  
3 period?

4 STEVEN BANKS: In a... in a calendar year,  
5 1,500 households which then obviously becomes...  
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: 1,500 households?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Households, right.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: That's our target  
10 for how many people will move out of shelter into  
11 public housing?

12 STEVEN BANKS: Right, the total... [cross-  
13 talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: How many  
15 vacancies are there a year?

16 STEVEN BANKS: The total turnover is  
17 about 3,300 in NYCHA so that's... and then on top of it  
18 you have people in other groups and plus the waiting  
19 list so it's 1,500 out of about 3,300.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And you're  
21 satisfied with that?

22 STEVEN BANKS: You know you asked me this  
23 question when I went from legal aid to become a  
24 Commissioner... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: You were really  
3 unsatisfied with it back then.

4 STEVEN BANKS: No, I, I actually had a  
5 different, different take on what I was going to say  
6 and I'll say it again, I was there for 33 years so  
7 I'm going to... so I must be an optimist by nature,  
8 right and then I became the HRA Commissioner and now  
9 I'm the Commissioner of both HRA and DHS so I must  
10 continue to be an optimist by nature. So, I'm  
11 optimistic that any housing resource we can get we  
12 can make use of and that's one of the reasons why we  
13 created all these rental assistance programs and we  
14 reinstated the NYCHA priority, it helps us get  
15 109,000 people housed and every last apartment we can  
16 get and find we can put to use.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. Thank  
18 you, Mr. Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
20 Member Lander, Council Member Helen Rosenthal.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so  
22 much Chair, great to see you Commissioner. I just  
23 want to start my communications, staff is reminding  
24 me that last week in the daily news I was misquoted  
25 completely about homelessness and I did not say what

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2 they said and instead what I meant to say or what I  
3 did say was that the ongoing levels of homelessness  
4 in New York City is tragic. I think you're handling  
5 if the Daily News is watching me now of the crisis  
6 has been spectacular, I think you lean in every day  
7 and you have a great staff who's working so hard, I  
8 certainly see that in my district so I appreciate all  
9 the work that you and your agency is doing around.. to  
10 address the homelessness crisis. I'm asking questions  
11 about three different areas, first about domestic  
12 violence shelters and how we're... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...taking care  
15 of survivors of domestic violence, I have a few  
16 questions about the human service contracts and  
17 lastly just a little bit about follow up from the  
18 Jazmine Headley situation and implicit bias. So,  
19 first of all I see here that... hang on, last year I  
20 think the DV... you took in a certain number of DV  
21 cases, I think it was 800 individuals... yeah, it's  
22 roughly 800, could be a little bit more but between  
23 your shelters and I'm wondering what the wait list is  
24 like number one and number two, I'm hearing from  
25 survivors and advocates that in order for survivors

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2 to process checking in its... that process is  
3 challenging and provides difficulties for them having  
4 to leave work and juggle so many different things  
5 whether or not you guys could try to ease that and  
6 similarly whether or not the funding at the shelters  
7 provides funds for child care?

8 STEVEN BANKS: First of all thank you  
9 very much for your comments, it means a lot to our  
10 staff and I appreciate your comments, I know they're  
11 directed towards me but I think we as an agency take  
12 them as all of us and our frontline staff who come to  
13 work every day trying to make a difference in  
14 people's lives so I appreciate your, your comments.  
15 There are different pieces I think that Administrator  
16 Bonilla can do some of this but let me just try to  
17 give a very top line first which is one of the  
18 benefits of having the agencies integrated is that we  
19 have got HRA domestic violence shelters but we have  
20 DHS which is there so when you raise the question  
21 about a wait list about 30 percent of the families in  
22 our DHS system the head of household has a history of  
23 domestic violence of some sort, it might not be a, a...  
24 at the level of the state statute that entitled you  
25 to DV shelter but we have between the two agencies a

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2 much broader reach than the number of beds we have in  
3 the domestic violence system and I think with the two  
4 administrators here we're very much focused on we're  
5 not two separate entities, we're very much trying to  
6 provide a, a range of different services that people  
7 want. Some people... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Are not maybe  
9 having the beds you, you can catch people in  
10 different spaces?

11 STEVEN BANKS: Right and some... and some  
12 people... and you know this is... domestic violence  
13 shelter it's a... it's a... you know we respect people's  
14 choices there may be someone who's a survivor who  
15 cannot remain in the community but would prefer to,  
16 to not be in a domestic violence shelter perhaps they  
17 would prefer to be in a DHS shelter. Having said that  
18 we made a commitment to add more beds and I think we  
19 have some good information to, to report to you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great, if... and  
21 then I'm going to go onto my next questions, thank  
22 you.

23 GRACE BONILLA: So, at the beginning of  
24 the administration we made a commitment to add 300  
25 new emergency beds, we have fulfilled that commitment

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1  
2 but to follow up on what the Commissioner has said  
3 part of the work that we do collaboratively with DHS  
4 it's not just that we have staff at PATH we also make  
5 sure that the, the clients that are not going into DV  
6 shelter are getting additional services while they're  
7 in DHS. I also want to point out that DV services  
8 because of state law is limited to intimate partner  
9 violence so while the Commissioner is right that 30  
10 percent of clients may have a history of DV in the  
11 larger sense of the word for DV shelters it's, it's  
12 limited to DV... to intimate partner violence.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: When you say  
14 limited do you mean the funding that they provide,  
15 they don't prevent you... if they were all the money in  
16 the world, right so you're talking about a funding  
17 prevention.

18 GRACE BONILLA: It, it is a funding  
19 prevention... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, just to  
21 be... [cross-talk]

22 GRACE BONILLA: ...it is set by the rate..  
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...clear..  
25 [cross-talk]

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2 GRACE BONILLA: ..absolutely if there were  
3 additional funding, we would look at it but the model  
4 even the way services are provided for example the  
5 way... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: By the state...  
7 [cross-talk]

8 GRACE BONILLA: ...case management is  
9 provided is to... yes, by... it is sanctioned by the  
10 state, it is to address intimate partner violence.

11 STEVEN BANKS: And just... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I got you...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: And just to add it's a...  
15 it's... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And Chair if I  
17 could... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: ...it's a state statute  
19 actually... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...just have two  
21 more minutes, a little bit more? Thank you.

22 STEVEN BANKS: It's, it's a state statute  
23 as Administrator Bonilla says that defines who's  
24 entitled to domestic violence shelter, it's one of  
25 the reasons why in our Department of Homeless

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2 Services shelter system we have a broader conception  
3 so that we can have a, a safety net that we think is  
4 commensurate with what the, the need is.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, so  
6 that's disturbing. I, I appreciate you, sorry let me  
7 clarify... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: I understood what you  
9 meant.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: The state..  
11 [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: Statute.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Statute is..  
14 its disturbingly too onerous for what most people  
15 probably need so they're requiring people to have a  
16 certain level of domestic violence in their life and  
17 then we can fund the program for them, that's  
18 disturbing.

19 STEVEN BANKS: And I think it relates to  
20 a lot of the conversations that we've had about the  
21 DHS census. If you look at the fact that 30 percent  
22 of the people in our shelter system have as, as  
23 Administrator Bonilla said some involvement with  
24 domestic violence if not meeting the state's  
25 saturator standard for imminent danger that's

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2 imminent partner violence, that's one of our drivers,  
3 11 percent of the people coming into shelter had an  
4 eviction that's because of I think all of the great  
5 work we've all done to drive down that number but 30  
6 percent are coming in because of... with a... with a  
7 history of domestic violence... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And then not  
9 right now but if you could get back to me about  
10 making the process easier for, for DV survivors I'd  
11 appreciate that...

12 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, interested as always  
13 in sitting down or, or having a phone conversation  
14 about what exactly you're seeing so that we can try  
15 and make improvements.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Are you  
17 getting funding again from the state to address the  
18 issue of employee overtime and the fact that if  
19 you're high management and you're not paid over time?  
20 So, in your contracts the providers are now forced to  
21 comply with exempting top managers from getting  
22 overtime and yet their salaries have not increased.

23 STEVEN BANKS: There hasn't been a state  
24 rate change, there's not been a rate change.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, so have  
3 the providers approached you about this problem,  
4 we're hearing about it a lot?

5 GRACE BONILLA: So, if we're talking  
6 about DV providers we've actually I'm very proud to  
7 say that we have worked aggressively to make sure  
8 that we have an open line of communication with  
9 providers on a number of issues, happy to sit down  
10 with you to see what, what we're missing but we have  
11 not heard this from providers.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: It's not just  
13 DV, it's any human service contract, no. And the  
14 legal aid society is asking for additional funds for  
15 the work that they do in their contracts, their case  
16 load is high, they're doing a lot of work and they  
17 feel they're not being paid at the level commensurate  
18 with the work that they're doing, is that something  
19 you're exploring?

20 STEVEN BANKS: Which, which contracts in  
21 particular?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Any contract  
23 you have with a legal aid provider.

24 STEVEN BANKS: I mean in terms of the  
25 immigration legal services funding we have made a

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2 pretty significant increase from about three million  
3 dollars to more than 30 million dollars for the  
4 field... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, but I  
6 would always ask is that because of increased demand  
7 for services or is the contract... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: Actually... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...richer?

10 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, so I was going to  
11 actually come to... come to that as well and then in  
12 terms of tenant representation we went from six  
13 million to 166 million full implementation... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right but...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...we always want to hear  
18 from our providers about what, what their challenges  
19 are, I know that there was testimony just last week  
20 from the Legal Aid Society about their request for  
21 additional immigration funding, we've just, you know  
22 now heard the testimony, we're going to look at it, I  
23 know that there is other testimony about their  
24 criminal defense funding..

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, let's

3 move on... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...I'm just going to say...

5 [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...I... it's the

7 same question as we discussed last year...

8 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...at this exact

10 same time that the legal service providers are in the

11 same shoes as the human service providers and they're

12 just routinely being underfunded. Lastly, I noted in

13 the budget that implicit bias mitigation is in the

14 budget for 1.3 million growing to 2.9 million, is

15 there any jeopardy those... that money will be pegged

16 away?

17 STEVEN BANKS: I mean I know I committed

18 to do those things under oath to address a very

19 serious situation and just, you know for the record

20 for body worn cameras its... 300,000 is in our fiscal

21 year 19 budget, it's a one time expenditure and then

22 in order to maintain the operation of body worn

23 cameras for our peace officers it's 54,000 dollars

24 that's, that's in the... in the preliminary budget

25 plan, for implicit bias it's a million dollars in our

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2 FY 19 budget, 2.2 in our FY 20 budget and then a  
3 million in the out years. I come back to it, I was  
4 saying I think in response to Council Member Gjonaj's  
5 question and the Chair's question we're very  
6 concerned about the 125 million dollar cut that is  
7 proposed at the state level, it's a ten percent  
8 reduction in funding for TANF funds that effects  
9 benefits that we pay out, it effects shelter payments  
10 that we have... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, so  
12 everything... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: ...and so we're very...  
14 [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...is at risk...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...we're very concerned and  
18 that's why we appreciate the Council pushing back  
19 hard on that because that would be on top of a 50  
20 million... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay... [cross-  
22 talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...dollar PEG that we would...  
24 that we'll be implanting.

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, thank  
3 you Commissioner, thank you Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thanks Council Member  
5 Rosenthal, Council Member Treyger.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, thank  
7 you Chair, welcome Commissioner..

8 STEVEN BANKS: How are you?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: On November 17<sup>th</sup>,  
10 2018 my legislation to provide families with, with  
11 free diapers, Intro 0380-2018 was enacted. It is now  
12 Local Law 182 of 2018 and it was supposed to go into  
13 effect last week, but the rollout instead has been  
14 delayed and there has been little communication with  
15 providers and parents. As you know many families in  
16 our city struggle to afford diapers and this is  
17 unacceptable because diapers are a basic need. Local  
18 Law 182 of 2018 will require the city to make  
19 available a supply of diapers and baby wipes  
20 sufficient to meet the needs of residents and  
21 recipients of subsidized child care centers, family  
22 justice centers, Department of Education life  
23 programs and city operated domestic violence shelters  
24 and homeless shelters. How are ACS, DHS, DSS, DSS  
25 planning on implementing Local Law 182?

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STEVEN BANKS: First of all I thought it was an important piece of legislation, we have systems in place to do this but I think the intent of the law is to make sure that it... nobody ever changes the systems and I appreciate it from a client perspective that it, it was an important reform that you enacted. Speaking of our DV shelters and our DHS shelters we have... have had the funding in place to make sure that diapers are available, we're focused on I think exactly what you're asking me about, about making sure that we've got communication in place so that people know that, that services that I might say to you yeah, we have it and its available I just want to be overly cautious to make sure that people are aware of it and we're, we're going to be putting in place a rollout. We do use the New York State industries for the disabled as our supplier of diapers under the state finance law, they have a right of first refusal on many goods and so we have been using them as the supplier, we think it works well but we're obviously going to take a... you know the look that you would like us to take to make sure that the implementation is working. As I see it, I think our, our focus needs to be in moving forward is

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2 making sure the communication is right for the  
3 families so that they know that which we've been  
4 funding is available to them.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: But are you  
6 aware of any family that has requested diapers for  
7 their children that have been denied?

8 STEVEN BANKS: Not aware of that, if you  
9 have information, I'd be... I'd be unhappy to know  
10 about it but let me know about it so that we can  
11 address what, what went wrong.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah, what I'm  
13 hearing directly is that there's virtually no  
14 communication going on with folks about, about the  
15 enactment of this law and so it's maybe not an  
16 intentional denial but there are services being  
17 denied one way or, or the other because folks just  
18 don't know about it.

19 STEVEN BANKS: Okay, but as I said one of  
20 the things that I think you're right on is we will  
21 make sure that we're... have... make sure that there  
22 aren't families that aren't aware that this is  
23 available to them, it's something that's been  
24 available to them, the law gives an opportunity to

25

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2 reinforce that it must be provided to people because  
3 that's what's required by the law.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: To follow up DSS  
5 says DV shelters through a state set for diem are,  
6 are funded to provide diapers and wipe supplies in DV  
7 shelters and now must develop a method of providing  
8 written notice to parents in the designated city  
9 languages about the availability of diapers and baby  
10 wipes, how much is the state per diem for shelter  
11 providers and is there a dedicated funding line for  
12 diapers?

13 STEVEN BANKS: Let me get... I don't know  
14 the exact amount of money, our DV system is regulated  
15 very closely by the state and the rates are set by  
16 the state so I'll follow up with you and your staff  
17 or we'll follow up with you and your staff to answer  
18 that question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I would  
20 appreciate that and just have some... couple of follow  
21 up questions... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: ...on that matter.  
24 What is the pantry budget for emergency shelters, is  
25 there a separate line for emergency diapers and wipes

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2 and how much is that and do you believe that there's  
3 a difference of quantity between the broader  
4 requirements for diapers and wipes provided for under  
5 Local Law 182 and the allocation of emergency diapers  
6 and wipes provided for under the pantry budget?

7 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, we don't think that  
8 there's problem presented by the requirement's Local  
9 Law and what we have been funding but again I want to  
10 come back to your appropriate initial question to me  
11 was let's make sure the people know about it and  
12 there's... that will be a further check to make sure  
13 that in fact there's not a gap between what we're  
14 funding and what people need.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right because I,  
16 I plan to visit to ensure that the law is being  
17 enacted and followed Commissioner and.. [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: I knew you would.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And, and so I  
20 just... this is very, very important to, to my office  
21 and to folks that we care about and lastly Chair,  
22 thank you so much just a... very last question, I heard  
23 earlier before Council Member... Councilman Lander  
24 asked about the number of NYCHA units that might be  
25 available for families in desperate need of housing

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2 and I certainly... you know I appreciate that. Now my  
3 question is... you know I represent quite a bit of  
4 NYCHA in my district, to my knowledge I don't... I'm  
5 not aware of certain types of supportive services for  
6 residents that we see in terms of developments that  
7 the city sometimes builds with, with HPD and some  
8 service provider, there have been instances in my  
9 district where folks who came out of the shelter  
10 system were, were given a NYCHA apartment and one  
11 instance almost a week later there was a shooting  
12 involved with that person because that person had...  
13 was battling an addiction and that addiction and the  
14 troubles that come with addiction traveled with that  
15 person to that apartment and the shooting occurred  
16 right during graduation time which traumatized many  
17 of the children in my community and district and... who  
18 were going to celebrate... supposed to be happy  
19 occasion, they had to see a crime scene tape in their  
20 building and, and... on Surf Avenue. My question is,  
21 what type of screening is in place to ensure that  
22 residents are being provided the services they need  
23 and not just simply being handed a key and saying  
24 here's an apartment but here is the support that you  
25 might need traveling with you to that apartment

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2 because these are human beings, they're not, you know  
3 just simply... you know they're not robots, they're  
4 human beings, they might have needs? I understand  
5 that the goal is to reduce the folks in the shelter  
6 system and I... and I appreciate that but we also have  
7 to be mindful that some folks might need additional  
8 support and so I just would like to hear... to hear  
9 your thoughts on that.

10 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you and what a  
11 tragedy you're describing, I really... I, I really  
12 appreciate how tragic that must have been and I also  
13 appreciate your focus on our clients as human beings  
14 which frankly I, I wish I didn't have to say I  
15 appreciate it but I do appreciate it because  
16 sometimes that's lost in a lot of the discussion  
17 about the services we provide and the clients we  
18 serve and so I, I commend you for, for that. Our home  
19 based program is our aftercare program that's  
20 available for all families with children in  
21 particular that move out of our shelters and our home  
22 based providers proactively reach out, its not one of  
23 those things where hey you can contact this, this is  
24 a part of their mission to follow up with families  
25 and make sure that issues that might arise in

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2 anyone's family is... can be addressed so we take that  
3 program very seriously, we increased funding for it  
4 during this administration in order to make sure that  
5 there's both prevention of homeless services provided  
6 to home, home based offices but also after care as  
7 well and the kind of support that's sometimes needed  
8 for somebody that's gone through a difficult period  
9 of time and needs some additional help.

10 GRACE BONILLA: Let me add to that  
11 because when individuals and families are in shelter,  
12 we're doing a comprehensive assessment and making  
13 referrals to community services so while they're in  
14 shelter they have the ability to make those  
15 connections so that's one support that we also want  
16 to make.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, thank  
18 you Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
20 Member Treyger, Council Member Gibson.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you, thank  
22 you Chair, good afternoon Commissioner... [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: How are you... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: ...thank you and  
25 your team for being here. I appreciate all of the

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1  
2 hard work you do and certainly I know that the  
3 challenges sometimes seem insurmountable. I am  
4 frustrated by some of the challenges that we continue  
5 to face when you talk about housing, homeless  
6 families. You alluded to the housing hearing on  
7 Friday of which I Co-Chaired with Chair Robert  
8 Cornegy and one of the things that I recognize is in  
9 the Housing New York plan to preserve and create  
10 300,000 new units of housing through FY 2026, the  
11 city is on target and actually has exceeded so far  
12 targets of housing preservation which is great. New  
13 construction we have not met our target specifically  
14 in the category of New Yorkers that are at extremely  
15 low income and so I guess my question is there is a  
16 very ambitious campaign, housing our future where the  
17 advocates and many housing campaign folks want the  
18 Mayor to commit 30,000 units of housing set aside for  
19 formerly homeless families, homeless New Yorkers and  
20 I guess I wanted to understand the partnership that  
21 DSS has with HPD as they create all of this new  
22 housing. So, we're building new housing for every  
23 different income level; middle, high income, low  
24 income but extremely low income we are falling far  
25 short. The majority of the families that are living

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2 in our shelters are in that particular category so  
3 are there things that we could be doing more of where  
4 we can really get through the challenges of  
5 addressing the housing needs for the New Yorkers that  
6 are at the lowest end of the spectrum?

7 STEVEN BANKS: So, first of all thank you  
8 for all the important work you're doing in your  
9 district and citywide, you've been a supporter of  
10 what we are trying to do and I appreciate that,  
11 sometimes I know it's challenging, you know from our  
12 agency's point of view we've got a very complex and  
13 broad mission and I know that HPD is very focused on  
14 what they have been charged to do in the city. For us  
15 they've been helpful, for example helping us gain  
16 access to 421-A units and we've gotten about 600  
17 families moved out of our shelters, households moved  
18 out of our shelters into those units that was  
19 something that didn't exist before, that's helping  
20 us. HPD has been helpful to us in our efforts to  
21 convert clusters so, you know we have a large  
22 mission, they have a large mission and they've been  
23 helpful to us. I'm cognizant that there are larger  
24 issues involved here and that you and I seek Council  
25 Member Salamanca here as well are very much focused

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on, on some of these larger questions and I know that there was... that there's going to be dialogue following the hearing on Friday with HPD about their plans and, and, and what your concerns are.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Right, so they're on target to achieve the numbers by FY 2026 but the reality is, is we need more housing to be expedited before 2026 so the frustration that many of us feel particularly in the Bronx when you look at all of the sightings of new shelters they are all saturated in the same communities of color and no disrespect to any of my colleagues but certainly I have every right as a representative of district 16 who has housed not only my homeless families but many other homeless families that are sometimes not even housed in their own original community and so when you talk about new construction we have been working extremely hard with developers to understand the need for set asides for homeless families coming directly from the shelter, raising the threshold from minimum of ten percent to as high as 30 percent. Council Member Salamanca will talk about that but even with all the things that we're still doing it's honestly not enough. I wanted

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2 to ask a question about cluster which you brought up  
3 because... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: ...most of the  
6 cluster housing again saturated in the Bronx and the  
7 city is on the cusp of a new agreement to acquire 17  
8 buildings, 13 of which are in the Bronx valued at 174  
9 million dollars, now that's 30 million dollars over  
10 the city's appraised value and my concern is we  
11 talked about eminent domain when you made the  
12 announcement in the Bronx with potentially taking  
13 over ownership of these distressed buildings and  
14 allowing not for profits to run them but my concern  
15 is 174 million dollars that we're going to spend to  
16 acquire these buildings from landlords have numerous  
17 violations, we know renovations will need to be done  
18 and on Friday I asked HPD does that 174 million  
19 include any money to renovate these units and I was  
20 told no. So, my concern is why are we paying 30  
21 million dollars more than the appraised value and  
22 what types of estimates can we get that will  
23 determine these buildings and the real work that's  
24 going to be required to acquire them over, you know  
25 the next few months as we discuss this?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Thank, thank you for your  
3 focus on this issue, I know that for both you and me  
4 it's been important to try to capture the cluster  
5 units and keep them in the affordable housing stock.  
6 This Giuliani era program was a program that took  
7 units off the market and didn't serve the clients  
8 well, didn't serve the community well and we... with  
9 this transaction we will have gotten... we would have  
10 ended the use of 70 percent of the units, we have 30  
11 percent still to go and when we announced your, your...  
12 appreciate you, you referencing this, we announced  
13 last December that we were going to use the new tool,  
14 imminent domain to try to convert as many units as  
15 possible to affordable permanent housing, in these 17  
16 buildings there are permanent tenants as well as...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh, right  
19 that need help, uh-huh... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: ...that need help, there's  
21 468 units who were involved in the cluster program  
22 and about 261 units are... were permanent tenants so  
23 let me... I don't... I don't mean to, to bog us down in  
24 this but I think its important to understand what,  
25 what the imminent domain proceedings are and what the

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1  
2 valuation of the properties would be at an imminent  
3 domain proceeding. So, in an imminent domain  
4 proceeding it takes three years in order to gain city  
5 ownership of the building... of buildings and a court  
6 determines what the value... the highest and best use  
7 of the... of the property would be and then the  
8 landlords is entitled to interest for the amount of  
9 time that the case was in court so let's... using  
10 imaginary money the landlord... the court determines  
11 that the property is worth 100 dollars that means  
12 that at the end of that three year period whatever  
13 interest the landlord could have gotten by using that  
14 money the court awards that to the landlord. In  
15 addition, the court awards attorney's fees to the  
16 landlord and the owner is always going to say the  
17 building is worth a lot more than what a city  
18 appraiser might say. So, you have a litigation risk  
19 of paying a lot more money than what an appraiser  
20 says and then you have a verily human issue which is  
21 these 1,200 children and adults in these 17 buildings  
22 now that will be in limbo for three years whether or  
23 not they're going to get to keep their apartments and  
24 by resolving this out of court taking into account  
25 the litigation risks and what the costs would be from

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1  
2 an imminent domain proceeding that's why this is a  
3 fair price to pay. In addition, its important to... and  
4 I think HPD might have said this but I want to say it  
5 again for the record here, the median price of a rent  
6 stabilized unit in the Bronx without renovation costs  
7 is 220,000 dollars, the median price for a rent  
8 stabilized unit in Brooklyn is 280,000 dollars,  
9 we're... the city is financing a cost of 237,000  
10 dollars, you're right to point out that that doesn't  
11 include the cost of upgrading but there's one  
12 difference between what the median price is on the  
13 open market and this situation which is why it was so  
14 important to be able to capture these units back. If  
15 we simply took with, with that 220,000 dollar median  
16 price for a rent stabilized apartment in the Bronx,  
17 the 280,000 dollar median price for a rent stabilized  
18 unit in Brooklyn those are some tenants in those  
19 units and so the landlord is buy... somebody is buying  
20 a building for those per unit costs subject to having  
21 someone in the unit with a rent stabilized lease.  
22 Here if we simply ended the cluster program and took  
23 the people out of the units the landlord would be  
24 able to sell on the open market essentially 468  
25 vacant units which a new purchaser or the existing

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2 landlord could take out of rent stabilization through  
3 all of the gaps that you and I both know in state law  
4 through major capital improvements and everything.  
5 So, by financing this transaction we have preserved  
6 the permanent affordability of these units in a very  
7 different situation than someone in the market place  
8 buying the units at these median prices even though  
9 our payment for the unit is about the same and as you  
10 say we have the additional cost of renovations but  
11 its apples to oranges a little bit because the  
12 landlord could have sold this building with 460  
13 vacant units and therefore the purchase price would  
14 have been effected by selling a building that's rent  
15 stabilized with 468 vacant units. The appraiser was  
16 done... was conducted by a law department appraiser  
17 that... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh... [cross-  
19 talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: ...is very familiar with how  
21 to evaluate the, the risks and challenges of an  
22 imminent domain proceeding, taking into account all  
23 of the factors that I just described so that's how  
24 you get to the... get to the purchase price, it's a  
25 purchase price that takes into account imminent

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2 domain and risks of litigation versus leaving people  
3 in limbo for three years and it takes into account  
4 what the median rate is for stabilized units that's  
5 tenanted let alone here where they wouldn't... 468 of  
6 them would be vacant.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, I thank you  
8 for the explanation and appreciate you Chair, I guess  
9 my final thing to say just to wrap it up is during  
10 this timeline of working with these 17 landlords it  
11 would be my expectation that the city would stay on  
12 top of the landlords, the social service providers of  
13 these cluster families and essentially I know  
14 renovations are necessary but there are hundreds of  
15 violations today in these buildings that have not  
16 been addressed that need to be addressed and should  
17 be addressed before we give landlords more money to  
18 purchase these buildings and so over the next few  
19 months I'm going to be working with you because I  
20 imagine many of these 13 buildings I represent, I  
21 know I do but I do want to make sure that there is  
22 some immediate attention given to the cluster  
23 families and the other traditional tenants that have  
24 been living in some really challenging conditions  
25 knowing that there will be, you know light at the end

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2 of the tunnel but we're paying 174 million dollars  
3 and these buildings have tons of violations that need  
4 to be addressed so if you can that will be really  
5 great to stay on top of the social service providers  
6 who you know they... who they are as well as the  
7 landlords in making sure those violations are  
8 addressed asap.

9 STEVEN BANKS: Right, the, the, the not  
10 for profits that will be the owners of these  
11 buildings and the social services providers are very  
12 reputable housing group selected by HPD, Banana  
13 Kelly, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Committee in Brooklyn, Manny,  
14 Fordham Bedford, I mean these are groups with deep  
15 roots that have a strong track record of providing  
16 tenants with the kind of services and support and  
17 managing buildings in an appropriate way that tenants  
18 are entitled to have after the end of this 19 year  
19 old program that, that we're... already made progress  
20 in illuminating 70 percent of it with this  
21 transaction.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you,  
23 thank you Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
25 Council Member Gibson, Council Member Salamanca.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you  
3 Chair, good afternoon Commissioner. First, I want to...  
4 I want to thank you and your team, this last year and  
5 a half our working relationship has been a great one.  
6 I know that in, in the past I've, I really have been  
7 vocal about the amount of homeless shelters that I  
8 have in my council district, I still feel that I am  
9 overburdened compared to some of my other colleagues  
10 however, we've been work together to find the  
11 appropriate places where these shelters that are  
12 needed where we can place them and, and actually  
13 working with other types of populations... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...and so I'm,  
16 I'm thankful for your work and your team's work to,  
17 you know working with me and getting this addressed.  
18 Commissioner I want to... I want to start first with  
19 HRA. I have I believe the largest HRA office in the  
20 borough of the Bronx on Barretto Street in the  
21 Banknote building... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...which is  
24 directly across the street from a safe haven shelter  
25 which Bronx Works operates and, and that, that, that

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2 particular block is very challenging, it's a very  
3 small block, the amount of individuals or, or people  
4 coming to seek services its in a very high volume... at  
5 least over 2,000 individuals a day if I'm not  
6 mistaken. Is there an HRA liaison in that building  
7 that should be working with the local community board  
8 to address some of the flow issues that's occurring?

9 STEVEN BANKS: There are people in that  
10 building who work with people on Administrator  
11 Bonilla's staff that we want to make sure we're being  
12 responsive to you, I think you're raising an  
13 important issue about just volume and we'll commit  
14 to, to work with you and the community board to try  
15 to understand what the... what the issues are and you  
16 and I have worked through a lot of challenges in our  
17 time working together, this is one that we'll commit  
18 ourselves to, to working on too.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Just want to  
20 point out, so, you know community boards have, have  
21 monthly district service cabinet meetings... [cross-  
22 talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: Okay... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...it's in the  
25 city charter, every city agency must per the city

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2 charter must send a rep to that... to that meeting, I  
3 can connect you with that local board but I know that  
4 there has not been a rep from HRA at these meetings  
5 and I just encourage you to please help identify  
6 who's the right person that should be sitting in  
7 these meetings.

8 STEVEN BANKS: We'll work with you on  
9 that and I... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay... [cross-  
11 talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...again I appreciate your  
13 partnership on so many issues and your opening  
14 comments and many respects it's a model partnership  
15 that we have, and I appreciate it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you  
17 Commissioner. I, I want to make sure I'm saying this  
18 right, the Phipps... the Phipps Vouchers, these are the  
19 vouchers... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: Yep... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...that the  
22 families get when they're coming out of the shelters,  
23 I'm getting major concerns... well I'm actually... I'm  
24 getting major calls from constituents where their,

25

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2 their vouchers which are... what is it averaging 1,200  
3 dollars?

4 STEVEN BANKS: For single adults a little  
5 bit over 1,200 dollars, for a family of three or four  
6 it's about... a little over 1,500 dollars.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: But landlords  
8 are refusing to take them and we all know that and  
9 their concern is that there's an expiration date to  
10 these vouchers, how are you working on addressing  
11 this issue because yes, they have a voucher, they  
12 can't find an apartment, I mean so how do we really  
13 address getting these families with vouchers into  
14 permanent housing?

15 STEVEN BANKS: I think there's three.. I  
16 think three things that I want to highlight for you.  
17 First, the... we've been able to be... through rental  
18 assistance and other things we've been able to get  
19 109,000 people connected to housing so I think the  
20 concerns that individual clients have are, are things  
21 that we take very seriously but we're also looking at  
22 the overall impact. The voucher time limit that was  
23 originally set we have aligned the city FEPS program,  
24 city FHEPS program with the state FHEPS program, the  
25 state FHEPS program has the ability with good cause

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2 to extend beyond five years, the city programs are  
3 lined up in exactly the same way. We will... your  
4 question causes me to say you know what we better re-  
5 double our efforts to make sure that's known to  
6 landlords and maybe we could use it as a test case  
7 some landlords that maybe have come to your attention  
8 and see if we can engage more effectively with them  
9 so that they know that we have aligned the city  
10 program with the state program. Number two, we have a  
11 source of income discrimination unit in which we  
12 brought two significant cases against landlords,  
13 groups of landlords we're waiting for a decision, we  
14 think that will have a beneficial effect on the  
15 situation which clients feel that landlords are not  
16 taking the voucher and related to that we have a  
17 hotline and we can make sure your office has it where  
18 we do get inquiries and our staff intervene and  
19 frequently are able to reverse a situation where the  
20 landlord says hey I don't want to take you because  
21 you have a voucher.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah, okay.

23 Commissioner I just have three other questions on  
24 DHS, Mr. Chair my time is going to expire, I mean can  
25 I just get one minute.. it's going to be quick.. these,

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these are quick questions. I have a bill, 915 which would require the Department of Homeless Services to report to every Council Member and community boards a list or the number of shelters, clusters, cluster units, supportive housing units requiring DHS to provide that information on a quarterly basis to community boards and Council district... and, and the Council Members and to the Council, you know and the purpose of this bill really is to point out overburdened communities such as mine, Vanessa and other, other members in the Bronx and to also point out some of... some, some communities that are not doing their fair share because they really exist. I know that there are more communities that have families in the homeless shelters and they don't have those same amount of beds in their districts and I also hear that there's word in the street that some of my colleagues are trying to put some of their homeless shelters into my district, you know but... so, Commissioner my, my question here is are you supportive of, of this reporting mechanism which I think will serve... it will help you in, in really bringing in shelters to those communities that are not doing their fair share?

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STEVEN BANKS: Right, we certainly.. and

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we've had conversations about, support the intent of

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it, I think there are some issues we've got about

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some unintended consequences like with so many things

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but we'd be happy to sit down with you and try to

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negotiate it through but I think both your comment

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and we're not going to let that happen what you're

9

alluding to, your comment and Council Member Gibson's

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comments really highlights the reason why we're

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moving forward with the Turning the Tide plan which

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is to make sure that we're able to provide

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opportunities to be housed in the borough and as

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close as possible to community that people lived in

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so we can eliminate the situation in which someone

16

would say oh, it's better to have people from Queens

17

for example be in the Bronx and we want to continue

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to work with you and Council Member Gibson and other

19

members as well because that approach is going to end

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what's gone on 40 years which is no organizing

21

principle of shelter, families with children placed

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all over the place and then certain communities

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having more shelters than, than is appropriate given

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what the need is.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah and then finally Commissioner I have a, a bill which it requires any, any developers that's getting city subsidies no, no matter the amount that they're getting for developing affordable housing that 15 percent of those units be set aside for homeless families that are ready for independent living. I understand that the administration is not in favor of this so I'm not going to put you on a spot to ask you if you like this bill or not but my question here is in 2018 how many families did DHS place in permanent housing of new development?

STEVEN BANKS: I'm not sure I've got a good way to do that number, I think the number that HPD testified on Friday was about 2,000 including the 600 in 421-A units... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: ...but I want to make sure that I'm not over... I want to make sure I'm, I'm comparing apples to oranges, but I think that the data they presented is the data that I'm familiar with.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, thank  
3 you Commissioner, thank you Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
5 Member Salamanca. Commissioner I think you meant  
6 apples to apples not apples... you want to make sure  
7 you're comparing apples to apples not, not... [cross-  
8 talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: Thank you very much...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...you want to make  
12 sure you're comparing apples... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: ...I've been at... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...to oranges... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 STEVEN BANKS: ...it for two and a half  
18 hours so I apologize if I got my metaphor mixed.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we have a  
20 second round of questions, Council Members there will  
21 be three minutes we're going to try to keep people as  
22 close to the clock as possible because we do have... I  
23 have some additional questions around some of the  
24 budget related matters so Council Member Grodenchik.

25

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COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you

3

Chair, I said good morning, I'll say good afternoon.

4

Fair Fares, be... I'd be lying if I didn't say I was

5

disappointed about the rollout this past January and

6

very quickly can you tell me today how many people

7

are enrolled, we, we had figured a possible

8

eligibility of around 800,000 New Yorkers and I'm

9

told by Council Finance the last number we got was

10

about 6,000 so can you update that today?

11

STEVEN BANKS: I'll be happy to update

12

you on the... on the number but I wanted to go back to

13

the premise of what your question was. The uptake of

14

the program I don't think was ever projected to be

15

800,000... [cross-talk]

16

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well I meant...

17

[cross-talk]

18

STEVEN BANKS: ...I think the... [cross-talk]

19

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: ...eligible, I

20

understand.

21

STEVEN BANKS: Yeah but I think that

22

that's actually an important point here...

23

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well there's

24

a big difference between 6,000 and 800,000.

25

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Right but I think we  
3 proceeded with the implementation of this program in  
4 a way in which we could be certain that it would work  
5 and I... and I think as our testimony reflects one of  
6 the reasons why the program was originally determined  
7 to be at HRA was because we had experience in  
8 determining who in our population might be eligible..  
9 [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well I  
11 appreciate that... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: No, if I could just finish  
13 though and so we very consciously and transparently  
14 said look the rollout of this is going to be first to  
15 a... to a targeted group of HRA clients who have  
16 transportation costs relating to employment and that  
17 we were going to build a system that would do what  
18 other cities didn't do, other... the first couple of  
19 months of this has been you have to go pick up a card  
20 somewhere, starting next month you're going to be  
21 able to go online, register for the program and have  
22 your card mailed so you don't have to go pick it up,  
23 its one of the reasons why in Seattle three years in  
24 they've had a 20 percent take up of the program  
25 because we have taken a different approach we want to

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2 have this program operate the way we're moving all of  
3 our benefits programs. I've testified a lot about  
4 SNAP creating an online approach and we're moving...  
5 we're doing that as well in cash so Fair Fares in  
6 implementing it we wanted it to be a system in which  
7 you didn't have to come in some place and we agreed  
8 that we would start with known populations of  
9 eligible so cash assistance recipients who are  
10 employed with, with transportation costs, SNAP  
11 recipients employed with transportation costs. We're  
12 moving to the next group of known people, people  
13 within NYCHA, people within CUNY, veterans that have..  
14 that are below 100 percent of poverty and then we're  
15 moving to have a system in which anybody can apply  
16 through a portal. I think you would agree that we  
17 should build the right technology to make this work..  
18 [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: There's no  
20 question we want to do this correctly, I am concerned  
21 though that our number and your number seems to be  
22 fairly wide apart but last question because I don't  
23 have much time, we had budgeted the city, we agreed  
24 106 million dollars and we are now almost halfway  
25 between the, the first of the year and the end of the

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2 fiscal year and do you have an estimate on how much  
3 money will actually spend and how much will not be  
4 spent more importantly?

5 STEVEN BANKS: I think the, the  
6 commitment was to budget that amount of money and,  
7 and amounts that would... were not expended would be  
8 able to be used in the following year. I think we're  
9 going to have to wait until we do the rollout next  
10 month to have a sense of what the expenditures would  
11 be with respect to being able to register online and  
12 being able to get your card mailed to you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: So, the  
14 answer is you can't give me an answer is that what  
15 you're telling me?

16 STEVEN BANKS: No, I think you're talking  
17 about... I'm talking about we created a brand-new  
18 benefits program... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I understand  
20 that and... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: ...and if I could finish...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay...

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...we had always said the  
24 real impact will be able to be felt when you can  
25 deliver something to somebody where they don't have

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2 to go someplace else to get it and they... all they  
3 have to do is go online and get it mailed to them...  
4 [cross-talk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I appreciate  
6 that... [cross-talk]

7 STEVEN BANKS: ...that will have a better  
8 sense of what the uptakes is going to really be...  
9 [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay, I  
11 appreciate it, I look forward to getting an updated  
12 answer at the executive budget hearing, thank you...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: That would be... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK:  
17 ...Commissioner... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: ...that would be a good time  
19 because we'll... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay... [cross-  
21 talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...know more then.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Mr.  
24 Chairman.

25

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council

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Member Grodenchik. Commission I just... I had a follow

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up about that. So, in effect right now since the only

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people that are currently being communicated with or

6

being invited to enroll are those on cash assistance

7

that are working and those that are on SNAP benefits

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and working... [cross-talk]

9

STEVEN BANKS: It, it's cash assistance

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and we'd began some SNAP recently, the plan always

11

was to expand to SNAP in April.

12

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, in effect only

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those that are working have access to Fair Fares and

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so there's like a work requirement, Fair Fares...

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[cross-talk]

16

STEVEN BANKS: No... [cross-talk]

17

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...if you want to... if

18

you want Fair Fares now you... there's a work

19

requirement... [cross-talk]

20

STEVEN BANKS: No, there's a concern

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about the impact on public benefits by providing an

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additional cash payment, we need to work through that

23

to expand eligibility beyond HRA clients who are

24

working.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, what's the  
3 solution there?

4 STEVEN BANKS: I think the solution is to  
5 let us roll out the program the way we've announced  
6 that it would be rolled out which is next month  
7 people will be able to register online then we're  
8 moving to CUNY and NYCHA and vets in the fall, we  
9 just did a joint announcement with this... with the  
10 Council and then in January we'll have the ability of  
11 the entire population to be able to apply.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Will there be a work...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: By then... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...requirement for... if,  
16 if people... the population that are veterans, NYCHA  
17 and CUNY?

18 STEVEN BANKS: We're, we're hopeful that  
19 we'll be able to work out the public assistance  
20 impact relating to that, right, if you don't want  
21 someone to get a benefit... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is Fair Fares a... is  
23 it... is Fair Fares seen as a cash benefit?

24 STEVEN BANKS: Yes.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, so... and  
3 that's... and that's... can you share with us exactly how  
4 that will be worked out then?

5 STEVEN BANKS: I think it would be best  
6 to let us work this through with the state.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay but in  
8 effect right now you have to be working in order to  
9 receive Fair Fares?

10 STEVEN BANKS: For a C-change program  
11 that we've just been implementing for a really short  
12 period of time we're phasing it in as we announced, I  
13 think you would be wrong to conclude from this  
14 hearing that we're imposing a working requirement  
15 what we are doing is in a very careful way rolling  
16 out a major program that's never been tested before  
17 in New York City and has had challenges in other  
18 cities in terms of the take up.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, Council Member  
20 Adams.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you again  
22 Mr. Chair. First of all, shout out to our former  
23 Council Member Annabelle Palmer. Commissioner I, I  
24 really want to follow up on something and this is  
25 just for my own personal edification, I've been

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2 following the CBS story on the SOTA program, the  
3 special onetime assistance program and I would really  
4 like an update on what is happening to those families  
5 that were placed in deplorable living conditions in  
6 homes outside of state, outside of New York in  
7 particular East Orange, New Jersey, a landlord was  
8 paid 40,000 dollars for a family to be placed in  
9 deplorable living conditions and it... that story has  
10 just been so disturbing to me. I really would like to  
11 know number one, why were these homes not properly  
12 inspected or vetted to realize these horrible  
13 conditions, we're talking vermin, mold, no heat,  
14 broken fixtures where babies were placed and where  
15 does the money... where does the funding come from  
16 outside of... you know within the budget, which pot  
17 does that 40,000 dollars for this horrible slumlord  
18 to be paid to place families or this particular  
19 family or families so I guess I've just got a number  
20 of questions but I really would like an update on...  
21 [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: ...you know on  
24 what's happening right now, I understand that DHS has  
25 not been in court with that particular landlord at

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2 all, I understand that but please give us an update  
3 and how this happened?

4 STEVEN BANKS: Sure, let me give you the  
5 context of the program overall and then what we're  
6 doing to address the kinds of issues that you're  
7 raising and again as always, you know you and I have  
8 worked together on many issues and I appreciate the  
9 spirit in which you're asking that question. So,  
10 clients in our shelter system come to us with many  
11 different kinds of opportunities and challenges  
12 taking advantage of those opportunities, we have  
13 clients who are working and have income sources that  
14 would enable them to pay the rent but need sort of a  
15 helping hand to, to get started and they're not going  
16 to be eligible for any of our public assistance based  
17 rental assistance program, there isn't enough section  
18 eight out there for them and so we created a program  
19 in September of 2017 to enable clients who have a  
20 source of income, have the ability to pay rent, are  
21 employed, have sources of... other sources of income or  
22 are going to be obtaining employment to enable them  
23 to pay rent and you know our clients are like many  
24 New Yorkers they want the ability to choose where  
25 they're going to live. Since September 2017 about

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3,500 households have participated in this program about 70 have returned to the shelter system in that period of time. More than a third of the families have relocated to apartments in New York City and about ten percent in New York State and the rest out of the... out of the city but this is a program that sort of has its roots in something that Koch developed in the 1980s called project reconnect, I think as you may remember I was a critic of many things that Koch did, this was actually something I didn't criticize him about because the ability to give a family a helping hand to relocate I think is part of what we're there to do to meet clients where they are and when they make a choice that they want to relocate to see what we can do to support them to do so. Of course, there's a right to travel established by the supreme court that gives people the right to travel. When we stood up this program, we gave the ability of families to move in with a promise to fix, if the family really wanted to move, they moved in with a promise to fix if there were issues that arose. That resulted in a situation in which both families and the city was taken... were taken advantage of by one or more unscrupulous people

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1  
2 in northern New Jersey. We have referred the matter  
3 to law enforcement and we're assisting in the follow  
4 up there. The fact that the particular individual or  
5 individuals are in court that's going to take its  
6 course but we're providing the assistance that we do  
7 for an appropriate investigation of, of these  
8 individuals. We also changed the program to be  
9 aligned with our regular rental assistance programs,  
10 when we streamlined all of our rental assistance  
11 programs last October we took a look at what the  
12 processes were for reviewing all apartments, whether  
13 they were through the old LINC program or SEPS or the  
14 old FEPS program or SOTA and we created a more  
15 intensive review process for apartments before people  
16 could move into them in New York City and in the  
17 metropolitan area if someone was going to move out  
18 through the SOTA program and part of the streamlining  
19 was to align the city programs with the old state  
20 FEPS programs, some of you know that program came out  
21 of the Jiggetts lawsuit, FEPS was, was the name that  
22 the state had and we wanted to have our inspection  
23 processes be aligned with the state processes and we  
24 added to the state processes and so SOTA was improved  
25 by adding this additional apartment review in the.. in

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1  
2 the surrounding counties, surrounding... metropolitan  
3 area and we illuminated the ability to move in with a  
4 promise to fix. We also took steps to prevent someone  
5 from claiming that they were the owner of property  
6 when they weren't the owner of, of property so we  
7 think the changes that we put in place are really  
8 aimed at preventing the type of conduct that took  
9 advantage of the families and, and took advantage of  
10 the city and as I said we're working with law  
11 enforcement and provider support to, to address the  
12 problems of the particular individuals and then as to  
13 the families that have been reported and I appreciate  
14 the reporting that CBS has done on this that revealed  
15 this to... in terms of those families we've reached out  
16 to them and each one of them has a different need in  
17 terms of connecting them to other housing  
18 alternatives.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Alright, I guess  
20 my, my final statement on this would be in, in  
21 watching the continuance of the reporting it's been  
22 very disheartening for me to constantly hear the  
23 families saying that there really has been no help at  
24 this... at this stage in the process from DHS so to  
25 hear you state that DHS has been helping these

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1  
2 families is a little bit contrasting to what the  
3 families are saying in these reports. It, it is  
4 extremely disturbing and has been disturbing to watch  
5 that series, that particular series and quite frankly  
6 I was startled by that to see little children running  
7 around in a place that we would not deem to put a  
8 human being in so I'm just very disheartened by the  
9 fact that this space or these spaces were not  
10 properly inspected and the fact that 40,000 dollars  
11 could be given to a slumlord, no more, no less for  
12 his... for his benefit and no one took the time to  
13 inspect this particular premise. I know there are  
14 others but this particular one that I have in mind,  
15 the one that's in, in focus has been particularly  
16 disturbing.

17 STEVEN BANKS: Look, I... my heart goes out  
18 to these families they were taken advantage of and we  
19 were taken advantage of and I think that the changes  
20 that we're... we've made are aimed at preventing this  
21 from occurring and the... working with law enforcement  
22 is aimed at holding one or more parties wholly  
23 responsible and accountable. I know by the way, you  
24 know having spent a lot of time working in law  
25 enforcement matters before I came to the... came to

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2 these... the... my, my positions that sometimes people  
3 want immediate action but I think its most important  
4 to build the appropriate case and then take action.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
6 Member Adams. I just have a follow up on that  
7 Commissioner. So, do we have a clear accounting of  
8 where people are being relocated through the SOTA  
9 programs, so you said a third in the city, another  
10 ten percent in New York State and then the remainder  
11 which would be, you know... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: About half... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...50, 57 percent are  
14 out of state, do we... do we know which states and  
15 counties and municipalities those people are being  
16 relocated to?

17 STEVEN BANKS: We do, I want to caution  
18 the inquiry though here and we'd be happy to sit down  
19 with you and give you a fuller briefing, you might  
20 recall that a particular locality in New York State a  
21 little over a year ago attempted to argue that people  
22 didn't have a right to travel and were demanding that  
23 New York City take... quote, take back people that had  
24 made a choice to relocate... [cross-talk]

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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2 STEVEN BANKS: ...so in all of this  
3 discussion I want to make sure that our clients don't  
4 end up being demonized that have made a choice to  
5 exercise the right to travel, we've given them help  
6 to do so, the fact that 3,500 households have  
7 participated in this program only 70 have returned..  
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: ...I think is indicative of  
11 success so though I want to reiterate what I said to  
12 Council Member Adams which is if even one family is  
13 in the circumstances that she and I have been  
14 discussing that indicated that we needed to make some  
15 changes and we did make changes.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I get it, I'm  
17 just saying that... so, even just the counties, we  
18 don't... so, I, I spoke to the gentleman who is  
19 responsible for housing inspections in East Orange,  
20 New Jersey last week and he said A, he has no idea  
21 how many families were moved from New York City to  
22 East Orange but he said that that particular  
23 apartment he didn't... it wasn't inspected and that's  
24 under his jurisdiction so... and he said that there's  
25 nobody at DHS that he can talk... he hasn't been able

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2 to get into contact with anybody at DHS or HRA or DSS  
3 and so there's, there's just no communication with  
4 the local jurisdiction and those responsible for  
5 ensuring safe and, and decent housing and, and  
6 habitability in these apartments so that's his  
7 responsibility and he said there's... you know he  
8 didn't even know that anyone was doing this and so  
9 it's not just... I mean there's a... there's a clear  
10 benefit in coordination with the authorities in this...  
11 in another jurisdiction to ensure that there's safe  
12 and habitable housing.

13 STEVEN BANKS: So, we're applying those  
14 same standards that we use for our rental assistance  
15 programs in New York City. Again, I want to... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But that means that...  
18 I'm sorry, so... because who's responsible then for  
19 going and doing the inspection, if we're relocating...  
20 or somebody decided that they want to move to  
21 Virginia does that mean that we're going to travel to  
22 Virginia to inspect an apartment?

23 STEVEN BANKS: In, in the metropolitan  
24 area we do travel to inspect apartments in the  
25 metropolitan area. Again, I want to... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, anywhere in New  
3 Jersey... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: ...if I... if I could... [cross-  
5 talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...anywhere in  
7 Connecticut...

8 STEVEN BANKS: If I could just finish  
9 Council Member.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, yeah.

11 STEVEN BANKS: In the metropolitan area  
12 either our staff or not for profits do conduct  
13 inspections applying the same standards that we do  
14 for rental assistance relocations in New York City  
15 but again I want to just remind us all that our  
16 clients come to us and say I want to relocate to  
17 someplace and we treat our clients as independent  
18 people making decisions that they want to relocate,  
19 we also verify that they have the wherewithal to pay  
20 the rent on an ongoing basis through documentation  
21 and through phone contracts and... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: This is... I'm sorry,  
23 my, my question is about, about the conditions of the  
24 apartment and who's responsible for making sure that  
25 those... that the apartment is habitable, that's it,

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2 that's the only thing... that's all... that's, that's  
3 the... our whole and I think I speak for Council Member  
4 Adams too that our entire line of inquiry here is  
5 just about the habitability of the apartments and  
6 who's responsible for it.

7 STEVEN BANKS: No, I... I hear what...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...so, who's... I don't  
10 know who's responsible for the... who... just is there a  
11 contracted agency that does this or is it... is it New  
12 York City DOB inspectors or is it the staff from DHS...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: So... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...I don't know who's  
16 responsible.

17 STEVEN BANKS: So, when we give somebody...  
18 when the city has given somebody an individual public  
19 assistance rent allowance to live in New York City  
20 not, not FHEPS, not SOTA... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...we give someone their 400  
23 dollars state rental allowance...

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right...

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3 STEVEN BANKS: ...that is a benefit that  
4 they're entitled to get, and we don't tell them you  
5 can't spend your shelter allowance in this apartment,  
6 you can't spend it in that apartment, that's been  
7 the... [cross-talk]

8

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But, but the  
10 difference... there's a difference, in New York City  
11 there's a sister agency to HR... or to DHS, DSS, the  
12 Department of Buildings that is responsible for  
13 ensuring... the Department of Buildings and HPD for,  
14 for ensuring the habitability of apartments in New  
15 York City any apartment but, but... and, and we... but  
16 when we go to a separate jurisdiction there... we have  
17 to ensure that there's some level of accountability  
18 for at least the safety of these apartments other... I,  
19 I just... I don't... [cross-talk]

20

21 STEVEN BANKS: You, you're not suggesting  
22 though that if a client applies for public assistance  
23 and part of their grant is a 400 dollar rent  
24 allowance that we should tell the client that they  
25 can't use that rent allowance in their apartment and  
that the Department of Buildings and Department of  
HPD should have something to say about that? I mean

25

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2 we're giving people grants to make decisions about...

3 [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: ...if I could just finish...

6 [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...the... I'm sorry...

8 [cross-talk]

9 STEVEN BANKS: ...we're giving people  
10 grants, I don't want to demonize our clients and  
11 have, have it be that they can't make independent  
12 choices... [cross-talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry Commissioner,  
14 that's a mischaracterization, we do in fact... we do in  
15 fact if we... if somebody gets a FHEPS voucher do we  
16 not inspect that... the apartment?

17 STEVEN BANKS: For a FHEPS vouchers we do  
18 do that but it's the same standard that we use for  
19 SOTA within the five counties but if somebody wants  
20 to move out of New York City... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...we want to give them the  
23 wherewithal to do that which is what we're doing...

24 [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, its... right,  
okay but we... with a FHEPS voucher we require that the  
apartment be inspected because we are providing city  
resources to that landlord to house the family and we  
have the expectation that, that the apartment will be  
habitable that standard ought to apply to those  
moving out of state through the SOTA program.

STEVEN BANKS: Right...

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Considering... just,  
just also... I mean just, just to be clear the number  
of people moving out through SOTA is, is, is a very  
large number when you look through the various  
programs that are rehousing people out of shelter,  
it's not an insignificant number of people especially  
since its only really been in existence for a couple  
of years now and so I just... I just am not sure that  
I'm getting from this testimony here the answers to  
my questions that there is an accountability  
mechanism for the habitability of apartments that is  
the same mechanism that we are using for the other  
move outs, the other... the other mechanisms for move  
outs so city FHEPS and FHEPS and section eight and  
TBRA and NYCHA obviously so all of those have a  
certain mechanism for accountability to ensure the

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2 habitability of an apartment and I just want to... I  
3 just... who's responsible actually just... that's the  
4 question, who's responsible for the habitability?

5 STEVEN BANKS: Right, we think there are  
6 mechanisms to address the problem that arose in  
7 Northern New Jersey, we think that was obviously a  
8 deplorable situation and we're happy to sit down with  
9 you and give you a fuller briefing... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who does the  
11 inspection... [cross-talk]

12 STEVEN BANKS: ...on the program...

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's all I want to  
14 ask.

15 STEVEN BANKS: But again, are you... I, I  
16 think you're not saying this, if somebody wants to  
17 move out of New York City not to the metropolitan  
18 area are you saying we shouldn't give them support to  
19 help them do that?

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm asking the  
21 question, who is... who is doing the inspections?

22 STEVEN BANKS: Right, to move out of New  
23 York City, out of the... out of the metropolitan area  
24 our clients are exercising independent choice to  
25 decide they want to move.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, who's doing the  
3 inspections? Commissioner I'm sorry I can't move past  
4 this point without an answer. Who's doing the  
5 inspections?

6 STEVEN BANKS: For people who are not  
7 moving within New York City or the five counties we  
8 rely upon our clients to make independent choices  
9 about where they want to live and that they're moving  
10 into apartments that appropriate for them, in  
11 Northern New Jersey our clients and we were taken  
12 advantage of by a group of bad actors or one or more  
13 bad actors.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Commissioner that  
15 answer is insufficient.

16 STEVEN BANKS: Council Member we're  
17 dealing in a world in which there's no regional  
18 planning, in which our ability to get the Krueger  
19 Hevesi bill which will give our clients the ability  
20 to move, move around the state is hanging in the  
21 balance, we're dealing in a world in which clients  
22 come to us and they want to live in New York city or  
23 they want to move out of New York City and we're  
24 trying to give them a helping hand to do so. We had a  
25 horrible situation that happened with, with a number

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2 of families in Northern New Jersey, I don't think  
3 that you want to throw out a program that's been  
4 successful because we got taken advantage of when  
5 we've taken steps to try to address the problem.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Neither I nor Council  
7 Member Adams suggested eliminating the program, I  
8 don't know enough about the program to suggest  
9 eliminating it frankly.

10 STEVEN BANKS: Be happy to... happy to give  
11 you a fuller briefing on it.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But, but I... well I  
13 think we could start by talking about who is... who is  
14 doing the inspections, but I don't... I'm sorry...  
15 [cross-talk]

16 STEVEN BANKS: I, I answered the  
17 question... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...somebody... so nobody,  
19 is the answer... [cross-talk]

20 STEVEN BANKS: You don't like the answer...  
21 [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...nobody?

23 STEVEN BANKS: You don't like my answer  
24 but our clients... [cross-talk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You didn't answer,  
3 who, who is doing... [cross-talk]

4 STEVEN BANKS: I did answer... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: .....the inspections?

6 STEVEN BANKS: I did answer the question  
7 Council Member. So, when you rent an apartment, you  
8 look at the apartment and you determine whether you  
9 want to rent it, I think our clients have the same  
10 ability that you do, I don't think our clients have  
11 less ability than you do.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, the family in  
13 East Orange identified the apartment themselves?

14 STEVEN BANKS: That isn't what I'm  
15 saying, you asked me a question I already answered  
16 the, the metropolitan area, you asked me about  
17 Virginia, you asked me about places outside of the  
18 five... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I... and you informed  
20 me that I guess it's, it's just the metropolitan area  
21 and that's helpful but I just don't know who is  
22 doing... who... I mean who, who's identifying the  
23 apartments then, I mean is it... it's... the, the family  
24 in East Orange identified the apartment themselves?

25

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2 STEVEN BANKS: I, I... don't, don't put  
3 words into my mouth Council Member, in the five  
4 counties... in the... in the metropolitan area we have  
5 city staff and not for profit workers that are using  
6 the same apartment review standard that we use for  
7 New York City relocations, previously we allowed  
8 people to move in with a promise to fix, the clients  
9 and we got taken advantage of by a group of bad  
10 actors in Northern Jersey, we stopped that and now we  
11 have a different approach in the five... in the  
12 metropolitan area, you were asking me before about  
13 what happens outside of the metropolitan area and I  
14 said to you our clients make choices there about  
15 wanting to rent an apartment just like you might...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In the metropolitan  
18 area then who is responsible... [cross-talk]

19 STEVEN BANKS: I answered that... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for inspecting the  
22 apartment?

23 STEVEN BANKS: City staff and not... or non  
24 for profit staff trained to use the same exact  
25 standards that the... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But what city staff,  
3 what agency?

4 STEVEN BANKS: DHS.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: DHS staff?

6 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, the same staff... we  
7 treat moves in the five... in the metropolitan area the  
8 same as we treat moves... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what not for  
10 profit staff?

11 STEVEN BANKS: If it is the... if it's the  
12 provider that the families in the shelter that are  
13 staying in their shelter, we trained all of those  
14 providers to be able to make FHEPS inspections in New  
15 York City, they can... they apply the same standard to  
16 inspecting for SOTA apartment in the five... in the  
17 metropolitan area.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you.

19 STEVEN BANKS: And I'm, I'm sorry if we  
20 got... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: ...tied up but I was trying  
23 to give you that answer and perhaps we were talking  
24 through each other, we know each other well I'm sorry  
25 if we got tied up with that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it, okay, Council  
3 Member Gjonaj.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair.  
5 Commissioner it's not easy the responsibility that  
6 you've taken over its overwhelming. I want to go back  
7 on two things in the... particularly in the borough of  
8 the Bronx echoing my colleagues, of the 467 shelters  
9 citywide, the buildings, the Bronx has 166 percent...  
10 166 buildings that's roughly 30 percent of the total  
11 shelter buildings of New York City Bronxites are  
12 approximately 17 percent of the total population of  
13 the city but yet we have 30 percent of the city's  
14 shelters. I'm concerned about the 90 shelter plan and  
15 how many more are going to work their way into the  
16 borough of the Bronx, we already know that we have  
17 more scatter sites than any other borough and there's  
18 a continuation and the reason I want to harp on and  
19 please answer that question because I want to make  
20 sure I have enough time to answer... ask my second part  
21 of the question. The reason I'm so concerned about  
22 your PEG cuts and I don't want to be the verta to  
23 Albany, is because the borough of the Bronx we see  
24 the strain on food pantries and soup kitchens, 30  
25 percent of Bronxites are SNAP recipients, of the

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public assistant grants of the entire city roughly 40 percent are Bronxites which is almost... a little over nine percent of the total population of the borough of the Bronx are recipients of the public assistant grants. On Medicaid nearly 30 percent of Bronxites are recipients, any cut will be felt by Bronxites more than any other borough. So, here we have an unhealth... the least healthiest borough and I want to say I'm Bronx proud, I love the borough of the Bronx, we've come a long way, we've got a long ways to go but what is being done by this administration is not helping the Bronx, it's actually putting a larger burden on the Bronx, we have the least healthiest, the most obese, the most asthma, the highest rate of unemployment, the least skilled, least educated, by allowing the borough to be inundated by shelters which come with decent families but needs are much higher and not giving us the resources is unfair, unjust and immoral. So, if you can answer the question about the inundation and then the 50-million-dollar PEG cut and please don't divert to Albany because every dollar will be felt more by Bronxites than anyone else... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: So... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...and when I say  
3 talk to me about the 50 million, when have you met  
4 with this administration to talk about the PEG cuts  
5 since we don't know where they're going to be, how  
6 many times have you met with them, who have you met  
7 with and who on your staff if not you has met with  
8 this administration to determine where the cuts will  
9 be, it's a fair question?

10 STEVEN BANKS: It's a fair question but  
11 the answer to your question is going to be  
12 unsatisfying to you, we're still... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yep... [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: ...looking at how we're  
15 going to implement them and we're continuing to  
16 review it, I'm personally involved in it and we will  
17 be able to tell you where we're going to be  
18 implementing the 50 million dollars in reductions,  
19 once we're able to complete the process. It's an  
20 ongoing process.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: When is the  
22 executive budget due?

23 STEVEN BANKS: It's due in May.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: In May. So, in  
25 two months... [cross-talk]

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2 STEVEN BANKS: End of... End of April and  
3 May... April and May.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...April, so a  
5 month and a half, right, we should have the executive  
6 budget, 45 days from now or less.

7 STEVEN BANKS: I think you're right.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And we don't know  
9 where the cuts are going to be, where do you think  
10 they should be? I'm going to ask where do you feel  
11 the PEG cuts should be?

12 STEVEN BANKS: I don't think that its  
13 very helpful when we're facing 125 million dollars  
14 cut from the state in the next couple of days to go  
15 through where you... where you or I think we should be  
16 implementing 50 million dollars' worth of city cuts.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: This is like  
18 Abbot and Costello, who's on first and what's on  
19 second? I'm worried about your 50 million, before I  
20 worry about the state's 125 possible and the borough  
21 of the Bronx is going to feel the brunt of it.

22 STEVEN BANKS: Council Member... [cross-  
23 talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...and I  
25 illustrated using your own numbers and reports and I

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2 can't get an answer. Where would you, you're given  
3 the power, you're negotiating, you're going to point  
4 out to this administration where do you feel the cuts  
5 should come from?

6 STEVEN BANKS: Council Member we're still  
7 reviewing with OMB where we're... [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you..  
9 [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: ...going to make the cuts..  
11 [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, in 30 days  
13 you'll have an answer for us and it'll be a big  
14 surprise to all of us where those cuts are and then  
15 we'll go through a whole second round of complaining,  
16 you understand my point and I believe it's with  
17 passion and conviction because it's the right thing  
18 to do. The borough of the Bronx is at a true  
19 disadvantage, we talk about the tale of two cities,  
20 this is the tale of two boroughs and the borough of  
21 the Bronx has always gotten the short end of it and  
22 it will continue to get the short end of it and I  
23 encourage four of my colleagues to stand up and fight  
24 for this borough against this department, this agency  
25 and this administration.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council Member Gjonaj, Council Member Gibson followed by Council Member King.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you Chair and thank you again Commissioner and while this week we know there's a lot that's happening in Albany and so I appreciate the impending visit that you and your staff are taking to Albany, I think we need to be very, very concerned about TANF cuts to this city. Last year we saw a number of unfunded mandates that we got from Albany and so to me I'm remaining optimistic but obviously we have to prepare for what will happen in the final enacted state budget and so I wanted to ask two quick questions based on numbers that we got from the PMMR as it relates to school aged children in our shelters, the work that you're doing with DOE on the number of students that are in temporary housing that are in many of our public schools and how are we doing in terms of placements for families with children in regards to keeping them in their home communities and then my second question also PMMR related are the adult family shelter entrance. I've noticed since FY 17, FY 18 and FY 19 the shelter stay has been increasing slightly from

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2 414 to 438 and now we're at 446 so I wanted to  
3 understand from your perspective what some of the  
4 driving factors are in increasing the length of stay.  
5 I know the city is actively in litigation with  
6 landlords who are refusing vouchers, we know income  
7 discrimination is real and we hear from a lot of our  
8 constituents that they have a voucher, right, but  
9 they're not able to find an apartment where landlords  
10 are accepting the program so can you give us an  
11 update on where we are and some of the driving  
12 factors that is related to the increased shelter  
13 stay?

14 STEVEN BANKS: So, let me deal with the  
15 school question first if I may?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh, sure.

17 STEVEN BANKS: So, I mean in essence the  
18 Turning the Tide plan is to give families with  
19 children the opportunity to be sheltered as close as  
20 possible to their communities so that they can... their  
21 children continue to attend school in their  
22 community. With the opening of additional shelters,  
23 we now have at any point in time about 75 percent of  
24 our families with children are in the borough of the  
25 youngest child's school, that's a significant

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improvement of where we were. The MMR and PMMR report on where the first placement was, we provided information in this year's PMMR that actually a better place to focus on is not the first night where we placed you but where you are ongoing but as we get more shelters opened as part of the Turning the Tide plan we'll be able to improve upon that but we're now at about 75 percent which I know you are very focused on as are we in delivering on a promise to keeping children in the schools that they were in and not having to be bussed and travel around. Number two, in terms of source of income discrimination, thank you for, for mentioning the two cases that we brought. We have two approaches to source of income discrimination which does effect, you know clients that have vouchers and the cases we brought are against several landlords and brokers, we think that the determination in those cases will have an impact on other individuals and we're hopeful that we'll have a favorable decisions. In the meantime, we do take inquiries and our source of income staff do intervene and we're able to turn no's into yes's and again we would encourage you and your staff and

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2 clients to call our hotline and so that we can  
3 intervene and, and help people.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
5 Member Gibson, Council Member King.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Chair  
7 Levin and Commissioner it's good to see you as  
8 always..

9 STEVEN BANKS: It's good to see you too..

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'll be brief, and  
11 I'll just, just be as concise as I can with my  
12 questions as opposed to our answers as well. I hear  
13 loud and clear my colleague Council Member Gjonaj and  
14 his concerns with regards of budget cuts and how it  
15 has an impact on the.. on the boogey down Bronx. So, I  
16 would ask you this, we go through this budget  
17 succession ourselves where we try to allocate funding  
18 to different groups and we look at what we have in  
19 our youth part, our senior part and our.. and so forth  
20 and what we end up doing, we look at some of our  
21 groups who are getting large amounts of money and  
22 then when we have to try to down scale and cut it we  
23 look at those who can't afford the cuts. So, what  
24 we're saying to you as.. from the Bronx wherever you  
25 deem that you need to make any reduction in cuts I

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2 would ask you to look at the Bronx who is overwhelmed  
3 right now and if these cuts will definitely hurt  
4 those of us who are the lowest then maybe we don't  
5 look at that direction at all, maybe you look at  
6 someplace else to figure out how to work because if  
7 you touch the Bronx the Bronx can and will fall  
8 apart. So, that's my first ask of you when you're  
9 going back to do your assessments to figure out where  
10 you're going to look to make cuts. The second thing I  
11 would like to ask of you and if you have it, if you  
12 have not, have you ever thought about being a part  
13 of... joining us in advocacy because some of the things  
14 I'm confused about when it comes to the budget when  
15 they talk about reducing or cutting, cutting costs  
16 that we're still spending new money so would you be  
17 willing to in your conversations with the part of  
18 your administration that you're part of and the  
19 Mayor's office, hey listen you're asking us to cut 50  
20 million, 60 million but we just spent 112 million on  
21 a new program. If we can't afford to spend money on  
22 new... on programs in here how do we invest money in  
23 new programs? I'm asking is it possible that you can  
24 be an advocate to help us on that and as well as  
25 along with the advocates?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: So, I'm taking from your  
3 two questions the following takeaway...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uh-huh...

5 STEVEN BANKS: One you want me to make  
6 sure that we're very focused on trying to minimize  
7 harm to people and you're pointing out the Bronx in  
8 particular given the, the numbers of people that need  
9 our help, you have my commitment that we're going to  
10 try to minimize harm to people and we'll certainly  
11 take into account, you know where... the, the needs of  
12 our clients across the city but I understand what the  
13 needs are in the Bronx. In terms of new programs  
14 versus old programs, sometimes new programs are  
15 better than the old programs so I, I would want to  
16 make sure that we all have the flexibility to say,  
17 you know what that program has been around for a  
18 while, it's actually not working as well, could it be  
19 changed and still leave room for a new program which  
20 might be better than an old program but at the end of  
21 the day the fact we've got a PEG and I know that  
22 Council Member Gjonaj didn't, didn't want me to keep  
23 mentioning the fact that we have the state cut there,  
24 this is part of the, the challenge of the economy and  
25 the economic factors that we're dealing with by... I

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2 appreciate your request of me, and we'll keep  
3 focusing on these things together.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And I... and I  
5 appreciate that because if there's an old program  
6 that's not working then that has to be clearly  
7 explained to all... us here on the committee so we can  
8 work in sync with you to say you gave us the metrics  
9 you were using for a program that's been ineffective  
10 but we want to do this new program so if you have to  
11 downsize it then we can all be on board and then my  
12 final question would be to you, do you have any  
13 programs or are you working on any programs or... and  
14 if you are what would be the cost of that program  
15 that allows you to work with families to engage in  
16 self-promoting behavior that never ever brings them  
17 into your system?

18 STEVEN BANKS: I think we have a number  
19 of programs designed to do that, one of them you and  
20 I were at, the homebased program which is designed to  
21 keep people from coming into our, our system and to  
22 connect people to employment as well. I think your  
23 point is very well taken that we got to always be  
24 focused on essentially prevention and we will keep

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2 being focused on prevention and I appreciate your  
3 perspective on that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr.  
5 Chair thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
7 Member King and we'll be seeing you momentarily co-  
8 chairing the second part of this hearing.  
9 Commissioner I just have a, a few more questions  
10 here...

11 STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...that I think are  
13 important to get to. The first is, there are a number  
14 of issues in... as we were going through and preparing  
15 for this hearing of issues within the MMR where  
16 there's not sufficient information, issues around  
17 shelter facility counts and capacity, issues around  
18 safe havens. I don't want to go through all of them  
19 right now but can we follow up and have a discussion  
20 around indicators that are presented in the MMR  
21 because there are several that are actually either  
22 not... you know they're, they're seen as not available  
23 in the MMR or they're, they're not actually  
24 categories in the MMR themselves and, and... but these

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2 are pieces of information that we think are  
3 important.

4 STEVEN BANKS: Of course.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to after  
6 care why does after care not have... why was that not  
7 included as part of the model budget process instead  
8 is being provided through home based and... in addition  
9 why, why do hotels not provide after care services or  
10 have social workers on site?

11 STEVEN BANKS: So, in answer to your  
12 first question I think we're focused on making after  
13 care services available to people in the communities  
14 that they're relocating to. The current world still  
15 involves people in shelter potentially relocating to  
16 different communities and so we want the ability of  
17 clients when they locate... relocate to a community to  
18 be able to deal with the community-based organization  
19 right there as opposed to still relating to the  
20 shelter that they were previously in.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that is... and that  
22 is something that everybody is then set up with so if  
23 somebody moves out of shelter with a voucher and they  
24 then... once they move into the new apartment have a  
25 case with a... with a local non for profit?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: So, the... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...that's funded for  
4 after care services?

5 STEVEN BANKS: The home based providers  
6 are... a part of their mission is to follow up with the  
7 families that are, are... that are relocated in their  
8 service area and so this is a, a topic of  
9 conversation that we have with our home based  
10 providers about their follow up.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean you might want  
12 to reach out to Henry Street Settlement House which  
13 through the Council's initiative so funding that we  
14 provide does after care services for people that move  
15 out of Henry Street wherever they may go, they could  
16 go to the Bronx but they still have a case management  
17 after care with Henry Street and they seem to have a  
18 lot of success with that.

19 STEVEN BANKS: Right, I think Henry  
20 Street runs a... runs terrific programs overall, we'll  
21 certainly look at their aftercare program but again I  
22 think that it is an important principle to have  
23 services available in the communities to which people  
24 are relocating but having said that I... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But all 109,000  
3 people that have moved out of shelter have an after-  
4 care case?

5 STEVEN BANKS: All of the people that  
6 have moved out of shelter have an outreach to them  
7 from somebody who was in a home based program  
8 offering them assistance, making sure that the family  
9 knows that they are available, that doesn't mean that  
10 the family is required to follow up with them it just  
11 means that the family now knows that there's  
12 someplace that they can get help and there's somebody  
13 there who can intervene and help them if they should  
14 need it.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How long does a case  
16 typically last as an after-care case?

17 STEVEN BANKS: It depends on whether or  
18 not the family wants to unveil themselves to those  
19 services. For example, landlord mediation is one of  
20 the services that's provided that could arise when  
21 there's a need for landlord mediation or it may never  
22 arise, so it really depends on what the individual  
23 family's issue is.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, what's the budget  
25 for after care?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: Its part of the overall  
3 service delivery model, I think we added 20 million...  
4 [cross-talk]

5 GRACE BONILLA: 18 million...

6 STEVEN BANKS: ...18... Its 18 million as  
7 part of the overall budget. Its part... its part of the  
8 overall homebased budget, I'm sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean I'm... I  
10 think that that's... I mean I imagine that home base  
11 staff have enough to do with trying to prevent people  
12 from going into the shelter system in the first  
13 place, that's normally what people traditionally have  
14 thought of as... with the, the role of home base for  
15 the last 14 years that home base has been in  
16 existence and so I just... I'm wondering whether that's  
17 the best service delivery model but that's something  
18 we can talk about in the future.

19 STEVEN BANKS: Right but just again for  
20 context the total home base budget is 59 million and  
21 18 million of that is allocated for after care.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And about social  
23 workers in hotels?

24 STEVEN BANKS: You know we, we... you and I  
25 talked about this recently... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

3 STEVEN BANKS: ...and certainly interested  
4 in pursuing our conversations about your interest in  
5 it, it's been our focus to get out of hotels, but you  
6 know as the budget process proceeds, I'm happy to  
7 have further conversations with you about... [cross-  
8 talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean how many...  
10 there are 90, 90 hotels, how many... [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: 88... there are 88 hotels  
12 and... but that includes hotels for single adults as  
13 well as... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...for families... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...but mostly for  
18 families like 70 of the 90 are for families. There  
19 are 18 single adult hotels and 70... alright, so most  
20 are for families so, so... I mean how many are we  
21 closing a year, I mean how many have you closed this  
22 past year?

23 STEVEN BANKS: Just closed one last month  
24 in Council Member Koslowitz's district for families  
25 with children.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many are we  
3 closing a year?

4 STEVEN BANKS: We're... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...how many... [cross-  
6 talk]

7 STEVEN BANKS: ...just... so, we're... I just  
8 told Council Member Adams we're closing two in her  
9 district but as I said I want to... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many did we close  
11 in the past year?

12 STEVEN BANKS: This is the second year of  
13 the Turning the Tide program; it's just now allowing  
14 us the ability to start to look at these kind of  
15 closures...

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many hotels have  
17 we closed to date?

18 STEVEN BANKS: I will get you that  
19 number, I just named three of them that we talked  
20 about in the... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right but there's...  
22 [cross-talk]

23 STEVEN BANKS: ...prior recent... [cross-  
24 talk]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...88 to go then we...

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that's going to take a long time and there are

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children that are spending an average of 400 days of

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their lives in a hotel without room to run around and

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room to be a kid and room to do their homework and

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room... and a kitchen, no kitchen, no stove, no washing

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machine, no... you know just... no bookshelves all the

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things that my daughter gets to experience, children

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that are living in hotels don't and they, they sit in

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a... they're in a room that is the size of a shoebox

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and they don't get to eat hot meals, they're... or

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they're heated up, you know microwavable meals and

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they're not getting nutrition and there's no social

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workers for them and there's nobody to help them and

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so the very... and there's 88 of these left and if

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we're closing, you know one a month it's going to be

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like another... that's like another six years or seven

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years before we close all these things and, and

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that's, that's long past... both of us are probably

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going to be in these positions and we don't... and we

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don't have social workers for these kids, it's just...

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we have to, we... it is like the least that we could do

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as a city is provide something for these children.

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2 STEVEN BANKS: So, as I said to you when  
3 we met just a couple of days ago, happy to talk  
4 through with you this issue, there are a number of  
5 things in your comments that I think I just have to  
6 correct for the... for the record. We are not closing  
7 hotels over the life of the plan at the pace that we  
8 have been up to this point, we prioritized getting  
9 out of clusters first which is the reason why we're  
10 70 percent of the way there now and I know you have  
11 been supportive in your district but the quicker we  
12 can get families with children shelters up and  
13 running around the city we'll be able to deliver on  
14 the clusters as well as the hotel closures. There are  
15 services as part of the service delivery that we've  
16 got in hotels and we will continue to work with you  
17 and look at the issue you're raising with respect to...  
18 in respect to social workers.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But just to be clear  
20 every, every tier two has a social worker?

21 STEVEN BANKS: Every... through the Thrive  
22 program we have one to 25 ratio of social workers in  
23 order to help stabilize the families with children in  
24 that system...

25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But not in hotels?

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2 STEVEN BANKS: We don't currently have  
3 them in hotels.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we should,  
5 okay. Okay, with that I'm going to turn it over to  
6 Council Member Rosenthal and I'll, I'll leave my  
7 questions at that, we... I do have a, a number of other  
8 questions that I didn't get to so we're going to have  
9 to follow up in... [cross-talk]

10 STEVEN BANKS: Happy, happy to... [cross-  
11 talk]

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...writing, is that...  
13 [cross-talk]

14 STEVEN BANKS: ...do that... [cross-talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...okay?

16 STEVEN BANKS: Happy to do that.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so  
19 much, I appreciate the second round of questions. I  
20 want to ask again about some DV domestic violence...  
21 [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...violence  
24 funding. A new need was added to HRA's budget in the  
25 preliminary plan in November for point five million

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2 for domestic and gender-based violence prevention,  
3 has that money been spent in fiscal year 19 and do  
4 you know what that's for?

5 STEVEN BANKS: Right, that, that is money  
6 that is for the End DV, that... we simply are the  
7 conduit agency for those dollars so that's for... we,  
8 we provide the budget for the domestic... the city's  
9 domestic violence office in terms of the operation of  
10 that program, that's distinct from what Administrator  
11 Bonilla and I have been talking about which is we  
12 actually provide direct services ourselves but we are  
13 the funding mechanism for the citywide office for  
14 domestic violence.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, is that  
16 like staff because its ongoing, it's a baseline  
17 number so is that... [cross-talk]

18 STEVEN BANKS: Again... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...staff, is it  
20 contracts?

21 STEVEN BANKS: We're going to have to get  
22 back to you on that, it's... I believe it's for  
23 contracts. I believe it's for contracts for that  
24 office, the former Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic  
25 Violence...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: No, I'm very  
3 familiar with it, why wouldn't it be in the Mayor... I  
4 don't understand why... [cross-talk]

5 STEVEN BANKS: Because that... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...it's there  
7 and... [cross-talk]

8 STEVEN BANKS: ...because that's part of  
9 what we talked about before in terms of economies of  
10 scale so rather than have separate personnel offices  
11 and separate contracting processes and all of that we  
12 are... we are the... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Fiscal agent...  
14 [cross-talk]

15 STEVEN BANKS: ...yeah... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...for  
17 contracts.

18 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, yep.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, if you  
20 could... [cross-talk]

21 STEVEN BANKS: And for operations, for  
22 their... we're, we're the fiscal... we're the provider of  
23 the financing for that office through our budget.

24

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, if you  
3 could confirm that I would... it would be helpful to  
4 know.

5 STEVEN BANKS: Sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I think I see  
7 what you're saying. Okay, I wanted to ask about HASA,  
8 there was an increase in the average number of days  
9 between the application submission and housing  
10 benefits issued by nearly two days, if you look at  
11 the first four months of fiscal year 19 to fiscal  
12 year 18... [cross-talk]

13 STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...and the  
15 actual annual averages for all years reported on the  
16 Mayor's Management Report have also been increasing  
17 notably above the target of 15.5 days, I'm wondering  
18 why the housing application processing time is  
19 increasing and whether or not you have the head count  
20 to meet those needs and then I have one last  
21 question... [cross-talk]

22 STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, we did... we did add  
23 additional staff, some of it obviously the overall  
24 operations relate to the complexity of finding  
25 apartments in the... in the city but in terms of

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2 processing time we did add additional staffing and  
3 part of it was catching up with the increased numbers  
4 of cases we have because of the expansion beyond the  
5 original clients having to have AIDS before we would  
6 serve them but we added additional staffing to catch  
7 up with the processing time.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, I, I  
9 think it's worth sort of looking at that a little  
10 bit... [cross-talk]

11 STEVEN BANKS: Sure... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...because it  
13 sounds like you're playing catch up with staffing  
14 because your number of days keep increasing.

15 STEVEN BANKS: Right, also our number of  
16 clients coming to us is increasing too.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Right, so I, I  
18 mean there's... so, it sounds like you're not getting  
19 staffed at the level you need because these are  
20 people that are just waiting for their benefits.

21 STEVEN BANKS: No, I think we have... we,  
22 we got the level of staff to address the challenge  
23 and... but we're going to monitor it very closely, but  
24 I do understand the spirit of your question.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, because  
3 it's only increasing but I hear you here behaving.  
4 Okay, I'm going to call it a day.

5 STEVEN BANKS: Okay.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you very  
7 much for your time, thank you Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
9 Member Rosenthal, Commissioner, the Administrators,  
10 Deputy Commissioner thank you very much Deputy  
11 Commissioners, thank you very much for your... for your  
12 time and for answering our questions and we look  
13 forward to continuing the conversation on these  
14 budget related matters between now and the executive  
15 budget so that when we have our executive budget  
16 hearing in May all the questions that we asked will  
17 have answers. Thank you very much, thanks.

18 STEVEN BANKS: And thank you for your  
19 support on fighting the 125 million dollars cut we're  
20 facing.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes sir, thank you.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Folks we still are in  
23 session so if you could please exit quietly, if you  
24 are leaving please exit quietly. Private  
25 conversations please take outside instead of rotunda.

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1  
2 We will be continuing with the Juvenile Justice  
3 momentarily. Once again if you are here to testify  
4 and have not filled out a witness slip please do so  
5 now at the Sergeant at arms table. So, once again we  
6 ask everyone that is not remaining for Juvenile  
7 Justice portion to please exit quietly, thank you.  
8 Once again those of you who are exiting please exit  
9 quietly, we are about to switch over to Juvenile  
10 Justice. Public portions for both hearings will be  
11 around three o'clock. If you have test... signed up to  
12 testify that would be around three o'clock for both  
13 hearings, for General Welfare and Juvenile Justice.  
14 Once again, we ask everyone to please exit quietly if  
15 you are leaving. Everyone else we ask to please find  
16 seats, silence your cell phones, if you are here to  
17 testify please fill out a witness slip. Thank you for  
18 your cooperation. Alright, we're going to ask  
19 everyone to please find seats at this time, we are  
20 going to resume in a moment. So, once again if you  
21 could please find seats, please silence all  
22 electronic devices at this time, please put all  
23 electronic devices on silent, any private  
24 conversations please take outside of the chambers  
25 throughout the hearing, thank you. Quite please.

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COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good afternoon.

Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Andy King, I'm  
Chair of the Committee on Juvenile Justice. I want to  
thank you Chair Levin for your spirited conversation  
with Commissioner Banks earlier and all who were here  
to testify and listen to our conversation but before  
I give my opening remarks, I did experience a... I want  
to say a playful banter but in a banter that was a  
little annoying from Commissioner Banks who was  
testifying earlier and I'm just saying to us, I know  
we have... we all have our relationships and how we  
want to answer questions to help the system so we can  
improve the systems but I want to always be truthful  
and honest, concise, in sync and if we don't have the  
answers which we're trying to ascertain today the  
answers to of our budgetary concerns when it comes to  
this JJ system, if we don't have an answer I'm just  
saying I would just ask you all to respect us and say  
we just don't have the answer and then we can move  
forward not dance around. I watched a 15 minute  
exchange and all he had to do was just give an answer  
and refused to give an answer until he finally found  
himself but I don't want to waste your time, I don't  
want the Committee's time to be wasted with that kind

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1  
2 of ugly dance. So, as, as I say that let's jump into  
3 today's conversation again. Thank you, Chair Levin,  
4 for this morning's spirited conversation with ACS and  
5 Department of Homeless Services. The city spends  
6 approximately 236 million of that budget... well let me  
7 back up, I just want to say the testimony we heard  
8 this morning discussed how ACS spends on its proposed  
9 2.6 billion budget for fiscal year 20 and 19. The  
10 city spends approximately 236 million of that budget  
11 annually on Juvenile Justice services managed by ACS  
12 Division of Youth and Family Justice or DYFJ. These  
13 services include alternative detention, nonlimited  
14 and secure detention placements and juvenile justice  
15 support. The total budget amount increased about 40  
16 million in the past year. The key issue for me is the  
17 progress of the city's ongoing Raise the Age  
18 implementation and I say the city because the state  
19 has excluded the city from the financial support it  
20 provided to every other New York county. As we will  
21 discuss the city is currently funding 90 percent of  
22 the total cost of Raise the Age or about 131 million  
23 in fiscal 2020. The state has a responsibility to  
24 support the program and should pay its fair share. I  
25 hope to really see this in the state's final budget.

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1  
2 I'm interested also in hearing more about the  
3 staffing transition and the joint operation at the  
4 Horizon Juvenile facility. We want to see how the  
5 youth development, development specialists in the  
6 facility as soon as possible. Quite simply can ACS  
7 tell us... tell this Committee today when all  
8 correctional officers will be removed from Horizon.  
9 Another concern across DYFJ is the availability of  
10 quality programming with rigorous metrics for  
11 evaluating success. This Committee has previously  
12 requested information from ACS on these performing  
13 metrics but as of today we have not received those  
14 answers. I'm hoping to receive that information soon  
15 and I will continue the partnership for some of the  
16 city's most vulnerable youth. Finally, we need more  
17 transparency and accuracy when it comes to DYFJ's  
18 budget. The city made a serious... made a serious  
19 commitment in last year's executive budget to Raise  
20 the Age and there's over 170 million in capital  
21 commitments for their facilities. However, ACS's  
22 capital commitment rate declined to just eight  
23 percent of fiscal 2018. How much facility work has  
24 been completed? How much money has been spent and  
25 what else needs to be done are just a few of the

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1  
2 answers we want to get answers to today? In addition,  
3 I'd like to know if the population coming into ACS  
4 system is bigger or smaller than anticipated. What  
5 can we expect when a 17-year-old adolescent comes  
6 into the system on October 1<sup>st</sup> marking the second and  
7 final phase of the changes in the Raise the Age law?  
8 We need clarity on the population numbers in order to  
9 align our budget to what it really needs especially  
10 if the Mayor's asking for ACS to produce a  
11 substantial PEG of 68 million. I noted with concern  
12 that ACS remove Horizon from the population from its  
13 monthly flash indicators and I would like to hear why  
14 that has happened. Finally, there is a question of  
15 Juvenile Justice contracts which total 100 million  
16 but the remain hidden... but, but remain hidden within  
17 its general contracting category. I'd like to hear  
18 from you Commissioner and your team, and we will  
19 continue to work with you to see if we can pull these  
20 contracts out for greater transparency. These matters  
21 are critical concerns for our communities in general  
22 but particularly our young people and families  
23 involved in the justice system. It is essential that  
24 ACS and the Council partner together for a fair  
25 future. I look forward to today's conversation. But

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2 before I introduce ACS Commissioner and Deputy  
3 Commissioner for DYFJ, DYFJ I'd like to thank the  
4 Committee for their work in preparing today's  
5 hearing; Daniel Kroop; Finance Analyst Dohini  
6 Sompura, Unit Head; Counsel Josh Kingsley and Policy  
7 Analyst William Holden. I will now ask the Counsel to  
8 swear in the panel. Before we do that, I'm going to  
9 defer to my colleague, Chair Levin to make a  
10 statement, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Chair King.  
12 Good afternoon everybody. I'm Council Member Steve  
13 Levin, Chair of the Committee on General Welfare here  
14 at the Council and I'm glad to be joined by my  
15 Committee colleague as well, Chair Andy King and  
16 members of the Committee on Juvenile Justice. I'll  
17 acknowledge Council Member Barry Grodenchik and  
18 Council Member Robert Holden who are with us right  
19 now. Welcome once again to the fiscal 2020  
20 preliminary budget hearing for the Committee on  
21 General Welfare. This afternoon as Council Member  
22 King, Chair King said we will be hearing testimony  
23 from the Administration for Children Services  
24 otherwise known as ACS on its proposed budget for  
25 fiscal 2020. General agency operations within it's

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2 proposed 2.67 billion budget and performance  
3 indicators for children services within the fiscal 19  
4 preliminary Mayor... preliminary Mayor's management  
5 report. There are... and just one thing I... before I get  
6 into the rest of my statement I just want to follow  
7 up on what Chair King said, we across budget areas  
8 covered by the General Welfare Committee are seeing  
9 drastic state cuts and shifts of responsibility to  
10 the city for funding of, of essential programming  
11 from the state whether that's in ACS or in homeless  
12 services. It's, it's a... it's shocking in preparing  
13 for this hearing how much of the burden the city  
14 takes and how much of that over time has shifted to  
15 the city from the state and so we call on our state  
16 colleagues to, to be a partner in providing these  
17 services for New Yorkers in need and not... and not  
18 entirely shift all of the responsibility and all of  
19 the funding over to the city because we are unable to  
20 do all of it on our own, we need our state partners.  
21 There are over 1.8 million children in New York City  
22 and a quarter of them live in poverty. In fact, a  
23 stunning 12,000 families with children return to a  
24 homeless shelter every night. We may live in a  
25 wealthy city, but the honest truth is that many of

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1  
2 our neighbors and families are struggling day to day  
3 just to get by. This is why ACS's mission is so  
4 important. With the transfer of Early Learn to the  
5 Department of Education, ACS renews it's focus on  
6 child welfare and family wellbeing. Today we will  
7 continue a conversation about whether ACS's critical  
8 mission is aligned to its budget. Are there enough  
9 resources in terms of staffing, contracts, training  
10 and capital projects to ensure ACS meets its mission?  
11 Are the investments that we have made the right ones?  
12 What more should we be doing? I was disappointed that  
13 there were no new needs in ACS's fiscal 2020  
14 preliminary budget. Additionally, I was very  
15 disappointed that OMB has outlined a very high PEG  
16 target of 68 million dollars in savings to be  
17 included by the executive budget. ACS's PEG is the  
18 city's second largest in real numbers as a share of,  
19 of an agency's funds behind only DOE which is very  
20 concerning. ACS also faces state budget risks again  
21 this year with 13 million dollars threatened for PINS  
22 preventative diversion services. Last year the state  
23 pushed over 130 million dollars of cost onto the city  
24 and the year prior cut 62 million dollars from the  
25 city's foster care block grant. This is very

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1  
2 concerning, it... this, this, this issue of the PEG  
3 target is something that I, I have... I'm, I'm, I'm  
4 really flummoxed about, the agencies that testified  
5 this morning, Department of Homeless Services and HRA  
6 have less than a one percent PEG and I understand  
7 that a lot of their budget is, is entitlement and not  
8 discretionary spending but there's, there's no excuse  
9 for the administration to be putting such a high  
10 burden on ACS which is caring for the most vulnerable  
11 people in our entire city, the most vulnerable people  
12 in our entire city that depend on ACS and to, to  
13 stick them with a seven percent PEG is absolutely  
14 unacceptable and I will continue to fight against  
15 that. From the federal administration to the state  
16 government and now with this Mayor's Administration's  
17 PEG I'm alarmed by what I see as a pervasive culture  
18 of cuts to children's services, a culture of cuts to  
19 children's services. Already we know that low  
20 provider salaries and high work loads are straining  
21 our system. We know that youth in homeless shelters  
22 and foster care need our help and we have heard that  
23 backlogs at the family court are preventing timely  
24 resolutions to critical questions of custody and  
25 guardianship. Today I look forward to hearing an

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1  
2 update on the transfer of Early Learn services to DOE  
3 and the future of the 66,000 strong voucher system  
4 that will remain at ACS. I'm particularly interested  
5 to hear what ACS and DOE are doing to address  
6 persistent pay gap for our day care teachers and  
7 staff some of whom earn as much as 60 percent less  
8 than similarly qualified and experienced teachers at  
9 DOE. But I also want to discuss what we can achieve  
10 together to reverse this culture of cuts and move  
11 from reactive to proactive budgeting for the child  
12 welfare system as a whole. For example, I strongly  
13 believe in the work that ACS has done to launch the  
14 pilot family enrichment centers and I want to thank  
15 Deputy Commissioner Lorelei Vargas for all of her  
16 work on that but I want to see more additional  
17 support in the preliminary budget for these community  
18 assets. I would also like to discuss the Fair Futures  
19 campaign for which... for, for comprehensive foster  
20 care supports and hear what the city is doing to fund  
21 the foster care task force's recommendations. This  
22 morning there were hundreds of people outside  
23 rallying for the Fair Futures campaign which would  
24 provide mentorship and coaches for every youth that  
25 ages out of foster care between the ages of 21 and

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1  
2 26. And going back to the foster care task force's  
3 recommendations, this includes a seven million dollar  
4 allocation that was agreed upon last year but was not  
5 implemented as part of the fiscal 2019 budget  
6 adoption deal between the Mayor and the Speaker.

7 Let's work together to provide the kinship  
8 navigators, improved family visiting time and  
9 workforce employment support, support that was  
10 promised by the Mayor to the Speaker last year. As

11 the father of one and soon to be two children and the  
12 Chair of the Committee for the sixth year, I feel I  
13 have an important role to play in ensuring that the  
14 city has proper oversight over the budget and policy  
15 making decisions at ACS. In partnership with you

16 Commissioner Hansell and your entire staff, Deputy  
17 Commissioners and, and... the entire staff and this  
18 administration I hope that we can work together

19 towards proactive budgeting that ensures that New  
20 York City's children stay safe, happy and healthy. I

21 want to thank my colleague, Chair Andy King of the  
22 Juvenile Justice Committee for all of his hard work  
23 in advocating for New York City's children. I'd also  
24 like to thank the Committee staff for their

25 incredible work in preparing for today's hearing,

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it's really just a remarkable amount of work that finance staff does to prepare; Daniel Kroop, the Finance Analyst for the Committee; Dohini Sompura, Unit Head, Regina Poreda Ryan, our Deputy Finance Director; of course our Finance Director Latonia McKinney who I didn't acknowledge earlier; Counsel Aminta Kilowan; Policy Analyst Tonya Cyrus and Crystal Pond as well as my Chief of Staff Jonathan Boucher and Legislative Director Elizabeth Adams and now I'll turn it back over to Chair King.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And at this point I believe we were joined by Helen; I don't know we've got her on the record but thank you, we've been joined by Council Woman Helen Rosenthal this afternoon. And now we will turn it over to Counsel to administer the oath of truth.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Please raise your right hand? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Committee and to answer honestly to Council Member questions?

DAVID HANSELL: I do.

JULIE FARBER: I do.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: And please state your  
3 name for the record before speaking, thank you.

4 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, thank you. Good  
5 afternoon Chair King, Chair Levin and members of the  
6 Juvenile Justice and General Welfare Committees. I am  
7 David Hansell, Commissioner of the New York City  
8 Administration for Children's Services. With me at  
9 the table today are starting on my far left Felipe  
10 Franko who is Deputy Commissioner of our Division of  
11 Youth and Family Justice; Dr. Jacqueline Martin, who  
12 is Deputy Commissioner of our Division of Prevention  
13 Services; Julie Farber, who is Deputy Commissioner of  
14 our Division of Family Permanency Services; and Jose  
15 Mercado, who is our Chief Finance Officer. We very  
16 much appreciate the opportunity to discuss the ACS  
17 Fiscal Year 2020 preliminary budget, and the many  
18 ways that we've been working to protect and promote  
19 the safety and well-being of New York City's  
20 children, youth and families. There are and I  
21 completely agree with both of you, there are a few  
22 missions more important than that of Children's  
23 Services, and I am deeply honored to have led the  
24 agency in this mission for just over two years now.  
25 Throughout my tenure I have taken every opportunity

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2 to share with the Council, with our many  
3 stakeholders, and with the families and the  
4 communities that we serve, the work we're doing, our  
5 successes and our challenges, and the steps we are  
6 taking to build the strongest possible child and  
7 family servicing agency. Our work is critically  
8 important, and I believe that all New Yorkers have  
9 the right to understand what we are doing, how we do  
10 it, and why we do it the way we do. So, in that  
11 spirit, I'd like to take this opportunity to share  
12 with you the ways in which we are strengthening child  
13 safety, capitalizing on data and technology, and  
14 working to build better support systems for our  
15 children's families.. our city's families and  
16 communities, which I truly believe puts New York City  
17 at the forefront of child welfare and juvenile  
18 justice work across the country. We've charted and we  
19 are pursuing a course that is strengthening all  
20 aspects of our work and enhancing our ability to keep  
21 children safe and support families. While we  
22 continually strive to improve our work, I am proud of  
23 the following accomplishments in particular. We have  
24 reinforced our child protective process, the front  
25 end of our system for keeping children safe. Most

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1  
2 significantly, we have reduced caseloads for our  
3 Child Protective Specialists, provided more advanced  
4 tools and technology to support their work, enhanced  
5 training and skill development, and tightened our  
6 quality assurance and oversight mechanisms. We have  
7 decreased the number of New York City children in  
8 foster care to the lowest level in decades. At the  
9 end of calendar year 2018, there were approximately  
10 8,200 children in our foster care system,  
11 representing a continued decline over the past two  
12 years, in the face of foster care increases  
13 nationally. And through implementation of our Foster  
14 Care Strategic Blueprint and the recommendations of  
15 the Interagency Foster Care Task Force, we are  
16 improving services and outcomes for young people in  
17 foster care. And we are keeping children safely at  
18 home with their parents, through our prevention  
19 programs. On any given day we are serving nearly  
20 25,000 children and their families in one of our  
21 community-based prevention programs. Our evidence-  
22 based prevention programs continue to draw national  
23 attention, as the new federal Family First law pushes  
24 child welfare programs nationally in the direction  
25 which New York City began to move years ago. We have

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1  
2 also launched a new preventive initiative to serve  
3 families for whom we might previously have sought  
4 court-ordered supervision to ensure child safety. I'd  
5 like to describe these accomplishments in greater  
6 detail and then we'll turn to juvenile justice as  
7 well. ACS remains committed to maintaining one of the  
8 lowest CPS caseloads in the country, and we have put  
9 in place measures to help drive those caseloads down.  
10 Over the last two years we have hired over 1,100 new  
11 CPS. With more frontline staff on board, we have been  
12 able to reduce the average investigative caseload to  
13 10.1 cases per caseworker during the first four  
14 months of fiscal year 2019, well below the nationally  
15 recognized standard of 12 and lower than almost every  
16 other jurisdiction in New York State. We have also  
17 added supports to increase staff retention and reduce  
18 staff turnover, such as extension of training time  
19 and revision of the training curriculum, enhanced  
20 supervision and coaching in field offices, and  
21 wellness and staff appreciation programs. Our child  
22 protective staff are out every day throughout the  
23 five boroughs, visiting homes, schools, doctors'  
24 offices, shelters, and other locations to investigate  
25 allegations and interview witnesses. As part of this

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1  
2 work, they must take notes of interviews with  
3 parents, teachers, doctors, and others, they must  
4 track active cases, and access a family's prior child  
5 welfare history. All of our frontline child-  
6 protective staff now have portable tablets that allow  
7 workers to conduct clearances, obtain case history,  
8 and access other critical information in real time  
9 while out in the field. The tablets also enable CPS  
10 to enter their case notes from locations such as  
11 courthouses or waiting rooms, rather than having to  
12 return from the field to their desks for that  
13 purpose. We've also launched new software called the  
14 Safe Measures Dashboard, which gives caseworkers,  
15 supervisors, and other staff a greater ability to  
16 manage their caseloads and prioritize their work  
17 through a streamlined overview of case details. Safe  
18 Measures provides a calendar of tasks and deadlines  
19 in cases, tracks casework contacts, prioritizes  
20 workloads, and allows supervisors to monitor  
21 caseworkers' workload and progress. This is a major  
22 step toward automating what have previously been  
23 manual and burdensome processes, and we will be  
24 making this valuable tool available to our provider  
25 agencies as well over the coming months. Getting to

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1  
2 homes quickly for an initial visit is key to securing  
3 children's safety, so ACS has implemented a multi-  
4 faceted transportation approach that includes access  
5 to Zipcar Local Motion technology that enables child  
6 protection staff to quickly reserve City vehicles  
7 online at any time before traveling to a home visit,  
8 and dramatically reducing CPS response times in the  
9 field. Thanks to... I'm sorry, the, the job of our  
10 frontline staff is among the most difficult in the  
11 City, and it's imperative that they receive the  
12 specialized training they need to do their complex  
13 work. This year, ACS will begin construction on two  
14 new training sites, one in Queens and one in Harlem,  
15 which will offer simulated "on the job training" to  
16 frontline child welfare and youth justice staff.  
17 ACS's first-ever simulation centers will allow staff  
18 to train in mock apartments, a mock courtroom, a mock  
19 detention center, and mock interview rooms, using  
20 actors and retired New York City family court judges  
21 to create a training environment that simulates the  
22 work in the field. Our Division of Child Protection  
23 is tasked with the enormous responsibility of  
24 reducing risk and ensuring safety and well-being for  
25 children and families throughout the City, so it's

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1  
2 crucial that we monitor the quality of our work and  
3 identify the areas where we need to improve. One of  
4 the first reforms I made as ACS Commissioner was to  
5 revamp our ChildStat model, to strengthen the  
6 agency's focus on performance accountability around  
7 child protection. Since the re-launch of ChildStat in  
8 May 2017, we've held more than 100 review sessions,  
9 resulting in scores of recommendations for zone-based  
10 and system-wide improvement. As issues have been  
11 flagged in ChildStat, we've identified and  
12 implemented reforms that have enhanced our  
13 investigative work, have increased the efficiency of  
14 key administrative processes and business functions,  
15 have reduced delays in initiating services for  
16 families, and have streamlined required casework  
17 documentation. And thanks to focused ChildStat  
18 attention and other enhancements, our CPS units have  
19 significantly improved the quality and timely  
20 submission of required safety assessments and have  
21 instituted solutions to enhance supervisory and  
22 managerial oversight within CPS units. In our  
23 prevention area we contract with community-based  
24 organizations to provide prevention services to  
25 promote family stability and prevent maltreatment. We

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1  
2 have worked with our provider partners to steadily  
3 increase the availability of evidence-based  
4 preventative programs that are shown to reduce rates  
5 of maltreatment and improve child and family well-  
6 being and that has positioned ACS at the forefront  
7 nationally in providing evidence-based prevention  
8 programs to support families. We have strengthened  
9 both our support and our oversight of contracted  
10 providers, to make sure that families receive high-  
11 quality services and that safety risks are flagged  
12 and addressed quickly. Our continuum of prevention  
13 services provides about 20,000 families and more than  
14 44,000 children a year with the support and the  
15 services that they need to address challenges and has  
16 allowed ACS to safely reduce the number of children  
17 in foster care year after year. For families with  
18 very high service needs, particularly those under  
19 Court-Ordered Supervision or at risk of court  
20 intervention, we added 960 new prevention services  
21 slots in late 2018, including evidence-based clinical  
22 models. With this as our foundation, we are launching  
23 a new vision for prevention work in New York City  
24 through an upcoming Request for Proposals. The  
25 Prevention Services RFP will be released later this

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1  
2 year with new contracts to begin on July 1, 2020. In  
3 anticipation of this procurement, we released a  
4 concept paper for public comment to solicit feedback  
5 from providers and from the community at large. Our  
6 new vision for prevention services in New York City  
7 focuses more heavily on evidence-based models relying  
8 on what we know work and better allocating service  
9 models across the City in a way that aligns with and  
10 advances the continued reform and innovation of the  
11 City's child welfare system. This will also prepare  
12 ACS and our providers well for the implementation of  
13 the federal Family First Prevention Services Act,  
14 starting in September 2021. The comment period for  
15 the Concept Paper started February 8<sup>th</sup> and it ends  
16 today, so I encourage anyone interested in commenting  
17 to visit our website and submit your feedback  
18 immediately. This is a very exciting moment for child  
19 welfare prevention services in New York City, and we  
20 look forward to incorporating your collective voices  
21 as we bring the next generation of prevention  
22 services to life. Our deep commitment to supporting  
23 and strengthening families has allowed the City to  
24 reduce the number of children in foster care to a  
25 historic low. There were nearly 50,000 New York City

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2 children in foster care 25 years ago, 17,000 a decade  
3 ago, just over 9,000 two years ago when I started as  
4 Commissioner and by the end of last year, we'd  
5 reduced the number children in care to about 8,200.  
6 The decline in our foster care population has  
7 continued even as the number of children in foster  
8 care in other states and cities nationwide has  
9 increased since 2012. We believe that children should  
10 only be placed in foster care when it is absolutely  
11 necessary for their safety, and then for the shortest  
12 amount of time possible. Protecting children's safety  
13 while in foster care and after they reunify with  
14 their families is a top priority for us and we've  
15 launched major new programs to enhance safety  
16 including a 6 million dollar initiative that we  
17 launched last year targeted to keeping children safe  
18 when they transition home to their families from  
19 foster care and we've also launched new investments  
20 in family time and visitation. ACS has invested in a  
21 campaign to increase the recruitment of quality  
22 foster parents and increase the use of kinship homes  
23 for foster care that has produced significant  
24 results, I'll talk about those in more detail in a  
25 minute. While maltreatment in foster care is rare,

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1  
2 any maltreatment in foster care is concerning and we  
3 monitor it very closely. In addition to the new  
4 initiatives I've just mentioned, we're taking steps  
5 to raise safety standards across the board, including  
6 conducting a close review of cases of maltreatment  
7 and a thorough review of provider programs. In the  
8 longer term, we're also rebidding our entire foster  
9 care system and will use that process to ensure that  
10 providers are protecting the safety of children. As  
11 you know, we, we contract with private nonprofit  
12 organizations to provide foster care services for  
13 children who are not safely able to remain at home.  
14 And during the next two years, we will re-procure our  
15 contracts for delivering family-based foster care and  
16 residential foster care services. We see this too as  
17 an opportunity for ACS to build on the successes of  
18 existing services for children and families and to  
19 design a shared framework across foster care and  
20 prevention services as well as to implement new  
21 strategies to improve safety, permanency, and well-  
22 being outcomes for New York City children and  
23 families. We very much appreciate the City Council's  
24 shared commitment to improving those outcomes for  
25 youth and family in foster care, and I would like to

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1  
2 acknowledge Chair Levin in particular for his role in  
3 shaping the work of the New York City Interagency  
4 Foster Care Task Force. I also want to thank the City  
5 Council for doubling its support of transition-age  
6 youth programming from 550,000 to 1.1 million in the  
7 current year budget. This funding has been allocated  
8 to eight agencies to provide education, employment  
9 and supportive services for older youth in foster  
10 care. We just released an annual update on the Task  
11 Force's work, and it shows that several of the  
12 recommendations have already been completed and many  
13 more are well underway. As a few examples, in March  
14 of last year we announced a goal to increase the  
15 proportion of children placed with kin, with family  
16 members or close friends, upon entry to foster care  
17 to reach 46 percent by the end of fiscal year 2020.  
18 And we are well on our way to achieving that. The  
19 proportion of children in foster care who were placed  
20 with kin rose from 32 and a half percent at the end  
21 of December 2017 to 38 and a half percent by the end  
22 of last year. And the increase in kin placements is  
23 supported by several initiatives, including the  
24 implementation of Kinship Specialists within our  
25 Division of Child Protection, also by a

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1  
2 public/private partnership among ACS, foundations and  
3 national experts to help foster care providers  
4 improve their kinship process... practice, and the  
5 launch of a kinship pilot with two provider agencies  
6 to implement innovative kinship strategies. We have  
7 also expanded our inventory of non-relative foster  
8 homes. And in fiscal year 2018, we increased the  
9 number of new non-relative foster homes recruited by  
10 32 percent and that reversed a six-year decline in  
11 the number of new homes that we've been able to  
12 recruit. To advance another recommendation from the  
13 Task Force, ACS has implemented two new tools with  
14 foster care agencies to help improve visitation  
15 practice, and we are partnering with the parent  
16 advocacy organization, Rise, to provide training and  
17 technical assistance to foster care agency staff.  
18 We've also launched a pilot with two providers to  
19 implement strategies to improve the quality of Family  
20 Time. Rooted in our core mission is the belief that  
21 every young person in ACS's care should receive the  
22 guidance and support they need for success in  
23 adulthood. Over the last two years, we've established  
24 and expanded a new Office of Employment and Workforce  
25 Development initiatives to expand career readiness,

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1  
2 internship, and employment opportunities for older  
3 youth in foster care. Six of our agencies have been  
4 implementing the Young Adult Work Opportunities for  
5 Rewarding Careers or YA WORC model, with intensive  
6 training and support from The Workplace Center at  
7 Columbia University. Earlier this month, we announced  
8 that we are expanding our workforce program with  
9 Columbia, adding five more foster care providers,  
10 each of which has been trained in the YA WORC model.  
11 Last April, we partnered with New Yorkers for  
12 Children and Youth Villages to launch the YVLifeSet  
13 program in New York City, with the goals of improving  
14 education, employment and housing outcomes and  
15 helping youth successfully transition to adulthood.  
16 More than 200 current and former foster and juvenile  
17 youth involved youth have enrolled in the Young Adult  
18 Internship Program PLUS, YAIP+, which has been  
19 developed by DYCD in partnership with us at ACS. And  
20 more than half of the participating youth completed  
21 their internships many of them hired into permanent  
22 jobs and an additional 30 percent have continued to  
23 advance on their educational goals. Moving on to the  
24 very important area of Juvenile Justice. Last  
25 October, we launched one of the most groundbreaking

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1 juvenile justice reforms in New York state's history;  
2 Raise the Age. Before that new law, New York was one  
3 of just two states in the country that still, still  
4 treated 16 and 17-year-old youth as adults in the  
5 criminal justice system. Today, 16 and 17-year-olds  
6 are no longer detained on Riker's Island, and if  
7 ordered by a court they are now held in ACS  
8 facilities where they receive education, age-  
9 appropriate therapeutic and recreational services,  
10 and health and mental health care. Newly arrested 16-  
11 year-olds are now treated as juveniles, having their  
12 cases heard either in the Family Court or the new  
13 youth part of Criminal Court, and if they are  
14 detained its either in Crossroads Juvenile Detention  
15 Center or one our non-secure detention facilities,  
16 where we provide the services they need to get their  
17 lives back on track. If adjudicated to placement by  
18 the Family Court, they are placed in small Close to  
19 Home residential facilities. Our Close to Home  
20 initiative has transformed New York City's approach  
21 to juvenile justice over the past six years, and it's  
22 become a national and international model. Last  
23 month, the Columbia Justice Lab issued a report  
24 noting that Close to Home can and should serve as a  
25

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1  
2 roadmap for other jurisdictions to emulate. In the  
3 years following Close to Home implementation, we have  
4 witnessed juvenile crime, arrests, detention and  
5 placements plummet in the City. From 2008 to 2017,  
6 the number of juvenile arrests decreased 70 percent,  
7 from 13,564 to 4,080. Overall admissions to juvenile  
8 detention decreased significantly year over year,  
9 dropping 64 percent from Fiscal Year 2007 when nearly  
10 6,000 youth were detained to only 1,754 in Fiscal  
11 Year 2018. And likewise, the number of New York City  
12 youth in juvenile delinquent and juvenile offender  
13 placement also decreased almost 90 percent from 2009  
14 to 2018. We have pro-actively expanded our array of  
15 interventions throughout our juvenile justice  
16 continuum to better serve the unique needs of the  
17 older youth who are now and prospectively will be in  
18 ACS' care under Raise the Age. At Crossroads Juvenile  
19 Center, we provide a robust menu of therapeutic,  
20 recreational and vocational services and programming  
21 for our young people, and we work with our partners  
22 at the Department of Education to provide  
23 uninterrupted educational services for every young  
24 person. When young people are placed in Close to Home  
25 residential care, a provider is assigned to each

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1 individual youth and those providers now remain with  
2 that youth throughout the duration of that young  
3 person's placement, including their time on  
4 aftercare. This enables providers to develop deeper  
5 assessments of youth and family needs and allows  
6 providers to create more streamlined service plans  
7 based upon those individualized assessments. As you  
8 know, ACS partners with the Department of Correction,  
9 as the law requires, to supervise the youth who have  
10 transferred from Rikers Island to Horizon, as well as  
11 newly arrested 17-year-olds for whom the law does not  
12 take effect until October 1, 2019. While the initial  
13 transition had some challenges, the facility is now  
14 stable and secure, and youth are attending school,  
15 receiving health and mental health services, and  
16 participating in a wide array of recreational,  
17 vocational and arts programming. You may also recall  
18 that ACS launched an aggressive hiring plan last  
19 summer to hire some 700 Youth Development Specialists  
20 over two years, to work in our secure detention  
21 facilities. Thanks in part to outreach and  
22 recruitment by the Council we've have hired over 250  
23 YDS to date, we are still recruiting, and we  
24 encourage anyone who's interested and meets the  
25

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1  
2 qualifications to apply. While we are obligated to  
3 investigate every report of maltreatment that we  
4 receive through New York State, we are also committed  
5 to redressing historical patterns of racial  
6 disproportionality in child welfare involvement,  
7 through a focus on equity in our work, and through  
8 efforts to strengthen communities that have faced  
9 generational patterns of marginalization and  
10 disenfranchisement. Our Division of Child and Family  
11 Well-Being aims to engage families before they ever  
12 reach the child welfare system, by focusing on the  
13 factors that contribute to well-being including  
14 health, education, employment, and culture. A large  
15 part of this important work is carried out through  
16 community and family engagement, through public  
17 awareness campaigns, and through subsidized early  
18 childhood education, as well as the promotion of  
19 equity strategies throughout ACS' work. As we've  
20 previously discussed with the Committees, ACS's  
21 Family Enrichment Centers represent an innovative new  
22 model for providing comprehensive, community-focused  
23 support to families. We are proud to have launched  
24 three pilot FECs in 2018 in neighborhoods with high  
25 rates of Child Welfare system involvement. The first

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Center opened last February in our Hunts Point/Longwood neighborhood and it's called Our Place, shortly thereafter the C.R.I.B program opened in East New York and then Circle of Dreams in Highbridge opened the doors for the community. Today these three Family Enrichment Centers are helping communities build connections among residents and offering supports for families who have identified a need to prevent those families from ever coming into contact with the child welfare system. Our Community Partnership Program is an ACS-funded, community-based initiative that partners with local communities to support families and engage them with ACS and other City agencies. Through coordinated service referrals, through community-led programs and through community awareness efforts, the CPPs serve as ambassadors to the community as... and... advocates for families and help to ensure that the work we do at ACS is equitable and culturally competent. Over the last year, Child and Family Wellbeing has worked to redesign and relaunch those Community Partnership Program model to build... to better serve families and communities throughout the City. The work of the reconfigured CPPs, which began in January, is rooted

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1  
2 in three foundational frameworks; collective impact,  
3 a two generation approach, and an equity framework—  
4 and it gives local organizations the space to network  
5 with each other, to share critical information and  
6 resources and provides resources that help families  
7 support their children. In Fall of 2017, we launched  
8 a citywide Safe Medication campaign to provide  
9 families with tools to help ensure that medications  
10 and potentially dangerous household items are stored  
11 out of children's reach. As part of the campaign, we  
12 partnered with the Department of Health and Mental  
13 Hygiene to develop informational palm cards and  
14 promotional posters to raise awareness of the dangers  
15 of unsafe medication storage. And our child  
16 protection frontline staff distributes medication  
17 lock boxes and bags to families engaged with ACS as  
18 needed to help keep medication out of children's  
19 reach, and we've also supplied lock boxes to our  
20 provider partners to distribute to other families in  
21 need. Tragically, a significant proportion of child  
22 fatalities in New York City, about 50 a year are  
23 attributed to unsafe sleep practices. To help prevent  
24 sleep-related injuries, ACS is partnering with New  
25 York City Health and Hospitals to put safe sleep

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1 information directly into the hands of new parents.

2 Earlier this month, we announced that parents who

3 give birth in any of Health and Hospital's eleven

4 delivering hospitals are now receiving a toolkit that

5 includes a onesie with safe... a onesie with safe sleep

6 instructions, a sleep sack or wearable blanket, crib

7 netting to protect from household pests, as well as

8 educational materials about best practices for infant

9 safe sleep, including our own informational video

10 entitled, "Breath of Life: The How and Why of Safe

11 Sleep," which is also accessible on our website.

12 Early education provides a solid foundation for

13 healthy social, emotional and cognitive development

14 our children and, and helps position them for future

15 academic and social success. You certainly know that

16 New York City has made major investments in high-

17 quality, free and affordable early care and education

18 programs over the last decade and especially in the

19 last few years. In order to make EarlyLearn part of

20 the City's continuum of education programs, it is due

21 to transfer to the, the Department of Education,

22 specifically it's Division of Early Childhood

23 Education this summer. As part of the ongoing

24 EarlyLearn transition, DOE recently released RFPs for

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1  
2 contracted early childhood education and for Early  
3 Head Start and Head Start Services and a DOE RFP for  
4 Family Child Care is due to be released soon. As that  
5 contracted system transfers to DOE, ACS will continue  
6 to administer the City's child welfare... the child  
7 care voucher system. We will continue our efforts to  
8 improve both the quality and the availability of care  
9 in this system, which serves nearly 66,000 children  
10 under the age of 12. And we're committed to making  
11 child care available to some of the most vulnerable  
12 families in New York City, including those who are  
13 involved in our child welfare system. We are as I  
14 mentioned earlier confronting the historically  
15 disproportionate impact that the child welfare and  
16 juvenile justice systems have had on communities of  
17 color, and we are in the process of taking important  
18 steps to address equity issues in our work. As part  
19 of the agency's work under Local Law 174, we've  
20 conducted gender, racial, income and sexual  
21 orientation equity assessments of both our child  
22 welfare and our juvenile justice continuums, and we  
23 are now working to create and implement an Equity  
24 Action Plan to address disparities identified through  
25 that assessment. We look forward to sharing our

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1  
2 progress in implementing our Equity Action Plan later  
3 this year. In 2017, we launched our Office of Equity  
4 Strategies within the Division of Child and Family  
5 Well-Being, and our longstanding Racial Equity and  
6 Cultural Competence Committee works to promote racial  
7 equity throughout the child welfare, juvenile justice  
8 and early care and education systems. Also, all of  
9 our child protective staff now learn about implicit  
10 bias as part of the core training that they take when  
11 they begin their jobs, and ACS recently launched a  
12 new eLearning course called, "Understanding and  
13 Undoing Implicit Bias," which is now mandatory for  
14 all ACS staff to complete by June. And all direct  
15 service staff and supervisors will be required to  
16 take a full-day, instructor-led course on the same  
17 topic. We know that there is more to be done, and we  
18 are fully committed to identifying and addressing  
19 inequities throughout our systems. With implicit bias  
20 training, affirming policies, and specific actions to  
21 ensure that our services are culturally appropriate,  
22 we are working towards correcting the systemic issues  
23 that contribute to disproportionality. So, as I hope  
24 I've explained today, we have strengthened our  
25 ability to meet the needs of New York City families

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1  
2 to protect New York City children, and to support our  
3 staff and we're constantly identifying more ways to  
4 improve. While we meet the challenges of today, we  
5 have also committed to a long-term vision for  
6 transforming child welfare to serve our City's  
7 families and communities and we are leading an effort  
8 to implement that vision nationally. In doing this,  
9 we're focusing on what I think are the five key areas  
10 of the effort. First, we're using evidence as our  
11 north star. We are not making policy decisions based  
12 on hunches, or on what we've always done, but on what  
13 we know works and achieves demonstrable results. And  
14 then we measure progress in order to constantly  
15 improve. Second, in keeping children and youth safe,  
16 we are not solely focused on just preventing repeat  
17 maltreatment. We are working with a primary  
18 prevention lens to reduce maltreatment and juvenile  
19 justice involvement, working with and within  
20 communities. Third, we're looking to create an entire  
21 ecosystem of services dedicated to these goals,  
22 rather than a single agency struggling to achieve it  
23 in isolation. And this includes our other government  
24 agency partners at all levels, it includes nonprofit  
25 providers, and the private sector. Fourth, we're

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looking to create a learning organization, not one  
vested in the status quo but one in which the  
response to making mistakes, mistakes which are  
inevitable in any large, complex system, is to learn  
from them to make the organization stronger and  
reduce the risk of future harm. And fifth and  
finally, we're working to be part of the effort to  
heal one of the greatest ills in our society;  
inequities based on race, poverty, gender, sexual  
identity, among other characteristics. We want to be  
and be seen as a part of the solution to these  
longstanding rifts in our society. I believe we are  
in a stronger place today than we were two years ago  
to meet the critical challenges that our work places  
upon us, but we must be relentless in continuing our  
forward mechanism. So, now let me turn to how the  
budget is supporting all of the programmatic  
initiatives I just mentioned. ACS's proposed FY 2020  
preliminary budget plan provides for operating  
expenses of 2.67 billion dollars, of which about 896  
million is city tax levy. The budget reflects the  
transfer of EarlyLearn NYC to the Department of  
Education beginning in FY 2020 and is offset by the  
addition of City funds to continue to support Raise

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1  
2 the Age implementation. In the Preliminary Plan, ACS  
3 has also received funding in support of the  
4 Collective Bargaining Agreements for the majority of  
5 our workforce. Like all agencies across the City,  
6 we've been asked to identify efficiencies in our  
7 budget. We've been able to do so by claiming  
8 additional funding under the Title IV-E program,  
9 producing a one-time City Tax Levy, Levy savings of  
10 27.7 million in Fiscal Year 19. And this will have no  
11 impact on services for children and families. And as  
12 with all City agencies and as Chair Levin you  
13 referred to, we have received a PEG target; ours is  
14 68 million dollars over two years. ACS is working  
15 with OMB and the Mayor's office on proposals to  
16 address this target. Our intention is to identify  
17 savings without reducing essential services or the  
18 number of critical frontline staff necessary to keep  
19 children safe. As we work to advance the programs and  
20 practices that have positioned New York City as a  
21 national model for child welfare and juvenile justice  
22 reform, and lay the groundwork for the 21st Century  
23 systems we envision, we are deeply concerned as we  
24 know you are that the newly proposed state budget  
25 cuts, along with historical state budget cuts,

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1  
2 threaten to undermine this work. The executive budget  
3 released in January at the state level would cut  
4 programs that help some of the City's most vulnerable  
5 young people specifically, cutting 13 million dollars  
6 in State funds to an ACS program that helps families  
7 avoid declaring a troubled youth a person in need of  
8 supervision, or PINS. Last year, 5,000 families  
9 received assistance through this program. The State's  
10 proposed budget includes a plan to reform PINS in a  
11 manner that is very, very troubling to us, both in  
12 terms of youth safety and financial impact. The  
13 budget proposes both to eliminate our ability to  
14 place a PINS youth in foster care if he or she cannot  
15 remain safely at home unless a court determines that  
16 a youth is sexually exploited, and it would also  
17 eliminate state reimbursement for PINS diversion  
18 services. This would impact the safety of those youth  
19 who need to be in foster care, and it would result in  
20 a 13-million-dollar state cut to our diversion  
21 program. This proposed cut comes in the context of  
22 even deeper cuts to child welfare and juvenile  
23 justice over the last several years. We are calling  
24 on the State to restore the 62 million dollars in  
25 support for New York City's foster children that was

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2 cut two years ago, and to avoid a budget action this  
3 year that would once again decrease state funding for  
4 child welfare protection and prevention services by 3  
5 percent, a loss of about 20 million dollars for New  
6 York City's children and families. And of course, we  
7 need the State to fully restore Close to Home funding  
8 that was eliminated last year, and to enable New York  
9 City to be eligible for 100 percent state  
10 reimbursement for Raise the Age expenses, like all  
11 other counties in New York state. We also have  
12 concerns at the federal level. Title IV-E of the  
13 Social Security Act is a federal entitlement and our  
14 main federal funding source that funds part of our  
15 foster care and adoption services, as well as kinship  
16 guardianship services and components of our  
17 preventative and protective work. We currently have a  
18 IV-E waiver, which allows the City to use IV-E  
19 resources to support an innovative, flexible funding  
20 model for family foster care, and evidence-based and  
21 evidence-informed interventions designed to improve  
22 outcomes for children and families. Our waiver  
23 program, which we call Strong Families NYC, has  
24 enabled us to lower foster care agency casework and  
25 supervisory ratios and caseloads, it has allowed us

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1  
2 to implement a universal trauma screening in family  
3 foster care, and has allowed us to scale up evidence-  
4 based models across our systems. A preliminary  
5 evaluation shows that the waiver has led to shorter  
6 foster care lengths of stays, to lower foster care  
7 re-entry rates for babies, and to improvements in  
8 placement stability. However, under current federal  
9 law, all Title IV-E waivers nationally expire in  
10 September of this year. We are working with other  
11 states and localities to advance federal legislation  
12 to extend the waivers. The elimination of the waiver  
13 authority would undercut our ability to maintain the  
14 investments that have produced these positive  
15 outcomes. I was in Washington last week to meet with  
16 members of Congress and their staff about federal  
17 funding for New York City's child welfare work, and  
18 in Albany the week before to meet with legislators to  
19 discuss the impact that recent and proposed budget  
20 cuts would have on children and families in New York  
21 City. I know you all share our concerns and our  
22 desire that the state and federal governments fulfill  
23 their obligations to our City's children and  
24 families, and we greatly appreciate the Council's  
25 support and advocacy in these State and Federal

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2 efforts. So, in conclusion I thank you for the  
3 opportunity to discuss ACS's Fiscal Year 2020  
4 Preliminary Budget. We are excited about the  
5 innovative and groundbreaking work that we're poised  
6 to do across all of our programs, fueled by the  
7 commitment and professionalism of our ACS staff and  
8 our provider partners. Uncertainties created by the  
9 State and Federal governments threaten to hamper  
10 these efforts, and we stand with the Mayor and the  
11 City Council in fighting against any potential  
12 detrimental effects on our families. I thank the  
13 Council for your leadership and your steadfast  
14 support and look forward to our continued partnership  
15 and we are happy to answer your questions.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you  
17 Commissioner, I appreciate your testimony and this  
18 magazine, a lot of information but before I go  
19 forward, we've been joined by Council Woman Barron  
20 and Council Member Mark Gjonaj from the Bronx. I'm  
21 glad to see there have been some improvements  
22 especially since the time I was a caseworker and we  
23 were dealing with 25 and 30 case, caseloads and  
24 people who were on 50 caseloads which was pretty much  
25 impossible to service, service a family with any

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2 dedication to resolve any issues, reducing them to an  
3 average of ten says there has been progress that has  
4 been made and how much further do we have to go will  
5 continue to depend on the conversations that we're  
6 having. How many young people do not go into the  
7 system but are offered opportunities that allow them  
8 to be productive and I say all that because I was  
9 going over with Council we sat down and going over  
10 some of the issues and the questions that we wanted  
11 to present today when it came to the budget but even  
12 just the system itself and we've had conversations  
13 about the terms that we use that either motivate a  
14 child or put a child in mind set that I'm going to be  
15 a failure from the start. So, when I look at the  
16 Juvenile Justice money that's being spent, over 131  
17 million I want to get an idea what is that money  
18 actually going to continue to do for our children in  
19 the JJ system especially Raise the Age, how are the  
20 programs that we've asked about before, how  
21 financially.. are they fruitful to making sure  
22 recidivism doesn't happen within our youth and I also  
23 want to know just to start off why.. how are we being  
24 engaged to advocate whether it's towards the  
25 Governor or within the system itself messages of

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2 prevention that doesn't even bring a child into the  
3 system i.e. alternative to incarceration is the terms  
4 telling a 14 year old when you sit with them that  
5 their path is incarceration or a path to detention as  
6 opposed to how that we have a program for you to be a  
7 successful entrepreneur, the thinking of when a child  
8 is going through something at 14 or 15, how do we  
9 change that, have a new dialogue with them so they  
10 think more of themselves so they never think about  
11 misbehaving so they come back into our system because  
12 no matter how much money we throw at a system if we  
13 don't change the mind sets of the individuals that  
14 we're trying to serve they are doing to repeat the  
15 same behavior. So, that's where I want to start  
16 today's conversation if you can answer those first  
17 three questions and then I want to open it up to my  
18 colleagues for, for the rest of this conversation.

19 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, thank you Chair  
20 King. So, yeah you raised a number of important  
21 issues there. Let me just say a couple of things and  
22 then I'll turn it over to Deputy Commissioner Franco  
23 to, to elaborate. So, first you raised the question  
24 of how do we know the programs are working and  
25 that's, that's very important. As I talked about in

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1  
2 my testimony we are extremely outcome focused and I  
3 am a real believer that we have to constantly  
4 evaluate and if we decide we need to make  
5 improvements or changes we need to do that, nothing  
6 is perfect and our responsibility especially as a  
7 steward of public funds and as responsibility for  
8 some of the most vulnerable young people in our city  
9 we have a responsibility to make sure we are doing  
10 the best we possibly can by them. with regard... so,  
11 with regard to that I'll say first of all what we do  
12 know... if we look at the system as a whole and I  
13 talked about this a little bit in my testimony, we  
14 can see that we are achieving positive results at  
15 sort of the macro level in terms of our entire  
16 juvenile justice system. We are seeing juvenile  
17 arrests decrease year after year, juvenile admissions  
18 to detention decrease year after year, juvenile  
19 admissions to our Close to Home program are going  
20 down and recidivism is going down. So, big picture we  
21 are keeping more young people out of the juvenile  
22 justice system, but we also have to look below that,  
23 look at our individual programs and make sure they're  
24 working. Some of these are programs that we operate  
25 directly within ACS, some of them are programs we

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2 operate jointly with our city partners like DYCD and  
3 the Department of Education and so let me turn it  
4 over to Deputy Commissioner Franco to talk a little  
5 bit about how we monitor our providers to make sure  
6 that they are delivering quality services to young  
7 people.

8 FELIPE FRANCO: Thank you Commissioner  
9 and thank you Council Member King for opening the  
10 question regarding where we use our resources and,  
11 and I think you heard both loud and clear from the  
12 Commissioner in his testimony that for example  
13 placements in Close to Home has gone down by 90  
14 percent. I think it's important for us to  
15 contextualize that back before 2012 there were more  
16 than 460 New York City young people in the custody of  
17 OCFS at a cost of 285,000 dollars per year. The fact  
18 that actually we have now less than 100 young people  
19 in New York City on the custody of ACS close to their  
20 families and close to home is a testament of what the  
21 city has done so well and following up on your  
22 question in regards to how we make sure that young  
23 people are getting the services that they need. First  
24 of all, as the Commissioner said our north star is  
25 doing what works, Close to Home is based on what is

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2 called evidence based policies, we know that having  
3 young people and their families close to each other  
4 allows us to work with the young person and the  
5 family as part of our therapeutic approach to the  
6 work. In addition to that all of the Close to Home  
7 providers actually have to be evidence based or  
8 evidence based in form and I think you and I had this  
9 conversation before, if you were to go to any one of  
10 the Close to Home providers they're either following  
11 the national standards under ITM, youth services  
12 institutes, sanctuary and other programs that  
13 actually have shown to work elsewhere more important  
14 than anything it's not just what we expect it's what  
15 we expect so Close to Home... Close to Home has a very,  
16 very robust new system of oversight and monetary, we  
17 actually are in the Close to Home, my team every  
18 month, we actually are in those Close, Close to Home  
19 sites at night and on weekends just to make sure that  
20 they're not just abiding by the best standards but  
21 actually we check that those standards are being  
22 implemented consistently.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, let me  
24 bounce around going from Close to Home or Raise the  
25 Age because they kind of correlate with one another,

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2 one has an impact on the other. So, since you were  
3 talking about Close to Home, I know in fiscal year  
4 2018 there was 1,754 admissions and at that point  
5 there was... you were spending 1,688 dollars per person  
6 that was in your system. I'd like to know what does  
7 that number look like for fiscal year 19 going into  
8 20 and what are we getting for whatever that number  
9 is?

10 FELIPE FRANCO: So, your question is the  
11 number of admissions for 2018 or... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: The cost per person  
13 now in, in 2018 that number was 1,688 so in fiscal  
14 year 19 per person that's in placement with you  
15 whether it's Raise the Age or Close to Home what is  
16 that number and what does it actually get that  
17 individual for that number?

18 FELIPE FRANCO: Yeah, I mean our contract  
19 with Close to Home and Jose I'm hoping that he can  
20 actually chime in are actually preset per diem rates  
21 so actually the provider gets... the provider gets paid  
22 as part of the contracting and RFP process a rate per  
23 day per youth so that's a... that's standard, that  
24 should be the same it was this year to the last year

25

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2 if that's the answer that you want so I mean there's  
3 a per diem rate... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Let me back up... let  
5 me back up a little bit. So, now if you have a child  
6 and you say to hold a child in placement it costs you  
7 2,000 dollars, I'm just throwing out a number, you  
8 all know what the number is, give us that number,  
9 what are... what is that, that one person getting, does  
10 that include meals, housing... [cross-talk]

11 FELIPE FRANCO: All good points, good  
12 point... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...does that include  
14 union costs, what are we getting because 131 million  
15 dollars is a lot of money... [cross-talk]

16 FELIPE FRANCO: Yeah... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...so if you're  
18 telling me there's only 80 people in placement that's  
19 a lot of money so I would like to get an idea of what  
20 are we getting for that money?

21 FELIPE FRANCO: Okay, I mean I, I think...  
22 I'm going to open a little program I think... which I  
23 know really know, I mean we're taking care of young  
24 people 24/7 that includes fully as you said waking up  
25 in the morning making sure that they're taking care

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2 of at a very low ratio because actually we achieve  
3 public safety by a lot of supervision from our staff  
4 to the young person immediately includes education,  
5 you know within the Department of Education, it  
6 includes all your health care and medical needs of  
7 that young person and more importantly it includes as  
8 I mentioned before a very thoughtful way of thinking  
9 about changing this person's way of looking at life  
10 and developing new skills that will ensure us that  
11 they actually when they go back to the community they  
12 don't come back. There's actually a significant  
13 amount of work that happens with the family in Close  
14 to Home, you know being in the community we don't  
15 make decisions on behalf of young people without  
16 including their parents or guardians and through a  
17 very well-known and proven practice of family  
18 conferencing will ensure that every decision when  
19 things are going well or when things are not going  
20 well are actually done by bringing the whole team  
21 together consistently.

22 DAVID HANSELL: Right, so what I'd like  
23 to do is, is get back to you with... make sure we're  
24 giving you accurate information about both the per  
25 capita cost of the Close to Home program and also the

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2 breakdown of the budget, what I'm being told now is  
3 that the per diem cost for a young person in our  
4 limited secure placement program is 756 dollars per  
5 day and then our non-secure placement program is 478  
6 dollars per day.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you.

8 DAVID HANSELL: But we'll, we'll confirm  
9 those numbers and we can also get you the overall  
10 breakdown of the Close to Home budget.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I'd appreciate if  
12 we can... if we can because if we're going to advocate  
13 and tell the governor the state you imposed this law  
14 on us and we're doing the best we can then we got to  
15 be partner... we got to be partners and New York can't  
16 stand alone by itself while you're partners with  
17 other counties... other 61 counties that are... whatever  
18 that number is across the state and we are out to  
19 fend for ourselves, it's only fair... [cross-talk]

20 DAVID HANSELL: Absolutely... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...that we... that we  
22 do it the right way. Just another question before I  
23 turn it over. There's been a number of conversations  
24 when we... when we first implemented with the unions  
25 that have been involved and the new youth worker that

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2 was supposed to come out of there and the correction  
3 officer was still in there, I know you have a plan  
4 that you were looking to phase out and get these  
5 youth specialists in there by January of next year  
6 but right now your goal was 700, you say you have 250  
7 January is coming around really fast, I'd like to  
8 know what is your plan actually to meet that goal  
9 and do you really think you are going to meet that  
10 goal?

11 DAVID HANSELL: Sure, yes, well as you  
12 know the state law required that the facility that  
13 was serving Riker's youth and 17 year olds who were  
14 not still under Close to Home... under Raise the Age,  
15 excuse me, had to be cooperated by the Department of  
16 Correction and ACS and so... because Horizon is the  
17 facility that serving those young people, Department  
18 of Correction has been staffing that facility  
19 together with ACS providing programming support and  
20 case management as you know Chair King. Our plan has  
21 been and, and we are on track we believe to achieving  
22 this that we will begin to transition some youth  
23 development specialists into Horizon next month and  
24 they will be working side by side with Department of  
25 Correction's correction officers for some period of

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time and then our goal and our expectation is that we will be able to take over full management of Horizon by early next year, we hope by January or February of next year. We have hired thus far about 250 YDS, in fact just today I spoke at the orientation of a new class of 50 new youth development specialists which was great and we are moving along well in that process and we believe we are on track to hiring the full compliment of 700 by the end of the year that will be necessary in order for us to fully staff Crossroads, fully staff Horizon as well as some other functions like transport and, and the court system. So, we are... we believe we are on track to the commitments that we've made.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Do... are there any financial challenges to meeting those goals, are you, you guys... you're good?

DAVID HANSELL: No, we have gotten very good support from the Mayor's Office and OMB for the funding that we've needed for our YDS hiring program.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: How's the relationship now with corrections officers 371, have they been part of this conversation up until now?

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2 DAVID HANSELL: We have been working very  
3 closely with them, in fact we've already started  
4 discussions with the unions about the transition of  
5 YDS into Horizon next month, we coordinate very  
6 closely with, with both of the unions and I, I.. and  
7 certainly our, our working relationship I'll let  
8 Deputy Commissioner Franco speak to this in more  
9 detail but our working relationship.. certainly,  
10 certainly at the agency level between us and  
11 corrections leadership has been very good and I  
12 believe on the ground that the work of the correction  
13 officers in relationship to our program counselors  
14 and case managers at Horizon has also been very good  
15 but Deputy Commissioner can speak to this in more  
16 detail... [cross-talk]

17 FELIPE FRANCO: Yes, thank you  
18 Commissioner for reminding, reminding everyone that  
19 actually.. we have been actually working shoulder to  
20 shoulder with the Department of Corrections since day  
21 one, actually before October 1<sup>st</sup>, we have a  
22 significant footprint of case managers and program  
23 counselors, actually the number of program counselors  
24 recently actually expanded to make sure that actually  
25 we were supporting the Department of Corrections in

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2 engaging young people in activities and that's  
3 actually going really well so there's actually in  
4 every one of the living units at Horizons there's  
5 actually a footprint of ACS staff as we speak and  
6 that will grow as the Commissioner said when we start  
7 bringing in the YDSs.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you,  
9 I'm going to... one more question then I'm going to  
10 open up to the committee to share questions. Now you  
11 heard earlier in my opening statement in regards to  
12 the flash indicators in that ACS removed Horizons off  
13 of that list even though DOC reports that there was  
14 an average daily population of 16 and 17 year olds in  
15 their custody from October to December in 2018 of  
16 about 80, can you confirm that but why did you all  
17 take them off that list anyway, Horizon off the list  
18 please?

19 FELIPE FRANCO: Yeah, no I, I think we  
20 want to make clear that actually the reporting of  
21 Horizons is the obligation of the Department of  
22 Corrections so they actually are reporting those are  
23 statistics under the report but actually my  
24 understanding is in the most recent quarterly report  
25 we actually took the information from the Department

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2 of Corrections and made it available in that report.

3 So, even though the Department of Corrections has  
4 their own set of metrics we actually now are taking  
5 that information which is a little different than the  
6 way we do it and making it available in our, our  
7 report.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay and I think  
9 once we get clarity and you're doing it then we can  
10 actually get a breakdown that goes back to the  
11 earlier question, how much are we spending per person  
12 who is under your care?

13 FELIPE FRANCO: Uh-huh...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Because if they're  
15 not on your report we can't even judge it in a budget  
16 report so thank you for that, thank you for that  
17 answer and we look forward to getting more  
18 information later on. Right now, I want to open it up  
19 to my colleagues on the Committee, first up is from  
20 Queens Barry Grodenchik.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
22 Chair King, born in the Bronx though, full discloser  
23 I just want to make that clear. Commissioner I just  
24 want to ask you a question, I'm delighted to see that  
25 the city has hired 1,100 new child protective

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2 services employees over the last two years and that  
3 the caseload is down to just over ten per caseworker  
4 which is really quiet something. My question to you  
5 is how are you doing, I know that you, you talked  
6 about retention and training and how are you doing,  
7 I, I know we've had discussions about this at  
8 previous hearings and privately about how difficult  
9 this job is to go in and to be with families that  
10 might be in some sort of turmoil especially with  
11 children involved, can you talk about the retention  
12 rate a little more?

13 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, absolutely.

14 Obviously the... you know the, the average caseload of  
15 our child welfare investigators is a function of how  
16 many staff we have and how many reports we have to  
17 investigate and the number of staff we have is a  
18 function of how many we hire and how many we retain  
19 and, and, and stay for, for longer periods of time  
20 in, in the job and it was a great concern of mine  
21 when I started two years ago that I felt we were  
22 losing too many child protective specialists too  
23 early in their... in their term of service and that was  
24 bad for a number from a number of perspectives  
25 obviously, it was not good that staff were not

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2 staying, it was not good that we were retaining staff  
3 with the experience to do the work and I was  
4 concerned that it, it would have an impact on the  
5 quality of the work. So, we launched a number of  
6 initiatives to try to address the attrition rate and  
7 many of the things I talked about in my testimony the  
8 improved technology, better transportation options,  
9 the new tablets and, and software that are now  
10 available to all the child protective specialists, a  
11 number of staff appreciation things that we have  
12 done, improving... looking at wellness in the  
13 workplace, we've done quite a number of things and  
14 I'm happy to say that we are seeing the impact we  
15 hoped we would see on, on staff retention. We are  
16 seeing fewer staff leave in that critical first year  
17 when we used to lose a lot, we still lose more than I  
18 would like and we're not where I'd like us to be but  
19 we are moving the right... in the right direction, we  
20 are losing fewer child protective specialists in  
21 their first year of service, we are losing fewer up  
22 to the second year and losing fewer up to the third  
23 year. We monitor it by essentially entry cohort, so  
24 we look at the staff that started in say 2016 and how  
25 many are still on board in 2017, 2018 and now going

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2 into 2019 and what we are seeing is that at each of  
3 sort of the key benchmarks one year, two years, three  
4 years in we are seeing fewer child protective  
5 specialists leaving so we are moving in the right  
6 direction, I think the things we're doing are having  
7 a positive impact but we have... certainly have more to  
8 do and, and, and also fundamentally of course just  
9 having lower caseloads make a big difference, right,  
10 it makes the... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Right...

12 [cross-talk]

13 DAVID HANSELL: ...job more doable and, and  
14 I think that... and I hear a lot actually from our  
15 front-line staff that that really is affecting the...  
16 their feeling about the quality of work they can do  
17 and their level of satisfaction with the job.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay, just  
19 one more question Mr. Chairs. I saw the... okay, that  
20 was answered, I'm sorry. Okay, I got my answers,  
21 thank you very much.

22 DAVID HANSELL: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you  
24 Commissioner, thank you Mr. Chair.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Council  
3 Member, we've also been joined from Queens Council  
4 Member Adrienne Adams, next up for questioning would  
5 be Council Member Barron from the big island of  
6 Brooklyn.

7 DAVID HANSELL: Island?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: It's a... it's an  
9 island, it's a part of Long Island, the battle of  
10 Long Island was fought in Brooklyn, yes so, he's  
11 absolutely correct. Thank you to the Chairs and thank  
12 you to the panel for coming. In your testimony you  
13 talk about... you make reference to the historical  
14 patterns of racial disproportionality particularly in  
15 child care, child welfare involvement. What has your  
16 agency done in terms of its staffing to likewise  
17 address that historical pattern, those historical  
18 patterns? If I were to look at your organizational  
19 chart what would I see in terms of the ethnicity of  
20 the persons at the highest levels?

21 DAVID HANSELL: That's something Council  
22 Member that's very important to us and it's important  
23 that we have represent... good representation of the  
24 populations in the communities we serve at all levels  
25 in the organization and that's something that we

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2 strive to accomplish, and I think... I think generally  
3 we're doing well in that area but again that's an  
4 area where I don't think we can ever be satisfied  
5 that we're where we need to be. So, when we look at  
6 our recruitment at any level in the organization from  
7 frontline up to senior management, one of the things  
8 that we take into consideration is the diversity and  
9 making sure that we are representative of the  
10 communities that we're serving.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Could I get an  
12 organizational chart and the numbers that are  
13 associated with each of those levels?

14 DAVID HANSELL: Certainly.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Very good. Can  
16 you describe for me briefly distinction between  
17 foster care support and foster care services?

18 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, I will ask Deputy  
19 Commissioner Farber to do that, I will say, you know  
20 our, our goal initially... I'm sorry, the high-level  
21 goal initially obviously is to keep children out of  
22 foster care wherever possible and that's why we're  
23 happy to see that the, the number of children in  
24 foster care in New York City has continued to  
25 decline... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-  
3 talk]

4 DAVID HANSELL: ...but when children are in  
5 foster care our goal is first of all to make sure  
6 that they're getting all the services that they need  
7 and then also that they can return to their families  
8 or achieve a permanent family situation as quickly as  
9 possible and so... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, what's the  
11 difference between the services which is at 569 and  
12 the support which is at 51 million?

13 DAVID HANSELL: I'm going to ask our  
14 Chief Finance Officer Mr. Mercado to... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I mean the two  
16 distinct categories... [cross-talk]

17 DAVID HANSELL: Yes... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...I wanted to know  
19 what's different about... [cross-talk]

20 DAVID HANSELL: From a budget  
21 perspective, I, I appreciate your question.

22 JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, hi, the support  
23 services include family... like our policy... excuse me,  
24 I'm a little nervous, first time... [cross-talk]

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's okay,  
3 welcome, is this your first time?

4 JOSE MERCADO: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, well you'll  
6 be back again.

7 JOSE MERCADO: Thank, thank you. Our, our  
8 foster care support actually is our support staff,  
9 staff specifically our lawyers, our, our policy  
10 program... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-  
12 talk]

13 JOSE MERCADO: ...budget people, all those  
14 people... [cross-talk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 JOSE MERCADO: ...things of that nature.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I'm on the  
19 clock so thank you for that. Can you briefly tell me  
20 about your adoption services program, what... how do we  
21 try to encourage parents to adopt children?

22 JULIE FARBER: Thank you Jackie, Julie  
23 Farber, Deputy Commissioner for Family Permanency  
24 Services. So, I mean our, our first goal typically is  
25 for children to be able to be reunified with their

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2 families and then when that's not possible we look at  
3 alternative options for permanency and we look at  
4 both kinship guardianship because there is now a... you  
5 know a kin gap option where you can become a  
6 permanent guardian and then receive financial support  
7 and all of that and then there's also the option of  
8 adoption and so all of those options are presented to  
9 foster parents and to... and to parents and to families  
10 and the... [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, what would be  
12 the attraction for a person who has a foster child to  
13 be incentivized to go all the way through adoption?

14 JULIE FARBER: Well I think, you know a  
15 primary incentive of most of our foster parents is,  
16 is wanting to care for a child whether it's a... you  
17 know a relative and, and it's... they're caring for  
18 another family member or even if it's a non-relative  
19 that they're, they're looking to provide a loving  
20 home for a child in need and then in addition we are  
21 fortunately able to provide financial and other  
22 service supports for families because these are  
23 children who have experienced trauma and, and have  
24 you know special needs and so forth and so there are

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2 financial subsidies that come with either an adoption  
3 or a kinship guardianship which we call kin gap.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay and finally  
5 can you talk about the relationship that your  
6 department has with CUNY in terms of ensuring that  
7 there are slots for children who are in foster care  
8 to be able to go to the CUNY... into the CUNY system,  
9 what is that current number, how do we make sure that  
10 all children in foster care and their families know  
11 about it and how can we increase that number?

12 JULIE FARBER: Thank you for asking that  
13 question, that's something that we've been doing a  
14 lot of work on in great partnership with CUNY. So,  
15 there are several hundred kids in foster care who are  
16 in college either in CUNY or elsewhere, you know  
17 elsewhere are ten state, some of them are out of  
18 state which is great. With CUNY we have a particular  
19 and very special partnership that we call the Dorm  
20 program or the foster and college success initiative  
21 and right now there is about 120 young people in that  
22 program and they are residing in dorms on campus and  
23 getting special supports including tutoring and  
24 social support and just sort of a sense of community  
25 that is built around them through a partnership with

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2 CUNY and, and the New York Foundling. Those students  
3 also are benefiting from a mentorship program that we  
4 have in partnership with Goldman Sachs in which  
5 Goldman Sachs employs or are providing mentoring to  
6 the young people.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And how many...  
8 what are your plans to expand this program, what  
9 numbers are you looking to increase over the time?

10 JULIE FARBER: So, the program started  
11 had just about 40 young people in its first year at  
12 Queens College, I think it grew to 93 youth in the  
13 next year and then currently the program is at about  
14 122 youth.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, do you have a  
16 number that you're annually looking to increase the  
17 program?

18 JULIE FARBER: So, we're in the process  
19 of sort of analyzing that now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And most  
21 importantly, thank you Mr. Chair, how are we making  
22 sure that children and their families know about this  
23 program because I've spoken to families and they  
24 don't know that it exists, we know they perhaps can't  
25 all get in at this point... [cross-talk]

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2 JULIE FARBER: Right... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...of course when,  
4 when we're successful and we get CUNY to be back as  
5 tuition free it won't be an issue but until we reach  
6 that point how are we making sure that families know  
7 about this option to apply?

8 JULIE FARBER: Well just to clarify for  
9 the kids in foster care that tuition is covered..  
10 [cross-talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Correct and once  
12 we get tuition free it'll be open to everybody, so it  
13 won't be an issue.

14 JULIE FARBER: Okay...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

16 JULIE FARBER: But, but... so, so there's a  
17 tremendous amount of outreach that happens to our  
18 foster care agencies, we have monthly meetings with  
19 the education specialists at all of the foster care  
20 agencies where they are informed about not only the  
21 CUNY Dorm program but the many, many other education  
22 initiatives that we have. We also have created a  
23 foster parent guide to education that has a lot of  
24 information for foster parents, we also provide  
25 information directly to youth, we, we try and use..

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2 there's many different venues through which we try to  
3 share this information so that young people are aware  
4 and, and so that their case planners are aware.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you,  
6 thank you Mr. Chair.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you and  
8 before we got to Holden I just want to add you, you  
9 mentioned in regards to what information is being  
10 shared with young people in the system to know they  
11 can go to college, you know there are... when I talked  
12 about... earlier about certain terms and advertisements  
13 that we use, you know it's been a conversation I've  
14 been having for the last three years, we passed it in  
15 the City Council about what the constitution stated  
16 with the three fifths clause compromise where it  
17 established a system of inequities from their male,  
18 white counterparts who created the system to the  
19 black slave in the system. To date we still have  
20 those same inequities based on the system that  
21 created a rule and conversations and agendas move  
22 like that so when you have the conversation are we  
23 talking about from school to prison pipeline we  
24 should be advocating that if you have a foster care  
25 program to college we should know about that, freely

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2 just like the advertising and marketing of some  
3 schools to prison pipeline conversations that people  
4 are having... well cross. I as the Chair I get a number  
5 of conversations about the juvenile foster care  
6 system is the pipeline to the juvenile system which  
7 is a pipeline to the adult jail system. So, this is  
8 the mentality and... I talked about and toss... and talk...  
9 alternative to detention and incarceration, ACS we're  
10 counting on you to have a paradigm shift in your  
11 conversation when it comes to our children to tell  
12 them how great they are and it doesn't start when  
13 they're 14, it starts when that child is three and  
14 four and five so as you partner up or how you partner  
15 with the Department of Education that there's better  
16 messaging with the kids or the child early on so they  
17 never even come into your system, that we don't even  
18 have these stressful conversations of why you haven't  
19 taken care of communities of color because when I  
20 hear... black males make up five percent teens, make up  
21 five percent of New York City's system but they make  
22 up over 43 percent of the juvenile justice system  
23 something is wrong because not every black child out  
24 here is messing it up so it's the little things that  
25 this unbalanced system utilizes to make sure that

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2 there's somebody who has to go into the system, we're  
3 asking you for your help today to have a paradigm  
4 shift in all of your conversations and all of your  
5 marketing and make sure that that young black child  
6 or young black boy has a chance, an equal chance to  
7 their whiter counterparts in the city of New York.

8 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah. No, I, I  
9 hear you and I agree and, and that's actually... that's  
10 why we have built our Division of Child and Family  
11 Wellbeing on the foundation of our early childhood  
12 program because you're absolutely right, we have to  
13 start from very young children and make sure they're  
14 getting positive messaging not negative messaging and  
15 so we really see it as a continuum from early care in  
16 education through you know teenage programs to  
17 adulthood and we are trying to incorporate what we  
18 call a primary preventative approach meaning the goal  
19 is to avoid child welfare involvement or juvenile  
20 justice involvement by working with young people and  
21 their families as early as possible from the  
22 perspective of building their capacity to have strong  
23 families to support their children and have their  
24 children be successful and minimize the possibility  
25 of ultimately being involved in the child welfare

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2 system, being involved in the juvenile justice  
3 system. It is a paradigm shift, you're absolutely  
4 right, it's something that we have committed  
5 ourselves to but we really need to continuously look  
6 at everything we do as an agency and frankly  
7 everything we do as a city to make sure we're  
8 aligning with that perspective, I think that's  
9 absolutely right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you  
11 Commissioner, it's amazing how you turned around the  
12 agency. Just reading this it's truly remarkable, I  
13 want to congratulate you...

14 DAVID HANSELL: Well thank you, we, we  
15 have a long way to go but... [cross-talk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I know, I know...  
17 [cross-talk]

18 DAVID HANSELL: ...we're moving in the  
19 right direction... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...but listen  
21 there's some very innovative measures you've taken so  
22 far with the tablets and the, the safe measures  
23 dashboard. I wanted to just ask a question about that  
24 software, that's in real time so when you, you input  
25 the information a supervisor can see it immediately?

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2 DAVID HANSELL: Yes, actually the  
3 information is pulled from the state system, the  
4 state has a system called connections which is the  
5 state child welfare system of record that we are  
6 required to use, safe measures pulls data from the  
7 state system and then presents it but it presents it,  
8 you're right simultaneously from every level from the  
9 case worker to theoretically up to me so at whatever  
10 level in the organization staff, supervisors,  
11 managers, directors and so on can see in real time  
12 the... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, so would that  
14 software trigger an alert let's say something is...  
15 like a red flag and you would see it or... [cross-talk]

16 DAVID HANSELL: Yes... [cross-talk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...a supervisor...  
18 [cross-talk]

19 DAVID HANSELL: ...or the super... yeah, I,  
20 I... you know I'd be having a lot of red flags if I  
21 were seeing them but certainly yes, the supervisors  
22 and managers can see them and if they need to then do  
23 some work with their line staff they... that empowers  
24 them to do that... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's great, that's great. These enhanced training sites, did they exist before, you're opening up two or you did open them?

DAVID HANSELL: They... the simulation sites we've never had them at ACS we of course have done training but it's been classroom training, we have done mock interviews, we've done mock court proceedings but we've never actually had a facility that truly replicates what it's like to walk into a family's home, to walk into a court room and now with the simulation sites we will have those.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah and that's so valuable, we're talking about in criminal justice too to have that, that atmosphere of a real working... you know a location so I, I like that... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Yes and, and it will include detention centers as well, so it'll include training... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, just, just another... I'm trying to beat the clock here. what's the average stay in the... in the foster system, foster care, do we... because you've been getting it down but do, we have an average?

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2 JULIE FARBER: So, most children return  
3 home to their families... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right... [cross-  
5 talk]

6 JULIE FARBER: ...and, and for those that  
7 don't the majority are adopted or, or go home to  
8 kinship guardianship fortunately, the numbers of kids  
9 who age out has been coming down and down and down.  
10 We've had I think, and my colleague Andrew White will  
11 correct me, but I think it's somewhere around a 38  
12 percent reduction in the numbers of kids in care who  
13 have been in care for two years or more over the last  
14 four or five years.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's great,  
16 that's great.

17 JULIE FARBER: Six years Andrew tells me.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, great. We,  
19 we had some trouble at Horizons and Crossroads  
20 initially, I know about Horizons, I don't much about  
21 Crossroads we're going to... we're going to visit I  
22 think in, in April, what was done at Crossroads to  
23 improve the situation and, and tell me how its  
24 improved, is it just hiring specialists or...

25

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2 DAVID HANSELL: Well no, there are a  
3 number of things and I'll let Deputy Commissioner  
4 Franco speak to the details but the challenge.. you  
5 know the challenge at Horizons I think you're more  
6 familiar with and there was a lot more public..  
7 [cross-talk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right.. [cross-  
9 talk]

10 DAVID HANSELL: ...discussion about, the  
11 challenges at Crossroads had to do with the fact that  
12 because we had dedicated Horizon to the Riker's youth  
13 and the 17 year old youth that meant that we had to  
14 manage all of the other populations in the juvenile  
15 justice system within one other secure detention  
16 facility Crossroads so we had multiple groups of kids  
17 with.. of different statuses and of course the  
18 population was larger than it had been prior to the  
19 implementation of Raise the Age so both the  
20 population and the range of populations we were  
21 managing created challenges but there's a lot that  
22 we've done to address that and I'll let Deputy  
23 Commissioner Franco speak to that.

24 FELIPE FRANCO: Yeah and I think you  
25 mentioned both facilities corrections which you are

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1 familiar and you went to visit with some of your  
2 colleagues, things are actually getting much better  
3 and I think that's really the Department of  
4 Corrections has reported like more than a 50 percent  
5 reduction in the use of force. Crossroads we had our  
6 challenges too, I mean we were suddenly moving every  
7 young person from every neighborhood in New York City  
8 into a smaller facility and on top of that Raise the  
9 Age created a new category called, called adolescent  
10 offenders who actually had to managed just on their  
11 own separate from juvenile delinquents and juvenile  
12 offenders. So, imagine suddenly having the most  
13 challenging 16 year olds in New York City all of them  
14 having to live within the same living unit so it was  
15 rocky at the beginning, our trainings are actually  
16 getting much better the number of incidents continues  
17 to go down and as we've been implementing sort of our  
18 therapeutic approaches to help young people learn how  
19 to regulate their emotions and behavior as we get  
20 YDSs that are amazingly good at connecting to young  
21 people though we're turning the curve and things are  
22 getting much better. Things will get even better when  
23 in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 the system is a juvenile justice  
24  
25

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2 system and we can recalibrate the move kids, kids  
3 easier in 2020 between the two facilities.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, just one  
5 question Commissioner, there's... in CPS there's been I  
6 think a high turnover rate in the... in the supervisors  
7 because they don't get overtime, is that... and some of  
8 their subordinates might get more because... with  
9 overtime?

10 DAVID HANSELL: Supervisors do get  
11 overtime, the... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: They do get  
13 overtime... [cross-talk]

14 DAVID HANSELL: ...managers... the managers...  
15 we have... our hierarchy is child protective  
16 specialists, supervisor level one, supervisor level  
17 two and then child protective managers, the managers...  
18 [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: The managers  
20 don't get... [cross-talk]

21 DAVID HANSELL: ...because they're  
22 managerial do not. We actually have not had I, I  
23 would say I don't think significant turnover,  
24 actually we've had more stability at the more senior  
25 levels. The issue of managers not getting overtime is

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2 an issue I think for managers across the board..

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I understand  
5 that, but we have the notes that are... that says  
6 differently but then we'll, we'll check on that.

7 DAVID HANSELL: Okay, we... will be...  
8 confirm that, we can discuss that with you... [cross-  
9 talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, alright,  
11 okay... [cross-talk]

12 DAVID HANSELL: ...and staff but I don't... I  
13 don't believe that's a significant issue.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, thank you  
15 so much, thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Council  
17 Member Holden, I'm going to turn it over to Chair  
18 Levin right now.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
20 Chair King, Commissioner thank you very much for your  
21 testimony. So, I have a, a few questions that I'd  
22 like to go through. First off, I, I think just as a,  
23 a general question here we are seeing this large PEG  
24 coming from OMB, I mean did they consult with ACS  
25 before arriving at a number of seven percent which..

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2 and, and how did they arrive at that number because  
3 as I said in my... in my opening statement HRA and,  
4 and, and DHS have like a... you know one percent or  
5 less than one percent PEG and you know this, this  
6 puts a huge, huge burden on ACS.

7 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah... no, I very much  
8 appreciate your concern Chair Levin. No, OMB did not  
9 consult with us or to my knowledge other city  
10 agencies... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

12 DAVID HANSELL: ...in establishing the  
13 amounts of the PEGs, we are working with, with OMB on  
14 determining how we're going to meet the PEG and we're  
15 in active discussions with them right now and the  
16 goal is and I think actually the OMB Director spoke  
17 to this a couple of weeks ago when she testified,  
18 ACS like some of the other human services agencies  
19 have access to a number of state and federal revenue  
20 streams and so our hope is as much as we're able to  
21 do that to utilize that revenue to meet the PEG  
22 target so that we don't have to have an impact on, on  
23 programming and certainly there's a commitment that  
24 there will not be an impact on our frontline, you  
25 know sort of core safety responsibilities..

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But that's not...  
3 that's not state and federal dollars currently going  
4 towards programming?

5 DAVID HANSELL: No, we have... we have some  
6 revenues that we've been able to actually... as, as we  
7 already done to meet our savings target, its  
8 basically unexpended state or federal revenues that  
9 we can put towards meeting these, these targets.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I'm, I'm  
11 very concerned but you have not been able to... you  
12 have, have you identified what your PEGs are going to  
13 be or...

14 DAVID HANSELL: Not, not specifically  
15 yet, we're still working with OMB on that.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay and I said this  
17 to Commissioner Banks as well, you know there's a...  
18 there's an institutional issue here not directed just  
19 at ACS or, or DSS but the administration as a whole,  
20 in the past when we had PEGs under the Bloomberg  
21 Administration my recollection is that we... those PEGs  
22 were put forward in the preliminary budget so that we  
23 were able to discuss it at the preliminary budget,  
24 work through the issues throughout the budget process  
25 for the administration to announce that they were

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2 going to do PEGs at the preliminary budget, 750  
3 million dollars, 12 percent of that is coming from  
4 ACS and then... and then wait... and, and then... and then  
5 wait until the executive budget to put those forward  
6 puts the public, the Council, advocates, clients,  
7 recipients of services kind of on their heels a  
8 little bit when these PEGs come forward because  
9 there's going to be less time to react to them so  
10 that's just a... something if you could take that back  
11 to OMB that would be very helpful because there's a  
12 lot of frustration on our end and I could tell you,  
13 you know the Speaker is particularly incensed about  
14 the PEG to ACS being so disproportionately high.

15 DAVID HANSELL: Okay, I appreciate that  
16 and I'll certainly... [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I am too... [cross-  
18 talk]

19 DAVID HANSELL: ...I will certainly take it  
20 back to OMB.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. There is a  
22 question about last year's budget agreement for FY  
23 19, as you can see we were informed and this is, you  
24 know the Speaker, our finance director and our chief  
25 of staff from the Mayor that there would be about

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2 eight million... 7.8 million dollars to implement  
3 foster care recommendations that's 3.3 for kinship  
4 navigators, 2.8 for family visiting services and 1.7  
5 for workplace employ... workforce employment for foster  
6 care agencies preparing youth for the workforce,  
7 these were all... we were very excited, the Speaker  
8 came back, I'm on the budget negotiating team it was  
9 at the last minute he says they agreed to 7.8 million  
10 dollars for some of the foster task force  
11 recommendations and obviously to date you know less  
12 than a million of that has been spent and I just... you  
13 know I'm a little frustrated with that and was  
14 wondering what the story is there?

15 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, well I... and I know  
16 we've had some discussions at the staff level about  
17 this... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

19 DAVID HANSELL: ...it appears there was  
20 some miscommunication all... what... all we know is we at  
21 ACS were never informed by OMB after budget adoption  
22 that we were expected to self-fund at that... at that  
23 level, if we had been I have to say I'm not sure how  
24 we would have done it because we would have had to  
25 take money from other programmatic initiatives but

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anyway we, we weren't, what we were told was that we had the authority if we wanted to initiate pilot programs which is what we did at, at the budget level that we were able to identify funding to do and so we launched them in the two areas as you know of kinship and family visitation and then also in the... in the area of transition age youth but that's where the council had put additional money into the budget so we... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, as far as I'm...

oh, go ahead.

DAVID HANSELL: I'm sorry, so all I can say is we, we did what we... basically... what, what was communicated to us after the budget was adopted.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, as far as I'm

concerned OMB owes ACS about seven million dollars for FY 19 so I'm going to have to take that up at the OMB hearing and in further discussions with the Mayor's Office but... and I'll obviously report this back to the Speaker but if you could also communicate that to OMB as well that we're quite irate about this because it wasn't just one person it was numerous people in that meeting that had that takeaway that

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2 they were... obviously it was rather specific so, it  
3 would be... it would be helpful, thanks.

4 DAVID HANSELL: Okay, we'll do that.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know in terms of  
6 new needs, you know looking back at the last 11 plans  
7 there, there have only been... so this is prior to your  
8 tenure obviously that there have been only three new  
9 needs put forward during those 11 plans and they were  
10 usually in response to, you know an incident that had  
11 come up during the proceeding months and so we would...  
12 we would like to... we would like to see kind of new  
13 needs put forward, I mean obviously it's a tough...  
14 it's a difficult budget environment right now to do  
15 that but, but I think it's important that we are  
16 putting the resources out there for new needs and  
17 obviously that... this might, you know might be a  
18 private discussion between ACS and OMB but we would  
19 love to see ACS really push for new needs such as  
20 Fair Futures or other new needs that, that we think  
21 can benefit the, the children that are... that have  
22 involvement with ACS.

23 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh. Yeah and I  
24 appreciate that and I, I've only been in this role  
25 for a couple of years, but I did... I have worked for

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2 the city in other agencies at other positions, so I  
3 have watched the process and I think in a typical  
4 year this is in some ways not a typical, at least not  
5 typical of recent years, I think... I think new needs  
6 tend to show up more in the executive budget than the  
7 preliminary budget and that's been the case for, for  
8 ACS. This is a particularly as you acknowledged Chair  
9 Levin this is a particularly difficult budget year so  
10 I don't know what, what will be possible but we were  
11 certainly in discussions with OMB about a number of  
12 areas and you know this, this usually involves  
13 getting made and reflected in the executive budget.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have you and your  
15 team identified potential new needs?

16 DAVID HANSELL: We've raised a number of,  
17 of issue areas with OMB, you know some of them  
18 obviously depend on what happens with the state and  
19 federal funding issues we talked about... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

21 DAVID HANSELL: ...the state issues we'll  
22 know... well assuming there's an on time state budget  
23 we'll know in a week what the outcome of that is, the  
24 federal issue is, is more complicated because we may

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2 not know until as late as September basically after  
3 the city budget is closed... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

5 DAVID HANSELL: ...and that's going to be...  
6 that's going to be tricky because you know we'll have  
7 to sort of think about how we deal with that but, but  
8 yes, we are in discussion with OMB about a number of  
9 different areas.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just a couple more  
11 questions here. There have been reports recently  
12 about physical fighting and overcrowding inside the  
13 children's... the, the Nicholas Capeta Children's  
14 Center in Manhattan which serves as the official  
15 foster care intake center for ACS, employees have  
16 said that they are particularly concerned about a  
17 dangerous mix of young children and babies with  
18 special needs living alongside teens and in some  
19 cases even adults, what, what's the status right now,  
20 I mean obviously there was a, a decision that was...  
21 that was released by a judge in family court that,  
22 that held the agency in contempt I believe... [cross-  
23 talk]

24 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and raised a number  
3 of issues I think we're going to be having a hearing  
4 next month to examine these further but can you... can  
5 you tell us what's going on right now at the  
6 Children's Center and what's happened over the last  
7 several weeks and is there... I mean is there an  
8 additional... is there an additional budgetary need  
9 here that we should be looking at?

10 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, no, I appreciate  
11 your raising that, it is an area that has been a  
12 major focus for, for all of us and, and particularly  
13 for me in recent weeks and months. The Children's  
14 Center is actually our only directly operated ACS  
15 facility for young people who when they are removed  
16 from a home because they are at risk of, of serious  
17 harm and we don't have an immediate foster care  
18 placement for them, the Children's Center is the  
19 facility that, that we use as a temporary residence.  
20 Most young people are there for a very short period  
21 of time, usually less than 72 hours but in, in  
22 recent... in recent months and years... in a couple of  
23 years we've had an increased population of older  
24 teenagers and actually some even in their early 20s  
25 who have come into the Children's Center, have

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1  
2 complex needs, are difficult to place in a foster  
3 home and therefore they have tended to stay at the  
4 Children's Center for a longer period of time and  
5 that has resulted as you said in the overall census  
6 of the overall number of children or, or young people  
7 at the Children's Center going up. And then you  
8 alluded to the incident that I know got a lot of, of  
9 media coverage in the last couple of weeks and while  
10 I can't talk to the details of that, they're  
11 confidential but I can say it was very concerning and  
12 we have done an intensive review of that situation,  
13 that child's situation and frankly all of the time  
14 that that young person spent at the Children's Center  
15 and we are developing recommendations for changes and  
16 policy and protocol to make sure that that never  
17 happens again. We are very focused on two things  
18 really, one is making sure that every child at the  
19 Children's Center is getting the appropriate level  
20 of, of care both medical care and all other support  
21 services that they need and second to make sure that  
22 children and, and staff at the Children's Center are  
23 safe and so in the last few weeks we've done a number  
24 of things from both of those perspectives. Our agency  
25 medical director, Dr. Angel Mandoza has done a review

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2 of every other special needs young person there to  
3 make they are receiving appropriate care, I'm happy  
4 to say that, that report... that analysis I guess that  
5 they were. We have brought from a safety and security  
6 perspective we brought additional... of our ACS special  
7 officers into the Children's Center to provide  
8 additional security within the facility, we also have  
9 enhanced partnership with NYPD to ensure safety in  
10 the surrounding community and, and the external  
11 environment, we have brought additional senior level  
12 leadership from ACS into the facility, our Deputy  
13 Commissioner Winette Saunders is now working very  
14 closely with Deputy Commissioner Farber and her team  
15 specifically around security, safety and programming  
16 issues at the Children's Center, we are very shortly  
17 in just a matter of days actually we are bringing on  
18 board a new assistant commissioner for residential  
19 care at the Children's Center but will overseeing all  
20 of the residential services there and someone who has  
21 extensive experience in, in residential care  
22 programs. We are very close to hiring an outside  
23 consultant to come in and give us sort of an outside  
24 set of eyes to look at the... at the Children's Center  
25 and give us some additional recommendations and then

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2 to address the specific issue that you mentioned of  
3 sort not just the high number but also the, the age  
4 groups and, and, and range of, of young people there  
5 we are looking at potential alternative facilities  
6 where we might be able to move some of the young  
7 people of the Children's Center to reduce the census  
8 and, and do a better job of, of managing different  
9 populations in different places. We also... you know  
10 many of... many of the young people who are there have  
11 needs that really should be addressed by other  
12 service systems, some of them have severe mental  
13 health or behavioral needs and really ought to be  
14 served in programs operated by the state Office of  
15 Mental Health, there are some young people there... and  
16 actually throughout our foster care system who have  
17 developmental disabilities who at the age of 21 are  
18 supposed to be the responsibility of the state Office  
19 of People with Developmental Disabilities. We've  
20 historically had a difficult time frankly getting  
21 those state agencies to take responsibility for young  
22 people that really should be served in their systems  
23 and not ours but more recently and actually with OPWD  
24 we've been in litigation with them for a number of  
25 years about that exact issue. With regard to the

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2 Office of Mental Health we actually are now engaged  
3 in an intensive process with them and with the state  
4 Office of Children Family Services to design some new  
5 service systems for young people with serious and  
6 complicated mental health and behavioral health  
7 issues and we're hoping that too will provide some  
8 additional resources. So, there are many things that  
9 we're doing to address this, it is a very important  
10 priority and making sure that the young people that  
11 are there, our staff that are there safe and that the  
12 young people are receiving the best quality of care  
13 is absolutely critical to us.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so, what  
15 specifically has changed like in the last... in the  
16 last week or two?

17 DAVID HANSELL: Additional leadership  
18 support... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

20 DAVID HANSELL: ...additional special  
21 officers for security purposes, you may have some  
22 additional items as well.

23 JULIE FARBER: Sure, there's some changes  
24 and, and Deputy Commissioner Saunders maybe could,  
25 could speak to some of these but there's also some

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2 changes being made around the actual security  
3 protocols as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then kind of from  
5 a... from a step... taking a step further back and  
6 looking at the kind of longer trajectory at the  
7 Children's Center there's... over time the census has  
8 increased from a few years ago so what, what is  
9 different about... what's different about the overall  
10 picture that would lead to an increase in the census  
11 at the Children's Center when, you know the number of  
12 youth in foster care has... continues to decline, the  
13 number preventative services continues to go up, you  
14 know particularly evidence based preventative slots  
15 continues to increase, our investment continues to  
16 increase in preventative services why, why does the  
17 census continue to go up at the Children's Center of  
18 all things?

19 JULIE FARBER: So, like the Commissioner  
20 mentioned the primary issue that has emerged over the  
21 last number of years is a little bit of a shift in  
22 the population where there is a, a group of teens who  
23 are over the age of 14 and who present with issues  
24 and serious mental health issues, developmental  
25 delays and so forth who's needs really should be met

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2 in either the OMH or OPWDD systems and, and so the  
3 Commissioner listed out a number of the strategies  
4 that we're working on to move those young people out  
5 of the Children's Center because most of the kids  
6 leave the Children's Center within a few days.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But, but what... there  
8 wasn't that population with serious mental health  
9 needs several years ago or is that... I mean I, I'm... is  
10 that not a, a population that, you know would be...  
11 would be somewhat persistent based on the... just the  
12 kind of nature of mental, mental health issues?

13 JULIE FARBER: So, it's become a more  
14 significant population which is why we're actively  
15 working with OCFS, OMH and DOHMH actually on looking  
16 at new models for serving this group of young people.

17 DAVID HANSELL: There are two other  
18 things I guess I would add, one is while the overall  
19 population of young people in foster care has dropped  
20 as we've talked about, that's also led to a shift in  
21 the composition and so we have seen a shift in the  
22 direction of, of the older youth with more complex  
23 needs so... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right and that...  
25 [cross-talk]

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2 DAVID HANSELL: ...that... [cross-talk]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...would... that would  
4 maybe shift the, the proportion but I wouldn't think  
5 that that would shift the, the, the kind of base  
6 number of, of youth in... at the Children's Center and  
7 you know I, I could... you know it makes sense that it  
8 would be a higher proportion but... and that would...  
9 that would have an impact on, on obviously on, on  
10 service and programming and you know service delivery  
11 but, but I, I still don't understand why... [cross-  
12 talk]

13 DAVID HANSELL: Right... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...what... you know  
15 nothing in the greater population I don't know why  
16 there would be more people between the ages of 14 and  
17 21 now that have a serious mental health need than  
18 there would have been four or five years ago.

19 DAVID HANSELL: Right, well it's, it's a  
20 function of how many young people we have that have  
21 those needs and, and what facilities we have to  
22 accommodate them... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

24 DAVID HANSELL: ...and we, we talked about  
25 the issues of the state systems that we believe

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should be taking responsibility, the other thing that we experienced and this really has been just in the last year or two is we have lost some of our residential care providers... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...you know we have been very successful in New York City in reducing the proportion of our foster care population that is in residential care, it's only about nine percent today which is much lower than the rest of the state, much lower than the nation... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...but a couple of our residential providers as I think you probably know over the last year... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...year and a half for various reasons have pulled out of the... that, that component of the system so we've lost... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...some of the resources that we had that would otherwise have been appropriate for these young people.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean that's  
3 something that like really we should be examining  
4 whether we have the capacity and the appropriate type  
5 of facilities, the appropriate type of programming,  
6 the appropriate type of support services to, to  
7 reissue those contracts, you know as quickly as  
8 possible to... you know to, to bring on capacity.

9 DAVID HANSELL: We, we very much agree  
10 and we... you know as we... as part of our re-upping of  
11 the foster care program and as a whole will be  
12 looking at this but that's a couple of years away  
13 and... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

15 DAVID HANSELL: ...this is a more urgent  
16 need obviously so we're also looking at things we can  
17 do in the short term... [cross-talk]

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

19 DAVID HANSELL: ...to both strengthen the  
20 residential care providers that we have and see if  
21 there are ways that we can expand that part of the  
22 system.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, I mean... you  
24 know residential programs present their own  
25 challenges, nobody is saying that they're... it's a

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1 perfect solution I think but, but in the instance  
2 where it's, it's exceedingly difficult to find a  
3 foster family you know it's, it's, it's more  
4 appropriate than having an extended stay at the  
5 Children's Center which is, you know not equipped to,  
6 to work with young people with, with serious mental  
7 health needs I don't believe.

9 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah... no, we completely  
10 agree.

11 JULIE FARBER: The, the other thing I  
12 would mention is as we've had success bringing down  
13 the numbers of kids in foster care and as Dr.  
14 Martin's portfolio, you know has grown so much larger  
15 it stands to reason and we actually have the data to  
16 show it that you... the, the kids who are coming into  
17 foster care tend to be kids with a higher group of  
18 needs, right... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

20 JULIE FARBER: ...because we're meeting the  
21 lower risk and lower issue families and in Dr.  
22 Martin's systems and in... and in Lorelei's area...  
23 [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right... [cross-  
25 talk]

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2 DAVID HANSELL: There is one other thing  
3 I, I should mention which we're doing which we are  
4 very hopeful will have an impact on this program, as  
5 you may know we actually two tiers of family foster  
6 care, we have regular family foster care and then we  
7 have therapeutic foster care which is intended for,  
8 for young people which have more severe needs, more  
9 serious needs, we've very recently within the last  
10 couple of months have taken a number of slots from  
11 providers that were underutilized that were not  
12 fulfilling, fulfilling their capacity of regular  
13 family foster care and we have reallocated those  
14 slots as therapeutic family foster care slots to  
15 providers that have been doing a good job of, of  
16 utilizing the program and so we're hoping that that  
17 in the short term will help us build up an inventory  
18 of foster care beds that will be appropriate for some  
19 of the young people that we hope to move out of the  
20 Children's Center.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you.  
22 Thanks, I'll turn it over to Council Member Adams for  
23 questions.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you Chairs.  
25 Good afternoon.

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DAVID HANSELL: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you for your testimony thus far. I represent district 28 in Southeast Queens where since 2015 we have had a Close to Home facility with the help of Sheltering Arms and I'd just like to discuss that just for a couple of minutes. So, when Close to Home was first presented to us, we were under the impression and Deputy Commissioner you've, you've been with us for a while so thank you for being here, you know where I'm going with this. When it was presented to us it was presented as an initiative that truly would be Close to Home, what we found that that wasn't necessarily the case with my South Ozone Park community who definitely did oppose the Close to Home facility coming into the community, this is a community of residents, homeowners and it did not fit the scheme and the character of the community. So, what we've experienced over the past year or so have been two incidents of AWOL with youth escaping the facility, the first one was in April of 2018, the second one was in December 2018 where we realized that after consecutive meetings with your team and others the facility itself does not really have a capacity or a

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2 high level of detainees in this particular facility  
3 and Deputy Commissioner if you can help me out and  
4 just let me know how many youth right now are in the  
5 Close to Home facility in South Ozone Park?

6 FELIPE FRANCO: I don't have the number  
7 in front of me but I know that actually we haven't  
8 gone above 12 ever so I mean kind of testament to  
9 what the Commissioner and I mentioned before, you  
10 know Close to Home actually being reduced by 90  
11 percent in terms of placements since the opening in  
12 2012.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh, so we've  
14 never gone over 12 in South Ozone Park and at both  
15 incidents where we've had youth go AWOL, I dare say  
16 no more than four or five if I'm not mistaken were  
17 residents in that facility at any given time. Now I  
18 am hard pressed to, to continue to justify the  
19 existence of this Close to Home to my community that  
20 opposed it vehemently since 2015 and if you can help  
21 me today to justify the existence of this particular  
22 facility existing and continuing to maintain a  
23 contract with Sheltering Arms in this community where  
24 we have had a two year old terrorized because a youth  
25 jumped the fence in April where in December a youth

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2 pulled the, the fire.. the fire alarm and was able to  
3 escape very simply with minimal effort from people  
4 that were supposed to be watching out for his safety  
5 and for the safety of my district so again if you can  
6 let me know how I can possibly justify the continued  
7 existence of this particular facility in South Ozone  
8 Park I would greatly welcome your assistance.

9 FELIPE FRANCO: So, I mean Close to Home  
10 was premised under the concept that young people  
11 should be close to their families and actually the  
12 law requires that young people should be in New York  
13 City or within 40 miles of New York City and we.. you  
14 know we meet the standards and actually do above  
15 that. In terms of our understanding of where young  
16 people are placed we look at their special needs  
17 first and then we look to proximity to home so at any  
18 one moment the majority of young people in Ozone Park  
19 are actually young people that are.. their families  
20 reside in Queens but as you and I have discussed in  
21 the past there may be young people from Brooklyn or  
22 other boroughs in that facility in Queens within the  
23 limited secure facility. I think to the context of  
24 why do we need the facility is be.. again we only have  
25 two limited secure facilities for young males, one in

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Queens, one in Brooklyn, we need that capacity but particularly in preparation for the young people who are coming into us now. Another fact that I think is important to the Commissioner I think we also are in the testimony talking about how proud we are that Close to Home placements have gone down by 90 percent. One of the things that actually I'm particularly proud is that after 2012 particularly after 2012, 2013 under the new, new administration AWOLs have gone down by 87 percent, the likelihood of a young person to go AWOL from Close to Home is lower than it has ever, ever been and as you and I have talked about its on a set level that actually happened twice in your district and the provider and all of us we have been as responsive as we can both young people were apprehended within a matter of days and we actually have been particularly tough and on those... on that provider even though it's a very good and responsive provider to make sure that that doesn't happen again, I mean I know all the neighbors of Ozone Park by name by now and you and I have consistently meet with them, I know their feelings about the facility and we work on a daily basis to

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2 make sure that we can turn that around, I mean I  
3 think... [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah and... [cross-  
5 talk]

6 FELIPE FRANCO: ...you have been  
7 particularly good at demanding from us to, to provide  
8 public safety but at the same time you always remind  
9 us the importance of serving these young people well  
10 and I think that even the neighbors and the residents  
11 of the community have actually turned around their  
12 conversations to us now about not just making sure  
13 you're not here but make sure you do it well if you  
14 are in my neighborhood.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah and certainly  
16 Deputy Commissioner I certainly appreciate all of the  
17 efforts that you've made over... you know over these  
18 years to always answer our questions, my problem  
19 still is that there have been substantial questions  
20 and the community has been right unfortunately which  
21 I would have preferred that not to be the case but  
22 the community has been right with this particular  
23 facility and... you know and, and the subsequent  
24 actions that have gone on with this particular  
25 facility, I'm not still convinced that this is good..

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2 that this is a good situation understanding that our  
3 youth and their priorities are at the top of  
4 everyone's list hands down but not convinced that  
5 this was the appropriate placement number one for  
6 this facility and number two that we need a facility  
7 of this size and capacity when there has yet to be  
8 that capacity limit met or come close to there so  
9 I'll just end it there and thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Council  
11 Member Gjonaj.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chairs.  
13 I just want to point out that its wonderful to see  
14 more monies now going to our preventative services  
15 than protective services, that means we're proactive  
16 and that's spending money wisely and investing to  
17 prevent the most vulnerable from being hurt or taken  
18 advantage of.

19 DAVID HANSELL: Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Eight out of the  
21 ten community districts that rank highest in the  
22 overall risk are in the borough of the Bronx which  
23 leads to my next question and the only question that  
24 I have. We have a four billion dollar increase in  
25 this budget from last year but yet your agency, your

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2 department is being forced to take a 7.6 percent cut,  
3 that's the highest by percentage of all of the  
4 agencies and departments and only ranks second in  
5 dollar amount to DOE. When this percentage came out  
6 of the thin air you were never consulted?

7 DAVID HANSELL: No, the decisions about  
8 agency PEG targets were made by OMB without...  
9 certainly without consultation with us and as I  
10 understand without consultation with other agency  
11 Commissioners.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And you indicated  
13 in the last few weeks you have spoken with OMB?

14 DAVID HANSELL: We're in discussions with  
15 OMB about how to meet the PEG target, yes and as I  
16 had said earlier our goal is to as much as we're able  
17 to use revenue streams that we have at ACS to avoid  
18 impact on programs as much as we can do that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, can you share  
20 with us what you anticipate whether you anticipate  
21 cuts to be in what programs or where in your...

22 DAVID HANSELL: I can't yet, we're in  
23 discussions with OMB about that and no decisions have  
24 been made at this point.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How many  
3 discussions have you had with OMB?

4 DAVID HANSELL: A number.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And at any of  
6 those discussions no programs have come up as a  
7 potential for cutting?

8 DAVID HANSELL: There have been  
9 discussions about different programs but there  
10 haven't been any decisions reached.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right. Well  
12 that's... I'm interested in those discussions because  
13 the concern is if eight out of the ten highest  
14 overall risks are in the borough of the Bronx any  
15 cuts are going to impact Bronxites by proportion over  
16 any other borough in the city and this is a  
17 tremendous concern and the earlier hearings that we  
18 had I pointed this out as well that the borough of  
19 the Bronx has many needs and we often refer to the  
20 Tale of Two Cities but we never talk about the Tale  
21 of Two Boroughs and that's the borough of the Bronx  
22 and the rest of the city when it comes to services  
23 and investments but we are first in many other areas  
24 from obesity and health concern and unemployment and  
25 the dumping grounds for the rest of the city when it

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2 comes in proportion to supportive housing and  
3 shelters. We're 17 percent of the population, we have  
4 30 percent of the city's shelters, we're 17 percent  
5 of the population and we have 41 percent more than  
6 Brooklyn, 99 percent more than Staten Island, 100  
7 percent more than Queens and 13 percent more than  
8 Manhattan in supportive housing. Any cuts are felt by  
9 the borough of the Bronx hardest so I would hope that  
10 whatever cuts you do agree to or in your discussions  
11 keep the borough of the Bronx in mind, we just simply  
12 need more and can't afford any cuts. Thank you.

13 DAVID HANSELL: I hear you and I will  
14 certainly communicate that back to OMB as we talk  
15 with them.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Council  
17 Member Gjonaj. I do just have a couple before we go  
18 to Holden who has another question and I believed  
19 Chair Levin might have another question or follow up  
20 and I do want to follow up first on what Chair Levin  
21 mentioned about the PEGs, the 68 million and as  
22 Council Member Gjonaj alluded to in regards to how  
23 did that number come about, you were never in the  
24 room, my question to you would be first is that when  
25 we asked the question each day how much is it costing

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you per youth that's in your system and which programs are effective, if we can really identify how much... what that dollar amount looks like then we can tell what the agencies are really doing, what we've asked them to do, what contract they have and then that might help us with the PEG if, if they're ineffective but if they are... if all your programs are effective and you really just cannot afford to cut anything are you willing to advocate for your agency to say it doesn't make sense, it's not our fault that your system... that the city's system is having an issue financial, we're doing our job because we've always said here the most vulnerable in our city are our youth and our seniors that's one piece of the budget that should never be cut. I've listened to the city add money to the budget if you don't have new money to add you can't add it so why add money and then tell somebody who, who needs that money to maintain what they main... to cut so I'm saying to you are you prepared to advocate when you're in those rooms about hey listen we can't afford to cut anything and if you have a way to cut people because people are doing it wrong then we can support that because you can sit up and say this program is not

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2 working out, that program is not working, we're not  
3 getting the most out of it we can cut here but if you  
4 need everything are you ready, is your team ready and  
5 prepared and tell your... people on the other side of  
6 this building we just... we just can't cut seven  
7 percent?

8 DAVID HANSELL: Absolutely. Chair, Chair  
9 King I would not have taken this job if I didn't  
10 believe that the work that ACS does is as important  
11 if not more important than the work that any other  
12 city agency does and I advocate on behalf of our  
13 programs and out budget every single day and I will  
14 continue to.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good, good to hear  
16 that. I do have another question. I have not heard  
17 from my sister here, she's been a silent soldier  
18 here, but I do want to ask the question in regard to  
19 when it comes to children who have mental health or  
20 other challenges that we say that they have and I  
21 want to... I want you to give us an accurate account of  
22 what's real because as Chair Levin said you just  
23 didn't recognize all of a sudden that five years ago  
24 we didn't have a mental health issue with our  
25 children now all of a sudden now that this one

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2 population is going down, I just want to make sure no  
3 one is labeling kids when they're not really meeting  
4 that code and saying we're going to put them over  
5 there so we can continue to fund that system because  
6 we just don't have enough children who are... who... it's  
7 almost like getting arrested for not jumping the  
8 turnstile and staying, you know five nights in jail  
9 as opposed to locking up the person who really just  
10 robbed somebody or hit somebody over the head, my  
11 question... can you give me a real answer on that?

12 JACQUELINE MARTIN: My name is Jacqueline  
13 Martin, I'm the Deputy Commissioner for the Division  
14 of Prevention Services at ACS. Thank you so much for  
15 your question Chair King. I have been working in  
16 prevention services for 30 years now, I started my  
17 career with runaway youth and also, I worked in the  
18 South Bronx for many years. So, I can say  
19 definitively that we as a child welfare system we  
20 have struggled with getting mental health services  
21 for children and families and communities, it didn't  
22 just begin. What I am very proud of today is that we  
23 have the opportunity at ACS to try to address those  
24 needs and so we have been aggressively doing that  
25 with, you know designing and innovating services and

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2 bringing programs to communities that we think will  
3 meet those needs. For example, we had the opportunity  
4 in 2017 to partner with Montefiore Hospital and to  
5 bring group attachment based, you know in, in...  
6 intervention to families receiving prevention  
7 services with very young children, zero to three year  
8 olds and so our commitment is to continue to do that  
9 because the services are needed in communities of  
10 color where we see long wait lists for mental health  
11 services, the challenges that families face unable to  
12 actually get proper evaluations to be done so that we  
13 know exactly what the needs are so I think, you know  
14 the Commissioner would agree that we are going to  
15 continue that commitment so that the children and  
16 families that we see in prevention services will have  
17 those services that they need.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I, I thank you for  
19 that answer and I just want to get more clarity on,  
20 you mentioned Montefiore, you mentioned communities  
21 of color, I do know that a Caucasian child could  
22 experience the same issues at 15 that a 15 year old  
23 or a nine year old.. or a nine year old.. [cross-talk]

24 JACQUELINE MARTIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...and the reason I...  
3 and I share... and I'm just going to give a quick  
4 story, when it talks about the Tales of Two Cities of  
5 how this system has worked to say that young brothers  
6 and sisters of color are less than and we've created  
7 systems to trip them up I tell the story of being in  
8 a middle school and a principal standing in a hallway  
9 as I'm there visiting, a young dark skinned brother  
10 about... in middle school, had to be no more than about  
11 12 comes out of the staircase, the bell had rung so  
12 he was late, she berated this young brother who was  
13 about your complexion then all of a sudden a little  
14 light skinned Latino kid walked out and she called to  
15 him and said what are you doing, you're lost, the..  
16 you see what I'm... you see where I'm going, see how  
17 they look at the child differently so when we talk  
18 about our system I want to make sure that our system  
19 doesn't do the same thing because when we come, I  
20 listen to the numbers, I look at the numbers and its  
21 like every child who is of color is part of your  
22 system and then everyone else getting it right. So,  
23 how are we telling that nine year old that they are  
24 super great if everything we tell them is that they  
25 need help, I've been in the ACS system and I've

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2 watched some things that I didn't really like so I'm  
3 asking us how do we change it on our end and how our  
4 numbers reflect because everybody got issues, if  
5 you're not... no matter... make a difference what color  
6 you are now you all do stupid things all the time no  
7 matter where you... where you live in New York but when  
8 we come in this room like this our data seems to be  
9 skewed to a certain set of people in the city of New  
10 York and I have a... I have a problem with that so I'm  
11 asking you to help me be real in the whole  
12 conversation and say hey are we servicing all of...  
13 people have problems with right... Close to Home  
14 program because you're taken kids from different  
15 neighborhoods and you put them in a community because  
16 they look like a community, they have no connection  
17 to it but because they look like the community you  
18 said we're going to put them in a Close to Home  
19 program and then when they run amuck the neighborhood  
20 that's around it has to deal with it so what I'm... the  
21 problem that I'm having is that you're going to tell  
22 me that nobody in Lower Manhattan has an issue,  
23 nobody in Upper Manhattan has an issue, nobody in  
24 parts of Park Slope has an issue it's just only  
25 Edenwald and Bed Stuy got issues. That's what I want

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2 to get... I want us... I want us to start having real  
3 conversations to help us all the parts of the system  
4 peers to be fair and neutral because right now it  
5 doesn't seem to be that way. Somebody please respond.

6 DAVID HANSELL: I'll say... and actually  
7 Dr. Martin can respond as well because she has been a  
8 real leader in addressing this issue at ACS. So, as I  
9 talked about in my testimony Chair King child welfare  
10 and juvenile justice have a history of racial  
11 disproportionality that reflects both  
12 disproportionate involvement by race and  
13 disproportionate involvement by geography as you're  
14 saying and there's some parts of that that we don't  
15 have control over at ACS, we are required... in the  
16 child welfare side as you know we're required to  
17 investigate every report that we get, we don't  
18 determine who reports, which families, which kids and  
19 on the juvenile justice side any child that a family  
20 court judge sends to us in the Raise the Age or in  
21 Close to Home we're required to serve that young  
22 person so that we can control but we do think that  
23 there are things that we can do to address the  
24 underlying issue of racial disproportionality and  
25 geographic disproportionality that you're referring

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2 to and primarily there are two things. One is we can  
3 try to intervene in a positive way in those  
4 communities before kids get involved in the juvenile  
5 justice system or the child welfare system and then  
6 we can make sure that we as an organization when  
7 we're working with families are not reinforcing those  
8 patterns. And so those are the two things that we're  
9 focused on so the work that we're doing in our  
10 division of child and family wellbeing through our  
11 family enrichment centers, through our community  
12 partnership programs and other activities are focused  
13 directly on how can we intervene in those communities  
14 to help the families in those communities get the  
15 services that they need to support their kids and  
16 help their kids grow up in a way so that they don't  
17 ever end up in the child welfare system or juvenile  
18 justice system and the work we're doing around  
19 implicit bias and the equity assessments that we're  
20 doing similarly are focused on how we within ACS can  
21 hold our selves accountable for making sure that we  
22 are dealing with every single family that comes  
23 through our doors in the same way regardless of race,  
24 regardless of geography, regardless of other factors  
25 that shouldn't have any impact on, on our interaction

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2 with them. Those are not easy goals to achieve, those  
3 as you... as you're pointing out these are deep seated  
4 problems in our society and we know that there are  
5 some parts of it that we can only respond to but  
6 there's some parts of it that we think we can  
7 proactively intervene with and that's what we're  
8 trying to do.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So, my next  
10 question goes to your 21<sup>st</sup> century new bill system  
11 that you just talked about inequities that you're  
12 looking to challenge. My first question is that how  
13 much do you... how much does a system like that you  
14 think cost and as you create a system like that what  
15 responsibilities will you... will this system have in  
16 holding other systems accountable for their... for  
17 their discriminatory practices that puts more burden  
18 on your system?

19 DAVID HANSELL: That's... those are both  
20 very good questions. On the first... I mean I... on the  
21 first one I can't attach a price tag to it and  
22 actually I think I would say its less about more  
23 resources, its more about how we use the resources  
24 that we have, are we using them in positive ways? So,  
25 I think the first thing we have to do is make sure

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2 that all of our programs and all of the ways we're  
3 using our resources currently are aligned with this  
4 perspective and this way of doing things. On the  
5 other that's a very good question, you know we are  
6 one of... I don't remember exactly how many city  
7 agencies, but we are one of the city agencies under  
8 Local Law 174 that was required to do an equity  
9 assessment, we are working... and actually there is a...  
10 I'm not sure if it's exactly a task force but there's  
11 a group of those agencies that is overseeing that  
12 process with the Mayor's Office of Operations and  
13 part of the reason for that structure is to make sure  
14 that we're not each individually moving in this  
15 direction but that we all as an entire city  
16 government that we are moving in this direction. So,  
17 I think... I think that's very important; I think if it  
18 doesn't happen across the board it won't be  
19 effective.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And my final  
21 question before I turn it back over to... I turn it  
22 over to Holden who has a follow up question. First I  
23 want to thank you for your answers, as we continue to  
24 talk more about the budget and we wrap up with budget  
25 I hope in your conversations with this 21<sup>st</sup> century

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that you will have the ability and the guts to call another Commissioner out if they're doing something wrong that's imposing and having an impact on your system that's the only way we get it right, we can sit up here and say it but when you all sitting in the room trying to figure out the next plan for the next system you got to call them out if you see something they're doing that's really just discriminatory or just not right that's having an impact on how you got to spend more money or get more... you're more stressed out or your staff is more overworked while they're creating a scenario for you, I hope that can happen... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...and the second thing I want to move into capital money that you've been spending for the facilities whether it's Horizon, Crossroads, Close to Home whatever that... those millions of dollars that you've... that you have that you've been building these facilities, I want to know if that gym is ready at Horizons and then also if all the money that you have you spend it all, is all your facilities ready and if not do you need more

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2 money or do you have anything left over, what's your  
3 status?

4 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, well we need more  
5 money from the state that's for sure. We have... we  
6 have spent a significant amount of capital money and  
7 I think you have those numbers but if not we can  
8 certainly get them to you, you know we... the two  
9 facilities, the two detention facilities, Crossroads  
10 and Horizon are about 25 years old and so they  
11 required quite a bit of renovation work just on, on  
12 really basic systems and so that work had to be done  
13 before October because we had to make sure that they  
14 were safe for the increased population of young  
15 people that we're going to put there. With regard to  
16 the recreational facilities we've been working... not  
17 just, just the gym but of course the outdoor space..  
18 [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: The outdoor space,  
20 yeah... [cross-talk]

21 DAVID HANSELL: ...which is also a big  
22 concern, I'm happy to say actually we understand that  
23 just today the construction work on the, the outdoor  
24 basketball court has started... [cross-talk]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay... [cross-talk]

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2 DAVID HANSELL: ...and the Department of  
3 Design and Construction is overseeing that, and I  
4 know they're working as quickly as they can and then  
5 also will be working on the, the other sort of grassy  
6 area in the interior courtyard so those, those will  
7 both be available for young people. There is some  
8 outdoor space now, but we want both the basketball  
9 court and the grassy area to be available as soon as  
10 possible. So, yes, we are working on those.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you.  
12 I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Holden for  
13 a follow up.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair  
15 King. I just have a couple of questions on the mental  
16 health area. We had heard from some providers that  
17 they have trouble keeping... hiring and keeping mental  
18 health professionals, are you seeing that with your  
19 providers?

20 DAVID HANSELL: Well most of our  
21 providers are in our prevention system that, that Dr.  
22 Martin oversees and it, it includes programs, we  
23 don't call them mental health programs per se but  
24 they provide mental health services and we did have  
25 and I think we talked about this actually from the

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2 first times I, I appeared before you, we did have  
3 providers telling us they were having difficulty  
4 retaining workers and so we worked with the Council  
5 to achieve some additional investments in enabling  
6 the providers to raise salaries, to make other kinds  
7 of investments to address the attrition that they  
8 were seeing in their... in the workers that were  
9 supporting these prevention programs and we are  
10 seeing benefits from that, we are seeing providers  
11 that are better able to maintain their contracting  
12 capacity of service which was more challenging a  
13 couple of years ago so I think we've made progress in  
14 that area but you know the issue of sort of trained  
15 and licensed mental health providers and clinicians  
16 is a problem in New York City, it's probably a  
17 problem across the country, there is a limited supply  
18 of them and so I think you are putting your finger on  
19 something that is a challenge to all of us... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because  
22 they're, they're saying... the provider is saying the,  
23 the area that they have the most trouble with is  
24 mental health and that's the area that we have to  
25 actually invest in and that's the area that Thrive

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2 NYC is investing in, do you... do you work with them or  
3 are they... you seeing a benefit from that program?

4 DAVID HANSELL: We, we are... one of the  
5 partner agencies, we have... we have several Thrive  
6 programs at ACS in our preventative services, in our  
7 foster care agency... our foster care programs and so...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, so do... sorry,  
10 do they... you've seen... there's an... there's an increase  
11 in funding in that area or, or new programs that come  
12 about from... in the mental health area from Thrive?

13 DAVID HANSELL: From Thrive specific...  
14 well so we have a total of four programs at ACS that  
15 are part of the Thrive portfolio, only one of them is  
16 actually funded through Thrive and that is a program  
17 we call trauma smart and it works within our early  
18 care and education system so there, yes, in that... in  
19 that program we did get an infusion of funding  
20 several years ago to basically do trauma informed  
21 training for staff in our early care and education  
22 program... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, it's just for  
24 training, it was not directly helping individuals,  
25 it's the training... [cross-talk]

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2 DAVID HANSELL: Well... [cross-talk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...of staff?

4 DAVID HANSELL: It is for training of  
5 staff, but the goal is to help children and actually  
6 we have outcome data that show that it has succeeded  
7 in doing that. The other three Thrive programs are  
8 considered part of the Thrive portfolio, but they're  
9 actually not funded through Thrive, they're funded  
10 either through other federal or state funding  
11 sources.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
14 Member Holden. Just following up on that, so two  
15 areas that struck me as potentially opportunities for  
16 Thrive resources is first the Children's Center  
17 obviously and also the Family Enrichment Centers, you  
18 know making sure that children and families that are,  
19 you know availing themselves to that really great  
20 resource in the community as a primary preventative  
21 model, you know have access to, to mental health  
22 resources I think would be a fantastic opportunity in  
23 the kind of continuum of services that are available  
24 to them.

25

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2 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, so both good points  
3 Chair Levin, in, in terms of the Children's Center  
4 we, we have a very close working relationship with  
5 the Bellevue adolescent psychiatry program and they  
6 do provide mental health services both within the  
7 facility or for young people who need to actually go  
8 to Bellevue at Bellevue and we're in constant  
9 dialogue with them about the, the quantity and the  
10 quality of services there so they have been a  
11 fantastic partner and a fantastic provider... [cross-  
12 talk]

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, there are no  
14 additional resources for mental health services at  
15 Children's Center that you see right now in... [cross-  
16 talk]

17 JULIE FARBER: Like the Commissioner said  
18 so we have an onsite team from Bellevue, they  
19 literally work, you know full time at the Children's  
20 Center and then in addition we send kids, you know as  
21 necessary... [cross-talk]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

23 JULIE FARBER: ...to the CPEP as well but  
24 we are in conversations as the Commissioner mentioned  
25 with OMH and DOHMH as well as OCFS about

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2 opportunities for kids at the Children's Center as  
3 well as kids in other foster care placements whether  
4 it's residential or other foster homes around  
5 increased mental health resources.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 JULIE FARBER: So, the Children's Center  
8 is in the mix of that conversation.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

10 DAVID HANSELL: And with regard to the,  
11 the Family Enrichment Centers as you know Chairman  
12 the Family Enrichment Center model is a... is a  
13 community generated model so we began the process by  
14 working with families in the community to identify  
15 their needs and then to develop services that would  
16 address them. I was just asking Deputy Commissioner  
17 Vargas and of the three thus far none of those three  
18 communities have identified mental health services as  
19 a priority that they want the family enrichment  
20 centers to address but if they did, we would... we  
21 would respond to that.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I'm going  
23 to jump around a little bit because there's some  
24 topic areas I want to get to before, before we go.  
25 Over time at ACS is... has come up as an issue

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2 particularly because overtime is not... is not a  
3 budgeted line item in PS so we'll go through an  
4 adopted budget, November Plan, January Plan, you know  
5 executive budget and then after the end of the fiscal  
6 year we see the overtime costs and at ACS it's gone  
7 up as you can see very significantly over the last...  
8 you know in just the last four... it's a very nice neat  
9 trajectory as you can see and it's going in one  
10 direction and you know I understand that A, the work  
11 needs to get done and we want people to be doing the  
12 work, you know effectively and that the cost  
13 associated with increased head count include ever  
14 escalating fringe costs and that is expensive in and  
15 of itself but at least with an increased head count  
16 we're, you know adhering to our, you know negotiated  
17 budget or at least the budget put forward during a...  
18 during the November or January plans so can you speak  
19 a little bit to this, you know rapidly increasing  
20 overtime, you know 254 percent over budgeted amount  
21 on, on, on personnel?

22 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, this is something  
23 we're taking a very close look at. The two major  
24 areas where we have seen significant overtime  
25 increases in the last two years have been our child

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2 protective specialists and youth development

3 specialists... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

5 DAVID HANSELL: ...and there are different  
6 reasons for those two, we have... we've actually talked  
7 about them this afternoon, on the child protective  
8 specialist side until fairly recently we still had  
9 caseloads that were significantly higher than they  
10 are today and when the caseloads are higher that  
11 means obviously more work involved and more overtime  
12 that goes into that. On the youth development  
13 specialist side we are still in the hiring ramp up  
14 period, we have 250 out of the 700 so that means  
15 we're, you know still currently managing with less  
16 than our ideal complement of YDS and so that means  
17 the YDS we have are working more overtime. Both of  
18 those should be largely resolved, right, our, our... at  
19 least now our, our child protective specialist's  
20 caseloads are significantly lower which should mean  
21 we should be able to control our overtime and by the  
22 end of this year we expect to have hired up to our  
23 full complement of youth development specialists and  
24 so there too there should be less need for those YDS  
25 to work overtime so as we address those issues and

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2 those two, you know core front line areas we expect  
3 to be able to really get more of a handle on it and  
4 be able to monitor, monitor our overtime costs in a  
5 better way than we've been able to over the last  
6 couple of years where we've been dealing with, you  
7 know particular concerns.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, our FY 19 we  
9 should... we should be less than 254 percent over our  
10 budgeted amount?

11 DAVID HANSELL: I would certainly hope  
12 so.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, moving over  
14 for a second here, so recently I had the opportunity  
15 with, with you and your team to visit a CPS office  
16 and meet with CPS staff and supervisors and managers  
17 and it was a really great experience, I had a lot of  
18 takeaways from it, I won't go into all of them right  
19 now, one of them by the way was that at 5:30 when I  
20 left almost the... every CPS was still working... [cross-  
21 talk]

22 DAVID HANSELL: Right... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and so I'm assuming  
24 that they were working overtime, I mean like  
25 literally like the whole office was still there, I

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2 said when do you guys leave, they said well you know  
3 we, we work late, we might... you know go exercise and  
4 then come back, I was like okay, you know that's a  
5 lot of hours. It's a... it's, it's a lot of work and  
6 obviously the work they do is incredibly serious and  
7 difficult, but it spoke to the... spoke to the overtime  
8 issue I believe. The other is that one thing that was  
9 recommended as I was talking to them as you recall  
10 I'm sure around implicit bias was that they go  
11 through an implicit bias training by ACS and so  
12 they're doing everything that they can to recognize  
13 the disparate impact of the Child Welfare System on  
14 children of color and that is... that's a... that's a  
15 tremendous undertaking what they recommended was that  
16 mandated reporters also do some type of implicit bias  
17 training, now that is a very wide swath of New  
18 Yorkers, there are many, many mandated reporters  
19 throughout our society and our city but if the cases...  
20 if they are being called... you know if, if, if a CPS  
21 is... if a case is called in a CPS has, has no choice  
22 but to go knock on that door and this is something to  
23 kind of just think about and I don't know... I mean  
24 obviously it would... there would be some, some budget  
25 implications to this, have we looked at this issue

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2 of, of mandate... of just... the bias of mandated  
3 reporters because that, that is the... that is the  
4 genesis of, of the disparate impact that we're  
5 seeing... [cross-talk]

6 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...on children of color  
8 in New York City which is very real and the... I mean  
9 to hear the CPS worker speak to it so passionately  
10 and eloquently was, you know a real eye opener for  
11 me.

12 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah, I know I  
13 remember that conversation very well when you were  
14 there. I think it's a very interesting question, the  
15 mandated reporter system is overseen by the state  
16 actually and in fact there have been, and I think... I  
17 think actually even in this session of the state  
18 legislature I think there are some legislative  
19 proposals around training of mandated reporters so  
20 this is an issue I think is interesting, I'm happy  
21 to, to raise it with the state and see if it's  
22 something that we'd be into but I think ultimately...  
23 obviously you know the organizations that mandated  
24 reporters work for could voluntarily decide to do it...  
25 [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right... [cross-talk]

3 DAVID HANSELL: ...but to do it as sort of  
4 a system wide initiative I think would require state  
5 legislation... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

7 DAVID HANSELL: ...but that's something we  
8 can certainly discuss with the state.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure, absolutely and  
10 I think maybe it's a conversation to have with, with,  
11 with the union as well because the... I think, you know  
12 obviously CPS are, are union members and you know,  
13 and I think that it, it... I think it, it's something  
14 that they have to, you know wrestle with and it's a...  
15 it's a difficult... it's difficult for them, the stress  
16 that they take home with them every night when they  
17 go home to their families has got to be incredibly  
18 wearing on them and intense and, and so this is  
19 something that I think that we should explore and  
20 maybe with the family enrichment centers as an  
21 opportunity to engage with the, the local... their  
22 local schools and their... and, and their local  
23 pediatricians and, and so on and so forth, it might  
24 be an opportunity.

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2 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah or actually really  
3 with the community partnership programs which are  
4 really their job is to sort of create those networks  
5 of, of providers within communities so that might be  
6 an appropriate place to introduce the conversation.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And being sensitive  
8 to the time I have two more issues that I, I need to  
9 address. One and this is, you know also an issue for  
10 the Department of Education but as ACS prepares to  
11 hand over the early learn system to the Department of  
12 Education there is still this structural problem of  
13 pay parody that is persisting and I believe threatens  
14 to undermine the entire early childhood education  
15 system if we don't resource the early learn system to  
16 pay the teachers what they need to be paid to survive  
17 and what they need to be paid in order to be on a  
18 level playing field with their DOE UPK counterparts  
19 and its... I mean as you know, I mean it's just... it's  
20 just... it is so galling to see that teachers in early  
21 learn setting who are working a longer day and a  
22 longer school year, it's... the entire year is their  
23 school year are getting paid so much less and I  
24 brought this up with the Mayor when he presented the  
25 preliminary budget, I did not get a good answer about

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2 how we're going to address this and I got kind of a  
3 well maybe we need to look at the whole system, I  
4 don't know that that meant, I don't know whether  
5 they... whether that meant that we were going to stop  
6 doing early learn but we can't stop doing early learn  
7 and so it's expensive, it's going to be a huge  
8 commitment of resources probably over 100 million  
9 dollars a year to right this but it is... we can't  
10 continue to... we can't continue to, to mistreat our  
11 teachers and expect them to continue, continue to  
12 educate our children and I... and I... this has to be  
13 resolved and I hope that it's part of the process of  
14 the hand off to the Department of Education but it  
15 just has to be resolved, it cannot continue to  
16 persist.

17 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah Chairman I  
18 appreciate your concern very much, obviously having  
19 qualified teachers who are appropriately compensated  
20 is critical to making sure that the children are  
21 getting the quality of services that they need and  
22 that they deserve in the early learn system. What  
23 we've been doing at ACS and we've talked about this  
24 in previous hearings is implementing the agreement  
25 that was reached between the administration and the

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day care council and the union in 2016 which was to raise salaries for community based teachers over a four year period and we have been implementing that in stages over that period of time. The issue of the disparity between community based salaries and DOE salaries obviously is an issue that will be for DOE to address as we hand the program over to them, we will certainly do whatever we can to support them as they you know figure out how they can address that issue.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, I mean the Day Care Council only had the resources that they were given by the city to be able to, to compensate the teachers so I... it just... I mean when we were at the rallies day care council is there with us... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...asking the city to make the commitment to fully fund the program so that the teachers can make a... you know an adequate salary and so just, just... it's just something that we have... we have to do before we do any new big initiatives, before we are, you know... before we do 3-K we need to

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2 pay our teachers in early learn, really we do need to  
3 do that.

4 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There's a, a few  
6 questions around the RFP that I think I'm going to  
7 have to follow up with in writing... [cross-talk]

8 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, okay... [cross-  
9 talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...just in the interest  
11 of time here and, and my last question is about Fair  
12 Futures which is this, this new initiative. So, this  
13 is a program to have coaching or mentorship for youth  
14 in the continuum of, of, of... as they're in  
15 adolescents and into aging out of the foster care  
16 system particularly those that are not, you know  
17 being adopted but are, are aging out into their own...  
18 you know into their own cognizance and have, have...  
19 has ACS examined this proposal to see what the fiscal  
20 impact would be because presumably based on  
21 programming that is now done I think that's either  
22 self-funded by some of the not for profits or  
23 foundation funded by the not for profits, they're  
24 able to show... they have data that shows how effective  
25 it is have we been able to extrapolate from that data

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2 what the fiscal impact would be of something like  
3 this?

4 DAVID HANSELL: That's interesting. So,  
5 let me start by saying that the, the issue of making  
6 sure that we are adequately preparing young people  
7 who are aging out of foster care to enter the  
8 workforce is a critical issue for us and talked about  
9 it in my testimony, we now have a dedicated office  
10 under Deputy Commissioner Farber that focusses on  
11 exactly that, we invested in a number of programs  
12 that I... we, we talked about today the why I work  
13 program, the foster and college success program and  
14 others so we are very focused on the issue. We've  
15 had... and you know in addition to the things we're  
16 doing we're always looking for other, other programs  
17 or other interventions that we think we would be  
18 appropriate additions to the services that we have in  
19 place. We've had discussions with the providers and  
20 the advocates from Fair Futures, I don't know that we  
21 have looked specifically at the financial sort of  
22 modeling or estimates with Fair Futures... [cross-talk]

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I know that's  
24 very compelling to, to First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan.

25 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...is... yeah... no, he's...  
3 I mean but he was... you know that's the kind of thing  
4 I've talked to him before about, you know the long  
5 term fiscal impacts of, of different types of  
6 programming and understanding partnership and.. when  
7 he was budget director and, and you know that's just  
8 something to examine if it's a... you know... [cross-  
9 talk]

10 DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, we can certainly do  
11 that.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah. Okay, I  
13 would strongly encourage that and do you... do you have  
14 it... have you... have you developed an opinion on it or  
15 have you examined it to, to see if you think it would  
16 be impactful?

17 DAVID HANSELL: Not specifically on the  
18 program itself yet but we're continuing to have  
19 dialogue with the providers around it and also, you  
20 know as part of the many discussions we're having  
21 with OMB in the development of the executive budget  
22 we're looking at a range of options including options  
23 in the area of additional support for older youth  
24 aging out of foster care.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because those... I mean  
3 and you have seen though the impact that it has had  
4 on youth in the programs that do do it, right, it's a  
5 very small percentage of programs that... of youth that  
6 are... that age out that actually have a, a mentorship  
7 or a coach, I think it's like ten percent or 12  
8 percent but, but you've seen the impact of, of, of  
9 the programs that do do it.

10 DAVID HANSELL: We have and as you know  
11 very well this was a subject of considerable  
12 discussion in the foster care task force so... [cross-  
13 talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh...  
15 [cross-talk]

16 DAVID HANSELL: ...we've looked at a number  
17 of different models in this area and you know we're  
18 very interested in what... in addition to what we're  
19 currently doing would make sense.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because we do  
21 have this new needs opportunity coming up in the  
22 executive budget so it would be a great time in  
23 addition to making sure that those commitments that  
24 OMB made to our finance director and our Speaker last  
25 year that they also fund Fair Futures as part of a

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2 new need, it would be great to see that. And then,  
3 I'm sorry my last question is around non mandated  
4 vouchers. So, I just want to reiterate as I've  
5 reiterated many times that the number of vouchers  
6 that were in place... my understanding is that the  
7 administration had commit... has committed to making  
8 sure that there's not a decrease in the number of  
9 vouchers year over year that... then... what was... there  
10 in, in 2014 when they started and so if we can  
11 continue to have a conversation to make sure that as  
12 we're budgeting for 2020 that, that we can continue  
13 to, to, to fund non mandated vouchers so that  
14 they're... so that they're staying at the, the same  
15 level that they have been over the last five and a  
16 half years.

17 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yes, I mean as  
18 you know we've now baselined something over 27  
19 million dollars... [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

21 DAVID HANSELL: ...in this area, this has  
22 been a conversation, every budget year I assume it  
23 will be a conversation again, this year I can say  
24 from, from our perspective at ACS we have... you know  
25 we have committed all the funds that have been

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2 available to us, the vouchers are, are fully  
3 committed and we'll continue to be and to the extent  
4 that, that funds are made available to us for the  
5 non-mandated vouchers we will make sure that they're  
6 made available to provide child care for young people  
7 that need them.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great and lastly and  
9 this is going to be my last question, on... [cross-  
10 talk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Final, final,  
12 final?

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Final question. So,  
14 the last PEG that the Bloomberg Administration did in  
15 2013 was post transitional child care so it was that...  
16 it was that year after the transitional child care  
17 that ACS funded in the past with CTL to extend I  
18 think for another year and... or maybe even beyond  
19 that, it was around... at the time it was around 13  
20 million dollars I believe and that was the PEG, this  
21 is something that could help a lot of families as  
22 they get back to work and are not receiving public  
23 assistance any longer but still have a need for child  
24 care so I think of Jazmine Headley's case actually as  
25 very instructive here, she... it's not exactly... she

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2 wasn't there... a post transitional child care would  
3 not necessarily have kept her from having to go in  
4 that day but here's a young mother who went back to  
5 work, was no longer receiving public assistance and  
6 that... and she lost her child care as a result, now  
7 she was supposed to get that, that, that transitional  
8 child care for the next 12 months but in thinking  
9 about families that rely on child care in order to  
10 stay working that post transitional child care is  
11 very important and it was cut during a time when, you  
12 know we were kind of having our austerity in New York  
13 City and its something that has not been restored yet  
14 and I think that it's something to, to reexamine so I  
15 would hope that ACS could look again at that.

16 DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah, we can  
17 certainly do that, and we can talk with OMB about  
18 that, it's... I mean we're unfortunately in a period of  
19 austerity again, I'm, I'm not sure how it compares to  
20 2013 but yes, that's certainly something we can take  
21 back and have discussions with OMB about.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, thank you  
23 Commissioner and I went to thank your entire team  
24 here.

25 DAVID HANSELL: Thank you very much.

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2 JULIE FARBER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Turn it back to my  
4 Co-Chair.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Chair  
6 Levin and I want to thank you all, we don't have any  
7 more questions, we just want to say thank you for  
8 your time today but I do have a closing comment just  
9 to use the phrase piggy back off my Co-Chair and when  
10 it does come to looking at our young people as  
11 opposed to having them age out at 21 I think there is  
12 some precedent that when, you know the federal  
13 government decided to move health care you stayed on  
14 your parent's health care to the age of 26 then you  
15 know when the city takes the responsibility to say  
16 that the parents no longer can handle the child and  
17 you're going to have a child for the duration of  
18 their teen years into their early, early 20s than  
19 yeah, you might want to consider continuing the care  
20 for them so... because what's happening is that if  
21 they're not stable either they go into the world of  
22 homelessness or they end up in being locked up and  
23 then they go into another adult system that's not  
24 designed to help them get themselves together but  
25 designed just to have them there so if we're going to

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2 do it right let's figure out how to do it right and  
3 then... and finally, any criteria that we have like the  
4 sister who had to go in there and it became a whole  
5 fiasco because she lost her child care services maybe  
6 you might want to start looking at a parameter of  
7 grey area so even though the bottom line is that if  
8 you make 27.50 and if you were at 29 that doesn't  
9 change your whole existence, you know and that's what  
10 the system looks at those hard numbers as opposed to  
11 having a great up and down place... space knowing that  
12 because I'm a dollar over doesn't mean that I'm able  
13 to... I, I get it all together but the system is really  
14 kind of unfair and it goes back to how, how bias is  
15 our system towards certain people in the system so  
16 I'm asking you to please take a look at that see if  
17 you can find some fairness and equity amongst all the  
18 people who are sitting at the table and yes, someone  
19 mentioned diversity a little earlier maybe... our, our  
20 team needs to look more diverse as we do this work as  
21 well so that compassion will be right there at the  
22 table so again thank you for your conversation and  
23 anything you need to get to us to any questions I'm  
24 asking that you get it to us in a timely manner so  
25 that we can review it and then you... we can be... and

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2 have a conversation as opposed to two hours before a  
3 meeting or a day before a meeting trying to assess  
4 what, what our today's conversation looks like so..  
5 and you can be responsible in that conversation and  
6 then you, you know we'll be all good, we're on the  
7 same page, alright. So, I appreciate you, thank you  
8 all, god bless you, be well. I know we have the  
9 public conversation; we have a couple of people who  
10 have signed up from, from the public to say a few  
11 words. I want to thank you all for your patience  
12 today who have sat and listened to today's  
13 conversation, I know we've all learned something that  
14 we didn't know when we woke up this morning. So, as  
15 the administration proceeds to exit or even if you  
16 want to sit back and listen to.. listen to some of the  
17 testimony of the public who sat and, and endured our  
18 conversation for the last four hours maybe you want  
19 to show them a little love and sit back and listen to  
20 a little something. We're going to take a one-minute  
21 break and then we're going to get back.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, we're back.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quite please.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Alright, first  
25 again I want to thank the public for your time and

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2 energy and the Department... ACS is still in the room  
3 so they will hear you so I thank them for sticking  
4 and staying but we will say due to... and we want to  
5 give everybody an opportunity to speak and it's been  
6 a long day so we're going to ask each panelist you're  
7 going to have two minutes to speak, we want to get  
8 you on the record, we've just trying to be fair  
9 because if we were to try to do it the other way we'd  
10 be here till 9:30 and I know somebody got to go home  
11 and cook, children... food for their children and I  
12 don't want any... somebody calling ACS on you because  
13 you're not home so we want to make sure that you get  
14 home in time, alright. So, Rosemarie Sinclair, First  
15 Vice President please come up CSA Council School  
16 Supervisors; Lisa Caswell, Day Care Council and Ralph  
17 Palladino, Local 1549, DC 37, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.  
18 Thank you. Okay, we can start left to right, right to  
19 left, we'll leave it in your capable hands, just  
20 identify yourself for the record and go.

21 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Can you hear me now?  
22 Okay, great. Hello, my name is Rosemarie Sinclair,  
23 I'm the First Vice President of CSA Council School  
24 Supervisors and Administrators. We have over 16,000  
25 members serving supervisors and administrators in the

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Department of Education and directors in city funded early childhood centers. So, good afternoon Chairman King and Chairman Levin and the distinguished members. We want to thank you for this opportunity and also for passing the resolution 358, which supports pay parity, this includes equal pay for our directors and assistant directors as their counterparts in the Department of Education. We are proud of this resolution however, we still see that our members continue to live close to poverty lines even though they are supervisors, they support supervise, observe and evaluate teachers. Most of our directors are making 11 percent less than a beginning teacher in the Department of Education and again our directors as long... as well as our teachers work long days and they have a longer year. Recruiting and retention is... for highly specialized professionals are at risk. Our members are losing teachers at the centers. Also, this leads to a risk of the quality of the program that we have for our children. This stubborn pay parity persists, and it runs counter to DOE's mantra of equality and excellence. We have 93 percent of our directors are women and a majority of them are women of color. We know you share our

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2 frustration and we believe our members should get the  
3 pay and respect that they so desperately deserve.

4 Thank you and please help us with this.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you for  
6 staying within your two minutes, next.

7 LISA CASWELL: My name is Lisa Caswell;  
8 I'm the Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care  
9 Council of New York and I'd really like to..  
10 appreciate whoever it is that scheduled the two of us  
11 to sit next to each other because we are together  
12 along with 1707... [cross-talk]

13 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Yes.

14 LISA CASWELL: The Day Care Council of  
15 New York for more than 70 years has served the needs  
16 of nonprofit organizations that sponsor child care  
17 programs across the five boroughs. Currently we have  
18 91 members operating 200 programs. We are responsible  
19 for negotiating collective bargaining agreements on  
20 behalf of our member agencies with the two unions  
21 1707 and CSA. First of all, we'd like to thank you  
22 for your persistent support of our membership even  
23 earlier today the continued raising of the issue. Our  
24 concerns are really in three areas; salary parody,  
25 program vacancies and the overall physical

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2 infrastructure of the system. The recent release of  
3 the DOE's birth to five RFP will have long ranging  
4 repercussions on the matter of salary parody. Our  
5 members continue to struggle with the hiring and  
6 retention of qualified teaching staff in the face of  
7 ongoing professional staffing competition with the  
8 DOE. Entry level early childhood education teachers  
9 who have their master's degrees and are state  
10 certified are paid 17,168 dollars less than their  
11 entry level counterparts at the DOE based on last  
12 month's salary bump for the UFT. For more than a year  
13 the Day Care Council has been engaged in complex,  
14 complex research on salary parody to determine the  
15 fiscal impact. Our goal is salary parody for all  
16 staff; however, we are starting the analysis by  
17 focusing on CBO directors and masters and bachelors'  
18 level certified teachers for two reasons. Our members  
19 have repeatedly discussed the difficulty in hiring  
20 management and state certified teaching staff for  
21 their agencies and Article 47 of the New York City  
22 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's regulations  
23 require the staffing for all early childhood  
24 programs. Our calculations are based on the UFT's  
25 collective bargaining agreement salary scales with

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2 specific attention, excuse me for going over, with  
3 specific attention to cost of living adjustments and  
4 longevity increases in calculating the funding amount  
5 consideration has been given to the current employee  
6 benefits structure which includes salary, FICA, a  
7 pension and health insurance. Salary parody is the  
8 only path forward for an integrated early ed system  
9 and we are committed to laying a proper foundation  
10 for long term stability. We will be releasing our  
11 research findings very shortly and are preparing for  
12 a City Council briefing as well. I'm just going to  
13 summarize our concerns related to the RFP and program  
14 vacancies. Right now, the average provider would not  
15 be able to get their full funding if they were going  
16 to be paid within the pending formulas with the DOE.  
17 And we've spoken with the DOE about how they came to  
18 their decisions, right now what they're going to be  
19 doing is they're... the RFP states that programs with  
20 enrollment rates of 58 percent or less will receive  
21 65 percent of their monthly contract value, programs  
22 with an enrollment rate between 58 and 93 will  
23 receive funding for their monthly enrollment plus  
24 seven and programs... seven percent and programs  
25 enrolled at 93 percent or higher will receive 100

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2 percent. The issue is this, they have centralized the  
3 enrollment process for UPK already, they've done well  
4 with head start recently, they have made changes to  
5 be able to try to accommodate the nonprofits, we are  
6 not saying that they are unaware of the problem of  
7 children going to the school system instead of  
8 staying in the CBOs but right now there's a new  
9 formula that risks underfunding for the nonprofit  
10 sector and it is not necessarily going to be working  
11 for us. Finally, physical infrastructure, many of our  
12 programs are in NYCHA, you're aware of the problems  
13 there. At this point we have parent testimonies that  
14 they're choosing school-based settings over CBOs  
15 located in NYCHA settings. And so that's our final  
16 concern. We must see as, as Council Member Levin has  
17 said we... this has to change, it, it isn't right, and  
18 we can't make it and we're doing better than the  
19 school-based settings academically. So, we want to  
20 thank you and that's it, yep.

21 RALPH PALLADINO: Good day, I'm Ralph  
22 Palladino, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of Local 1549, clerical  
23 administrative employees representing the eligibility  
24 specialists in the food stamp and the SNAP program  
25 and also Medicaid recertifications and clerical

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associates working in HRA and ACS. There are... if you see what's going on with the staffing numbers that I have provided you will see that there are 400 less clerical associates in the last four years in, in HRA. There are 400 less eligibility specialists in HRA than there were four years ago. Eligibility specialists are key and critical and the determining factor in, in determining eligibility for people in SNAP and Medicaid recerts. Four hundred less is almost a 20 percent reduction in staff the last four years, if you do not hire the people rather than have them attrite as, as the city has done in the last four years when there were surpluses and even under bad times there's been surpluses at the end of the year, we all know then you will not... you will continue to have the lines, you will continue to have the waits especially in Medicaid but also in the SNAP areas and on the phone lines because the workers are doing double duty. Our staff, the ESSs are... have been hounded, they have been disrespected by management at work, they have been followed to the bathroom, they have been timed to go to the bathroom all because the city decided that they... HRA decided to attrite those positions and they are the ones who are responsible

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for signing up all those people when Trump shut the government down, all the SNAP people. They had to work forced overtime, many of them did it because they wanted to but forced overtime, they need to get, get... find the money to hire those people and fill those lines and the clerical associates are being replaced by other titles, higher titles not competitive titles and that includes in ACS, costing the city money, subverting civil service. So, I'm asking you to look at both of those things as well as the language issues which I've out, outlined here. One last thing if you don't mind, they talked about the loss of centers in the Bronx in the last hearing that I testified at which I have a copy of here, I attached to our... my, my testimony. I think you need to look at what happened under the Bloomberg Administration when he cut... had every single agency cut ten percent of its budget dealing with rents and when they started doing that they started closing and consolidating centers and we argued that they should not do that, they should be expanding them into the community and if they did that then the Bronx would not be underserved the way it is now. Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, thank  
3 you for your testimony and... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you all... to  
5 this panel every... we very much appreciate all the  
6 work that your membership does in serving all New  
7 Yorkers, thank you.

8 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The next panel  
10 Dominique Dylan Tatom; Michael Leake; Sophia Gurley  
11 and Kevin Nicholson. Yes, okay. Okay, whoever wants  
12 to begin. You can start.

13 SOPHIA GURLEY: Hi, my name is Sophia  
14 Gurley and I have been... I am one of the individuals  
15 who were speaking out against the homelessness, the  
16 Department of ACS and so forth. I have been one of  
17 the victims who unfortunately have been in the  
18 circumstances of being homeless and being biased in  
19 the system and I felt like personally that the system  
20 is, is an error in it and it needs to be fixed. Some  
21 of the things that need to be fixed is the judgement  
22 towards the people that are in the system because not  
23 everybody that is in the system has a mental illness,  
24 that's for one. Not only that, yes, it is very biased  
25 against people of color because I am one of those

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2 people who unfortunately have been through ACS system  
3 numerous time due to false allegations and stuff and  
4 I have had my children taken from me. My children  
5 have been out of my care for a whole month and a half  
6 before I was able to get my children back and when I  
7 did get my children back everything was unfounded so  
8 how does that right there consist of ACS working on  
9 the issues that they have presented today, that was  
10 my first concern when I was sitting in the back  
11 listening to them. Second, the school system is  
12 corrupt because not only are they not paying  
13 attention to our children, but they are failing to  
14 properly educate our children in a manner to catching  
15 there, their attention. I know because I am a  
16 teacher's aide in the state of New York, you can... you  
17 cannot sit there and constantly call parents day in  
18 and day out when you feel like the child has a  
19 problem, not all children have problems, every child  
20 comes from a different background, not everybody came  
21 from good backgrounds, not everybody comes from bad  
22 backgrounds but you do have a mixture of both and  
23 that needs to be addressed. Third, on the  
24 homelessness, I am a victim of, of being in the  
25 system, I know my time is up. I have been a victim of

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2 being homeless and I have been one of those families  
3 who was moved out of New York and placed into New  
4 Jersey, I have been on the news three times already  
5 due to this incident so I know what it feels like to  
6 be in the corrupt system going through the corrupt  
7 system and still in the corrupt system and the system  
8 is not being fixed, it's not being adjusted and it's  
9 not being handled. You're welcome, thank you.

10 DOMINIQUE TATOM: Good afternoon Chair  
11 Levin, Chair King, members of the Committee on  
12 General Welfare and Juvenile Justice. I'm here to  
13 share my personal experience with having a coach and  
14 advocacy for the Fair Futures program. My name is  
15 Dominique Tatom, but I prefer to be called Dylan. I  
16 entered the foster care system when I turned 13. I  
17 moved from foster home to foster home twice a year  
18 with the hope of finding a genuine connection with my  
19 foster parents unfortunately that was unsuccessful.  
20 Adapting to being in foster care where I was  
21 separated from the only family, I knew was an  
22 emotional journey for me and at one point it  
23 reflected in my poor academic performance. I quickly  
24 realized that I had to change because I knew that my  
25 circumstance wasn't and then as a result I graduated

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2 from high school on time. If you would have asked  
3 seven years ago if college was an option, I would  
4 have quickly replied by saying no. If you would have  
5 asked me four years ago if college was an option I  
6 would have said perhaps or maybe. But if you would  
7 ask me today if college is an option I would not  
8 hesitate to respond and encourage others like myself  
9 that college is absolutely, positively not only an  
10 option but a reality for many youth in care who are  
11 afforded the support of a coach that is committed to  
12 their personal development and future goals in life.  
13 I was introduced to my coach Lauren Petit during a  
14 pivotal moment in my life, I chose to attend  
15 LaGuardia Community College however I was unprepared  
16 for the obstacles that awaited me during the  
17 enrollment process. I lacked the knowledge of this  
18 process because no one I lived with went to college  
19 or cared to assist. I was guided through the  
20 extensive process because being a youth in care meant  
21 that there was additional paperwork to handle. Lauren  
22 eagerly advocated on my behalf to obtain the  
23 necessary documents that my enrollment status was  
24 contingent upon. In the end I not only was  
25 successfully enrolled but Lauren made it a priority

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2 to connect me to resources on campus that were  
3 fundamental to the college experience. It is safe to  
4 say that without the support of my avid coach I would  
5 have struggled with registration and the motivation...  
6 I'm sorry... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can keep going...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 DOMINIQUE TATOM: ...for going over...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...okay, go ahead...  
12 [cross-talk]

13 DOMINIQUE TATOM: ...thank you, to remain  
14 in school. I graduated from LaGuardia Community  
15 College in June 2017 and currently attend John Jay  
16 College of Criminal Justice. Attending college is  
17 something to feel good about, you're staying in  
18 school and making the firm decision to continue in  
19 pursue higher education expands one's access to  
20 opportunities. To my coach the options are endless,  
21 college is an option which so is vocational training.  
22 Entrepreneurship is attainable because there is no  
23 limit. To my coach I am a valuable person with a  
24 unique skill set, I am not just a case number. To my  
25 coach the entirety of youth welfare matters which

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means that a plethora of services are provided to benefit successful youth development. Throughout the course of our relationship I have been surprised with care packages, provided a shoulder to cry on when my grandmother passed on and given mental stimulation and access to job opportunities. I had been rewarded for my accomplishments and encouraged to persevere during the most difficult yet pertinent times in my life. Gratefully I had been paired with the coach who possessed the personal experience with the goal I have of attending law school and she has demonstrated 100 percent commitment towards ensuring that this goal becomes materialized. Youth in here need people to look up to that they can emulate. It is important for youth to have someone in their corner that is dedicated to changing the narrative for them. I urge you all to think about the many 13 year olds that you came or will come across at some point and to then take a look at what we know about precedent outcomes of these youths when they age out. The trajectory of their lives depends on the implementation of programs designed to address the needs of youth in care. There is no one who has done life alone and we certainly cannot expect vulnerable youth to do so either. It is

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2 prominent that we ensure that every foster youth has  
3 a fair future, a fair shot and a fair opportunity to  
4 transform into the best versions of themselves  
5 because every kid deserves a chance. Thank you.

6 [applause]

7 DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Dylan.

9 SADE COLLINGTON: Hello everyone, my name  
10 is Sade Collington. I am one of the forgotten  
11 families that's been on the CBS2 news. Today I'm here  
12 just to advocate for my family and let you guys know  
13 that in June 2018 my family moved into unlivable  
14 conditions through DHS and now we're back in the same  
15 predicament, we're back in the shelter system going  
16 through everything all over again. I'm really here  
17 just to reach out and wish that certain programs  
18 change such as the SOTA voucher. I wish that DHS took  
19 the opportunity to really understand that cutting a  
20 check and dumping your problem onto another state is  
21 not fixing the problems, it's only making the problem  
22 worse and it's only making things worse for our  
23 families. I have an eight-year-old and a two-year-old  
24 who's chronically asthmatic and during our stay we  
25 have endured conditions that are unspeakable. So, I

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2 just really wish that everyone is able to help our  
3 family and really be there to vouch for us and  
4 understand that things aren't black and white, there  
5 are definitely grey areas. DHS has not helped my  
6 family as of yet and I'm hoping that by speaking out  
7 today they are willing to at least come to us and  
8 apologize for the lack of communication between  
9 themselves and other states and really just shake our  
10 hands and be willing to work with us for future  
11 endeavors.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, thank you.

13 KEVIN NICHOLSON: Good afternoon, my name  
14 is Kevin Nicholson, I'm the husband to Sade  
15 Collington and the father to Kevin Nicholson Junior,  
16 right there eight-year-old and I have a two-year-old,  
17 Caden Nicholson. I was one of the families on the  
18 news. My family was the first to get the news I... to  
19 our situation which led other families to get onto  
20 it. The first night we were dropped off to an  
21 apartment in New Jersey, they dropped us off, the  
22 workers were still working on the house, so they told  
23 us why did DHS send you guys? So, the first three  
24 nights we got there me and my family stayed outside,  
25 we slept outside the first three nights as soon as we

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2 got there because the workers weren't done on the  
3 house, so we stayed there outside. From there on it  
4 has been... it has been like downhill, declining.  
5 Raining inside of the house over the stove, over  
6 beds, over couches. My son was sleeping in negative  
7 12-degree temperature which caused him to go to the  
8 hospital anemic and everything. We stood in the  
9 hospital for two weeks for my son and his asthma. It  
10 was just the worst experience that I ever felt and  
11 Steven Banks I watched him over the news say that we  
12 had choices and choices, no we didn't have no choice  
13 of anything, we was forced that if we denied housing  
14 more than twice or three times then they saying that  
15 we're denying it and we got to leave the hotel or the  
16 shelter and go back to PATH and start over. So, we  
17 have to take these options whatever choice they've  
18 given us we have to take it, there's no choice,  
19 there's no... so we took it and right now we're back in  
20 this hotel, nothing is happening, we've been here for  
21 three to four months. If it wasn't for me and my wife  
22 sticking together it would be the worst thing so I'm  
23 just reaching out and asking for help in, in the  
24 midst of just apologies and understanding because I  
25 don't think that Steven Banks and other people that's

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2 in the DHS chairs understand what we're going  
3 through.

4 SOPHIA GURLEY: I'm sorry, can I also  
5 like kind of piggy back off of them because we're all  
6 going through the same situation. I, I just have... I  
7 just find it mind boggling that people can sit and  
8 say that they strategically thought about a plan to  
9 help families move into permanent housing but yet  
10 there's an issue that is still going on and on and on  
11 where nobody is placed in permanent housing, you  
12 can't even get yourself together because of the other  
13 issues that you are facing, you understand and when  
14 you strategically think of something that means you  
15 planned it out, you mapped it, you have a... you have a  
16 strong plan. Me, personally giving people 17,000  
17 dollars up front for a family is not strategic  
18 thinking, that's not... now when you strategically  
19 think about something and you have a plan and  
20 especially if you move the families out of where they  
21 are comfortable out then that means there should be a  
22 plan in place. Okay, what's going to happen after  
23 this family moves into... right, what's going to happen  
24 when this family moves into this next state, you know  
25 what I'm saying because I was also one of the

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2 families that was moved out of New York into New  
3 Jersey and I didn't have any family there, I learned  
4 New Jersey as I moved there and... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Where, where in New  
6 Jersey by the way?

7 SOPHIA GURLEY: I'm in Newark, New  
8 Jersey.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Newark...

10 SADE COLLINGTON: Right, I'm sorry...  
11 [cross-talk]

12 SOPHIA GURLEY: And I was also one of  
13 those families as well, when I saw their story that's  
14 what prompted me to speak up as well and about the,  
15 the, the... the foster care, my children was placed in  
16 five different homes within a month and a half time  
17 frame, five different homes. So, right now I could  
18 relate to everybody on this table and I really do  
19 have way more that I could speak on but I know we  
20 don't have that type of time today but I just wanted  
21 to piggy back off of them and let you all know that  
22 this is a major problem that has to be... that has to  
23 be addressed... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you... [cross-  
25 talk]

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2 SOPHIA GURLEY: ...not only that the Mayor  
3 of New Jersey is calling for the Mayor of New York  
4 and the Commissioner to come and meet with him  
5 because of this and no one has reached out to our  
6 families or nothing like that yet...

7 KEVIN NICHOLSON: Yeah, no one.

8 SOPHIA GURLEY: ...not the Commissioner,  
9 not DHS, not the Mayor, nobody and I do have a  
10 meeting with the Mayor coming up soon.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

12 SOPHIA GURLEY: ...because of this, because  
13 I also now have a DCP case in Jersey because of my  
14 living arrangements which is ACS in Jersey.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank... yeah, thank  
16 you. And just one question for Sade and Kevin, did,  
17 did you choose the apartment, you did not choose the  
18 apartment?

19 KEVIN NICHOLSON: No, we didn't choose  
20 it, like I said we, we seen two apartments before  
21 that prior to it which was messed up, the third one  
22 we were told if we don't choose this one, we're  
23 denying housing... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

25

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2 KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...so we would have to  
3 leave... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...go back to PATH,  
5 yeah...

6 KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...we'd go back to PATH  
7 and start all over again and so it was like you know  
8 what, let's just go ahead and then... [cross-talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

10 KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...we went... they told us  
11 in two weeks it'd be ready, they knocked on the door  
12 of the hotel, they packed all of our stuff up, they  
13 took us there, dropped the bags off, the workers were  
14 there, they said why did DHS send you guys it's not  
15 ready, first three nights me, me and my kids and wife  
16 stood outside, the first three nights.

17 SADE COLLINGTON: Everything was done  
18 through DHS.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Everything was done  
20 through DHS... [cross-talk]

21 SADE COLLINGTON: The, the van run...  
22 [cross-talk]

23 KEVIN NICHOLSON: Yeah... [cross-talk]

24 SADE COLLINGTON: ...taking us to... [cross-  
25 talk]

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2 KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...everything.

3 SADE COLLINGTON: Taking us there to the  
4 actual property, from my knowledge they were supposed  
5 to conduct some sort of inspection and ensure that  
6 everything was done, nothing... [cross-talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Obviously they  
8 didn't.

9 KEVIN NICHOLSON: None, they did nothing...  
10 [cross-talk]

11 SADE COLLINGTON: Right, nothing was  
12 done... [cross-talk]

13 KEVIN NICHOLSON: And we went back to the  
14 hotel to show them pictures like two weeks after we  
15 got there... [cross-talk]

16 SADE COLLINGTON: They threatened to call  
17 the... [cross-talk]

18 KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...and they said that we  
19 were trespassing so they can't do nothing right now  
20 because we're no longer tenants in the house.

21 SADE COLLINGTON: We reached out and made  
22 several 3-1-1 complaints, the only thing I received  
23 was someone from the ombudsman office, her name was  
24 Miss Singleton she told me that we had the right to  
25 go back to PATH but they were not going to do

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2 anything for us until the SOTA voucher ended which is  
3 in June... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay... [cross-talk]

5 SADE COLLINGTON: ...and as of right now  
6 that's what it seemed like it's, it's happening, we  
7 have to wait because we haven't even received a  
8 voucher.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank you  
10 for, for calling a lot of public attention to this  
11 program and we're, we're looking at it in depth but I  
12 don't think that, that wouldn't have happened  
13 without, without your story coming to light and I  
14 just want to wish you and your family well and, and  
15 you know urge you to, to keep up... you know advocating  
16 and, and, and working for your family, thanks.

17 SADE COLLINGTON: Thank you.

18 KEVIN NICHOLSON: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then Dylan I just  
20 want to thank you, you did an amazing job at the  
21 rally earlier and you know inspired I think everybody  
22 that was there, all hundreds... you know hundreds of  
23 people and, and I want to, you know wish you the, the  
24 best at John Jay and I know you said you wanted to go  
25 to law school afterwards so I, I, I want you to, to

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2 keep on with it because you're, you're doing an  
3 amazing job and I want to thank you.

4 DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thanks. Council  
6 Member, okay. Thank you so much to this panel.

7 DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

8 KEVIN NICHOLSON: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have a good day,  
10 thank you. Next panel; Reed Vreeland, Housing Works;  
11 Ted Houghton, Gateway Housing; John Sentigar,  
12 Covenant House and Sarah Chiles RH Capital. Thank you  
13 all, whoever wants to begin. Sorry, make sure that  
14 the light is on, sorry. There you go.

15 SARAH CHILES: Can you hear me? Good  
16 evening, my name is Sarah Chiles and I am the  
17 Executive Director of the Redlich Horwitz Foundation.  
18 We're a philanthropy dedicated to improving the  
19 foster care system in New York. In recent years, we  
20 have granted close to one and a half million dollars  
21 to ACS for technical assistance and over four million  
22 dollars to New York City foster care agencies. Thank  
23 you to Chairperson Levin for unwavering commitment to  
24 children in foster care and to the members of the  
25 General Welfare Committee for your leadership in

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creating the interagency foster care task force. With Commissioner Hansell's leadership and his exceptional management team, ACS has increased permanency rates and also increased placements of children with relatives. We congratulate ACS and its provider community on these successes, all of which were major recommendations of the task force. We know that if this administration sets its mind to something it gets it done. The task force also recommends providing services to ensure older foster youth can meet their education and career goals. The Fair Futures campaign launched this year to do just that. With over 80 organizations signed onto the coalition, we urge ACS and the city to support our older youth to meet their potential. The good news is that we know exactly what works. Several agencies have received private funding to provide coaching and academic tutoring to foster youth age 14 to 26 and have seen tremendous results; while only 22 percent of youth without these services achieve a high school degree, nearly 90 percent of program participants graduate from high school. But currently only 12 percent of our foster youth receive these services. The return on these investments is clear; more young

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1 people educated, employed, housed and thriving.

2 Several foundations are raising close to two million

3 dollars to match public funds so that we can scale

4 these successful programs. The private funds are

5 being invested to create the infrastructure to track

6 results and to train staff. But we need 50 million

7 dollars to scale these successes to even more

8 deserving young people and we have creative ideas for

9 where that money can come from. We urge you to make

10 New York the first city in the nation to ensure all

11 our young people have a fair shot at a successful

12 future. Thank you.

13  
14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

15 JOHN SENTIGAR: Good afternoon, my name

16 is John Sentigar and I'm a member of the advocacy

17 team at Covenant House New York where we serve

18 runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to 24. I'd like to

19 thank the Committee on General Welfare and Council

20 Chair Levin for the opportunity to testify today. In

21 2018 Covenant House served over 2,000 young people in

22 our residential programs including pregnant women and

23 mothers with their children, LGBTQ youth and

24 commercially sexually exploited youth and trafficking

25 survivors. Many of our youth have experienced abuse

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1  
2 or neglect at the hands of parents or their care  
3 givers and a disproportionately high percentage of  
4 our youth struggle with pervasive impacts of trauma,  
5 mental health issues and substance abuse. We provide  
6 young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical  
7 care and mental health and substance abuse services,  
8 legal services, high school equivalency classes and  
9 other educational programs including job training  
10 programs. I just wanted to highlight some of the  
11 initiatives that we are applying for discretionary  
12 funding for this fiscal year and these include LGBTQ  
13 youth mental health, we're requesting 50,000 dollars  
14 to improve and expand our mental health offerings at  
15 Covenant House New York specifically as they relate  
16 to LGBTQ young people. We're also requesting money to  
17 support our homeless student's initiative and job  
18 training and placement initiative; education  
19 employment is extremely important especially for our  
20 young people at Covenant House and we want to be able  
21 to provide more of that. Finally, I'm also requesting  
22 on behalf of Covenant House expanded funding for our  
23 metro card program. We really applaud the city's  
24 effort in rolling out Fair Fares unfortunately for  
25 our young people though Fair Fares would not cut it

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2 for them, we need to be able to provide full  
3 subsidized metro cards for them to be able to get to  
4 job interviews, medical appointments, and the like so  
5 I urge you to consider those requests on behalf of  
6 Covenant House New York. Thank you very much.

7 BRENDAN CHENEY: Good afternoon Chair  
8 Levin, Chair King and members of the General Welfare  
9 Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
10 today. My name is Brendan Cheney, I'm an Associate  
11 Director at Gateway Housing, a nonprofit organization  
12 that works to improve the shelter system by helping  
13 to create model nonprofit owned, purpose built  
14 transitional residences, with innovative financing  
15 methods and evidence-based practices. You've got our  
16 full testimony before you, but I will try and  
17 summarize and, and be brief. The Mayor's budget shows  
18 a commitment to improve the city's homeless shelter  
19 system. We support the Turning the Tide plan and we  
20 support the model budget process though we think the  
21 process should be improved to allow some more  
22 flexibility with providers during negotiations. And  
23 now we want to talk about some of the concerns we  
24 have in the... in the budget. We think the City Council  
25 should work to preserve Thrive NYC funding. The

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Thrive NYC is a large ambitious program that spans many agencies causing some to criticize it as unfocused and lacking metrics. This has not been our experience at Gateway Housing where we are seeing firsthand positive, concrete results being achieved with new staff positions funded by Thrive NYC. We run a program that seeks to improve school attendance for homeless children and that program works with Thrive funded positions including the client care coordinators that are at the city shelters and the bridging the gap social workers from the Department of Education. Both of those positions are critical to our program and critical to we think improving school attendance among homeless children. We've seen some pretty positive results already early on with the program. One third of the students we've worked with have improved from having chronically home... being chronically absent or severely chronically absent to good attendance over the first four months of our program, that couldn't have happened without these Thrive funded positions. Unfortunately, the Mayor's budget cuts the bridging the gap social workers, we're asking the city and the City Council to restore these funding cuts and add an additional 6.5 million

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2 dollars to expand the program. And we also hope that  
3 the client care coordinators are not vulnerable  
4 despite the sort of criticism that's come from Thrive  
5 NYC. Lastly and briefly, I'll just say that Gateway  
6 fully supports the house our future campaign to set  
7 aside 30,000 units of the Mayor's housing plan for  
8 homeless families and individuals and we support  
9 Intro 1211. And finally, we support the human service  
10 community's calls to address the chronic underfunding  
11 in their sector by investing 250 million dollars this  
12 year to fill the gap between their indirect costs and  
13 the contract reimbursement rates. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and I just  
15 want to thank the work that you guys do at Gateway  
16 Housing for providing an effective model to help  
17 transition people into permanent housing and I think  
18 it's something that we should be, you know  
19 replicating, you know all over the city so thank you.

20 BRENDAN CHENEY: Thank you.

21 REED VREELAND: Hello, thank you Chairs  
22 Levin and King for hearing our testimonies today. My  
23 name is Reed Vreeland and I'm with Housing Works, one  
24 of the largest HIV/AIDS... community-based HIV/AIDS  
25 services organizations in the city. I'm here today

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1  
2 to, to really thank the Council for the... ending the  
3 HIV/AIDS epidemic initiative that the Council has,  
4 has funded. Due to this initiative both at this... the,  
5 the Mayor and the city... the city's investments we've  
6 been able to decrease new HIV infections in New York  
7 City by 36 percent by... since 2013. So, that's a  
8 really considerable achievement. I'm here today to  
9 specifically talk about the HASA Healthcare  
10 Integration Pilot Project. So, as we know housing is  
11 healthcare especially with... for people with HIV and  
12 it's almost impossible to stay on antiretroviral  
13 treatment for HIV if you don't have a stable place to  
14 live. We have proposed and are in the middle of HASA  
15 Healthcare Integration Pilot Project and we hope for  
16 continued funding and support from the Council for  
17 this initiative. Despite current services, many HASA  
18 clients continue to face structural psychological  
19 barriers to effective care that can result in high  
20 utilization of healthcare services yet poor health  
21 outcomes. Since 2016, working groups composed of  
22 staff from HASA, New York City Department of Health  
23 and Mental Hygiene and Healthix and community-based  
24 organizations and health care providers have worked  
25 together to develop demonstration projects to improve

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2 outcomes and health opportunities of people living,  
3 living with HIV who are a part of HASA. I am... I look  
4 forward to future opportunities, but I do want to be  
5 here and say thank you on behalf of Housing Works and  
6 people with HIV for the Council's continued attention  
7 on how to continue to help people with HIV who need  
8 housing assistance.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Reed. I  
10 just want to say I, I apologize for not getting to  
11 ask questions about HASA during the DHS/HRA testimony  
12 because we were running late but we do plan on having  
13 a hearing in this Committee sometime hopefully before  
14 the summer on the HASA Demonstration Projects to see  
15 if we can get a clear update as to how the progress  
16 is and what's working and what's not working as well  
17 so... but we're looking forward to, to doing that and  
18 we'll be in touch with you and Housing Works.

19 REED VREELAND: Great, thank you very  
20 much Chair Levin. Also, I wanted to note that Housing  
21 Works does support the House our Future campaign  
22 request too.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Excellent, thank you.  
24 Thank you to this panel, thank you for all the work  
25 that you do. I look forward to continuing to work

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2 with you and, and your... and your organizations for  
3 many years to come so thank you. Next panel; Chelsea  
4 Goldinger, LGBT Center; Ariel Savranski, UJA  
5 Federation; Michelle Jackson, Human Services Council;  
6 Gregory Brander, United Neighborhood Houses;  
7 Catherine Trapani, Homeless Services United; Michelle  
8 Yanche, Good Shepherd Services; and Kristina Coleman,  
9 Children's Village. I think six... and I apologize to  
10 everybody who's name I did not call yet, we're doing  
11 this is a somewhat random fashion so... you know I, I  
12 appreciate everybody's patience with this annual  
13 marathon that we do here at the General Welfare  
14 Committee. Okay, whoever wants to begin.

15 MICHELLE JACKSON: Alright, I'll go  
16 first. Good afternoon, my name is Michelle Jackson,  
17 I'm the Deputy Executive Director for the Human  
18 Services Council. Thank you so much for providing me  
19 the opportunity to testify and for staying with us on  
20 the marathon day that happens every year. HSC  
21 represents 170 human services organizations, your  
22 very familiar with our work and familiar with the  
23 work of our providers who help over 2.5 million New  
24 Yorkers every year. This year I really want to focus  
25 on the gap between what the city funds for human

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services contracts and what providers can supplement with private philanthropic dollars. That gap has grown too large and are asks this year which you've heard a couple of people testify already is 250 million dollars for indirect funding. The nonprofit resiliency committee has put together an indirect manual that does not contain funding to actually pay nonprofits real indirect rates while, a not very sexy issue. What a lot of people testified about today and the questions that you had really do come down to how providers are paid for their work or not paid for their work and their ability to provide quality services. There's a lot of work that needs to be done in that area from program design, involving providers, we're seeing RFPs whether it's COMPASS and SONYC or caregiver RFPs that are coming out that don't fund the full cost and don't take a lot of the qualities that we see in the nonprofit resiliency committee put forward, they're not implementing them as we see new RFPs roll out so there are a number of issues. The one issue we know we can focus on this year is the indirect funding initiative. Providers need to be able to pay their staff, they need to be able to track outcomes, they need to be able to

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2 budget better, the city knows that when they pay  
3 providers they're not covering the real indirect  
4 expenses and that leads to some of the issues that  
5 we're talking about, about how providers can better  
6 serve people in our communities and make sure that  
7 the quality programs that New Yorkers deserve and  
8 that you're hearing from today are, are really  
9 implemented in the right way. So, thank you very  
10 much.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

12 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you, thank you  
13 Chair Levin and, and Chair King for the opportunity  
14 to testify. My name is Gregory Brender, I'm here on  
15 behalf of United Neighborhood Houses. Wow that was  
16 quick. We are New York City's federation of  
17 settlement houses and I wanted to talk today  
18 specifically about early childhood and the RFPs that  
19 are now coming out. Most of the issues or actually I  
20 think all of the issues that I'm going to talk about  
21 are things that this committee has been fighting for,  
22 for many years. DOE has now released two requested  
23 proposals to replace programs that are currently run  
24 through ACS under early learn, the birth to five RFP  
25 and the head start RFP. In both these RFPs we found

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2 five major issues that are so severe that many  
3 providers who have been longstanding providers are  
4 actually questioning whether they can apply or if  
5 they can apply to serve the number of children. The  
6 first of these is around the salary disparities,  
7 which I know you've heard about from... earlier from  
8 the folks in the union as well as the Daycare  
9 Council. Truly stark disparities that are leading to  
10 turnover in the programs. Secondly, it's the failure  
11 of these contracts which are eight-year contracts to  
12 include any provision for cost escalators. It's  
13 reasonable to expect that rent and other expenses  
14 would increase over eight years and there's not even  
15 a method with, within the RFP for future budgets to  
16 include that funding. Thirdly as Michelle mentioned  
17 these RFPs do not fund indirect costs. Fourth, the  
18 program brings back the pay for enrollment system  
19 which had actually been phased out by ACS, it started  
20 in the Bloomberg Administration over the objections  
21 of then Council Member De Blasio and phased out so  
22 it's been... it's really surprising and disappointing  
23 to see it return in the birth to five RFP. And  
24 finally, in the birth to five RFP they create a new  
25 distinction between program... the extended day

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2 programs between the pre-K hours and the hours that  
3 are not covered by Pre-K splitting them into what  
4 they're calling core and non-core hours. This, this  
5 goes away for a model of early childhood education  
6 that, that uses the understanding that children are  
7 learning all the time that there's not a separation  
8 between learning and recreation in early childhood.  
9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look  
10 forward to working with you on it.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

12 CHELSEA GOLDINGER: Hello, my name is  
13 Chelsea Goldinger and I'm the Manager of Government  
14 Relations at the LGBT Center, the largest center...  
15 LGBT center on the East coast and the second largest  
16 nationally. We've covered a lot of important content  
17 already and I can't thank the advocates enough, I  
18 wish they were still here. I just wanted to  
19 collaborate the attention to the disproportionate  
20 number of LGBTQ youth in the homeless population. An  
21 estimated 43 percent, yes 43, almost half of homeless  
22 youth identify as LGBT, LGBTQ and LGBTQ young adults  
23 have 120 percent higher risk of ultimately ended up...  
24 ending up homeless. Ones within the system, hopefully  
25 folks from ACS are still here, finding affirming care

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2 from providers and families it becomes even more  
3 challenging especially for... especially for those most  
4 vulnerable within our community, the transgender and  
5 gender nonconforming folks. So, often they end up  
6 kind of stuck between families because they can't  
7 find placement whether with the actual families or  
8 the case workers and staffers are just not trained at  
9 an affirming language. Secondly, at the center we  
10 don't actually have housing services but one thing we  
11 provide is what we call our LIFT program which aims  
12 to actually keep families together. We know that the  
13 best way to actually keep children out of the foster  
14 system and lead for the best future outcome is to  
15 help those families stay together so providing the  
16 direct counseling and support especially for LGBTQ  
17 youth who often face... actually have to leave their  
18 homes due to not welcoming environments from their  
19 families. So, we just urge the inclusion of that  
20 within whatever trainings ACS is working to include  
21 for those services. And the only other thing I did  
22 want to just point out we also do a youth advocacy  
23 program which again this is to help connect folks  
24 who've been within the system and helping with mental

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1  
2 health support afterwards. So, I have 18 seconds so  
3 yes, affirming training, next.

4           ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Good evening, my name  
5 is Ariel Savransky, I'm an Advocacy and Policy  
6 Advisor at UJA Federation. Thank you for the  
7 opportunity to testify and for holding this hearing  
8 today. So, my colleagues Michelle and Gregory did a  
9 pretty good job of summing up the concerns of the  
10 human services sector so I'm just going to echo  
11 everything they said and highlight just a few other  
12 things from our testimony. So, I'd just like to  
13 discuss the importance of investing in the Elie  
14 Weisel Holocaust survivor initiative. I know the  
15 Council has been very supportive over the past few  
16 years and we really appreciate that support. It's  
17 essential that we continue to invest in this program.  
18 Many of our nonprofit partners provide services such  
19 as case management services, personal care and  
20 assistance, legal services, entitlement counseling  
21 and whole host of other services that are really  
22 important to this population and their specialized  
23 needs. So, we would just request that we increase  
24 funding by 500,000 dollars to four million in FY 20.  
25 And then I would just like to highlight the

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2 importance of increasing access to meals especially  
3 Kosher meals. There are over 500,000 people living in  
4 poorer and near poorer Jewish households in the  
5 greater metropolitan area. The high cost of a kosher  
6 meal presents a unique challenge for many of our  
7 agencies that work with this population, SNAP  
8 benefits often run out after the third week of the  
9 month for a majority of people who live in New York  
10 City it happens even earlier in the month for those  
11 who keep kosher because of the high cost kosher food.  
12 So, its essential that the city invest resources in  
13 ensuring that food pantries are equipped with enough  
14 food to serve their clients especially culturally  
15 competent foods such as kosher and halal. We've also  
16 supportive of other initiatives meant to increase the  
17 access to meals throughout the city including  
18 increased investment for EFAP, congregate and home  
19 delivered meals for, for seniors, investment in  
20 expanding the anti-hunger safety net and increasing  
21 access to kosher and halal school meals. Thank you  
22 for the opportunity to testify and I'd be happy to  
23 answer any questions.

24 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Hi, good evening  
25 Chair Levin and Chair King. I'm Catherine Trapani,

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1  
2 I'm the Executive Director of Homeless Services  
3 United. [bell] Actually I've run out of time pretty  
4 early. I'm going to speak on a couple of different  
5 areas of the budget. The agency represents the  
6 nonprofit providers of both preventions so under the  
7 HRA umbrella as well as shelter and after care on the  
8 DHS side. So, before I get into the specifics, I want  
9 to echo certainly we're all human services providers  
10 and I echo the request for increases to the indirect  
11 rate so that the full operations of our program could  
12 be funded. On the prevention side I want to talk a  
13 little bit about rental assistance and the vouchers.  
14 The, the, the CBOs that do FEPS applications for  
15 persons living in the community used to be handled by  
16 the state, they were transferred over to the city.  
17 The city is now considering eliminating that three  
18 million dollar program where the CBOs facilitate  
19 applications for rental assistance, they do much more  
20 than just push paper and applications, they actually  
21 have a tremendous role in preserving housing for  
22 people in our communities so we would urge HRA to  
23 continue funding the FEPS CBOs. We also would urge  
24 the city to finally extend rental assistance  
25 eligibility to DYCD shelter, shelter residents, I

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know you know this Chair Levin that has not been explicit in the budget and we would also request enhanced support for the all-important walk throughs. We heard from families the devastating consequences when walk throughs are not fully funded and people aren't held accountable for that, the nonprofits that are doing those walk throughs need the resources to do them correctly, to dedicate staff time so we need enhancements on the prevention and on the shelter side to do those walk throughs. I also want to touch briefly on services in shelter, you mentioned earlier when you were questioning Commissioner Banks that there are not social workers for children and families in hotels, we would like to see client care coordinators into the Thrive initiative assigned for families with children shelters. We would also like to see the bridging the gap social workers funded and the schools for homes children. So, all of these speak to wellness for children and families and then the, the last thing I want to say is that for the street solutions portfolio we would really like to see a rate adjustment because those providers were left out of the model budget and I think that doesn't get talked about enough that drop ins and safe havens

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2 have not seen any rate increases since the inception  
3 of those programs. And in addition, we need  
4 assistance for opioid treatment and those programs  
5 with those... with those clients so, clearly have a lot  
6 to say, you have my written testimony with all the  
7 different program areas, but I just want to thank you  
8 for your advocacy.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And just with the  
10 DYCD population, I thought that was supposed to  
11 happen by now...

12 CATHERINE TRAPANI: It was supposed to  
13 happen about two, two to three years ago, when was  
14 the 90-day review, that was one of the initiatives  
15 so... [cross-talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, 2015... [cross-  
17 talk]

18 CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...we've been waiting,  
19 yeah, for every iteration of the program and... [cross-  
20 talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right... [cross-  
22 talk]

23 CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...I'm becoming  
24 increasingly concerned that it's a savings initiative  
25 to delay the implementation.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, I mean I saw in  
3 the new... the new rules for the... you know for the new...  
4 the new program it allows... [cross-talk]

5 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Right... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for, for a referral  
7 from DYCD but I don't know whether it actually...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 CATHERINE TRAPANI: It... yeah, I'm told  
10 they're close... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...facilitates such a  
12 thing... [cross-talk]

13 CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...I'm told they're  
14 close so that was November 2018, I've been... [cross-  
15 talk]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

17 CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...talking with DYCD, I  
18 know the intent to, to, to do this and that they  
19 almost have regulations but we're, we're all still  
20 waiting.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, really  
22 frustrating, totally unacceptable at this point so...

23 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Right.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

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KRISTINA COLEMAN: Hi, how you doing? My name is Kristina Coleman, I'm with Children's Village, I've been there about ten years, I'm currently the Program Manager over the Way to Success Program, which is a program that supports children aging out of care. We also assist children with that transition into adulthood, we are privately funded so money is really important for us to do the work that we are doing. Also, we focus on three essentials in the program which is education, employment and financial literacy. We have some different things that we do because the children... for the children the program is optional so they are not required to be in it but they do come on their own, we do that through encouraging them by coming through doing workshops, we offer incentives. One of the incentives that we do offer is we do a matched account and what that is, is we encourage our kids to save their own money and we will match up to 500 dollars a year for each kid. Also, what we do we offer workshops and we also do a lot of... a lot of our work with credible messengers as far as the mentoring component of it to keep our kids engaged. I'm just going to give you some of the statistics that we do have right now. We have about

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2 80... over 80 percent of our youth that are currently  
3 in school are registered with some type of education  
4 program, we have 100 percent of our kids that  
5 currently have stable housing and about 92 percent of  
6 our kids that are employed through our program so..  
7 the funding is really important for us.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sounds successful.

9 KRISTINA COLEMAN: It is very successful.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's perhaps  
11 something that we should be expanding, congratulation  
12 Kristina... [cross-talk]

13 KRISTINA COLEMAN: Thank you... [cross-  
14 talk]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...look forward to  
16 continuing to work with you on that. We should be  
17 funding it by the city... [cross-talk]

18 KRISTINA COLEMAN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for sure,  
20 supplementing your private funding.

21 KRISTINA COLEMAN: Yes, you should.

22 MICHELLE YANCHE: Hi, Michelle Yanche,  
23 Associate Executive Director of Good Shepherd  
24 Services, we're a member of human services council so  
25 I want to underscore what Michelle said about the

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2 need for rightsizing our contracts and a particular  
3 funding indirect and I also want to join with my  
4 colleague Gregory as a member of the Campaign for  
5 Children and lending our voice for the need for  
6 salary parity in early childhood. I won't be reading  
7 my testimony, but I want to use my time to underscore  
8 two and focus on two areas in foster care. One.. the  
9 first is the crisis in residential care and the  
10 second is to lend our voice and support of the need  
11 to fund Fair Futures and expand the incredible model  
12 that is having such great success with young people.  
13 First on residential care, the recent media coverage  
14 of the Children's Center shined a spotlight on what  
15 has been a really ongoing crisis. Councilman Levin at  
16 your budget roundtable you may remember me talking  
17 about our staff who are under the most incredible  
18 stress dealing with our most traumatized youth and  
19 who are the most likely to be physically assaulted at  
20 work. These are the same young people that we're...  
21 that we're talking about here. We of course, are in  
22 full support of addressing the crisis at the  
23 Children's Center but we want to underscore that the  
24 crisis is, is not limited to the walls of the  
25 Children's Center it's also affecting our programs

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and what we need is a systemic solution and a systemic investment to make sure that we can take care of these young people wherever they are. Also, to make sure that the investment can't be one sided on the ACS side because what then happens is that sucking sound of our staff going to ACS which is our own child welfare foster care version of salary parody, we need to make sure that the providers can also fund staff, staff and have services and the kind of model that will enable us to be successful for these young people, also so that we can accept more of the young people that need to leave the Children's Center and come to us. We have lost a lot of capacity because we've lost staff and I know many other colleagues will be saying a lot about Fair Futures we just want to say that when, when a young person is taken away from their family we together with you, the providers and the city of New York serve in local parentis and we need to be fulfilling that responsibility both to keep our young people safe and secure when they're with us and to launch them successfully into their futures the way that we do as parents with our own children. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, couldn't  
3 have said it better myself, thank you. I want to  
4 thank all of you for the amazing work that you do day  
5 in and day out on the front lines helping and  
6 advocating and supporting, you know New Yorkers in  
7 need and, and I just want to thank you for all that  
8 great work and your organizations as well. Thank you.

9 MICHELLE YANCHE: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Ditto.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to let  
12 everybody know that there is at six p.m. scheduled to  
13 be a charter revision commission hearing in the  
14 chambers so I think we might have to move next door  
15 if we, we go past six but just right there into the  
16 Committee Room. Okay, next panel Georgia Boothe,  
17 Children's Aid; Danielle Fuller, Forestdale; Dawn  
18 O'Toole, Forestdale; Dawn Saffayeh, HeartShare St.  
19 Vincent's; Jess Dannhauser, Graham Windham; and Raysa  
20 Rodriguez, Citizens Committee for Children.

21 [off mic dialogue]

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry and one more  
23 Dareth Ogle.

24 DANIELLE BROWN FULLER: Alright, thank  
25 you honorable Council, ACS leadership, staff and

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2 esteemed guests. My name is Danielle Brown Fuller,  
3 and I am Director of Youth Development at Forestdale,  
4 a family service organization out of Queens. I am  
5 here today to ask for your support for the Fair  
6 Futures initiative to make sure all young people in  
7 care are given the supports they need to succeed and  
8 I'm also here with a message, together we can do  
9 this. Since 1854, when Forestdale was founded, we  
10 have helped tens of thousands of youth, adolescents  
11 gain skills that will serve them long after they  
12 leave the child welfare system. Samantha, not her  
13 real name, after being separated from her family in  
14 foster care, struggled with trusting people, sharing  
15 her feelings, she needed what any young person  
16 needed, a safe home, education, healthcare among  
17 other things. In working with our life coach, she has  
18 been able to go back to college and she's studying  
19 psychology, she rents an apartment with her... near her  
20 sister, she has full medical coverage, but the  
21 statistics are staggering for other youth. There's  
22 joblessness, homelessness, pregnancy but there is  
23 good news, we have discovered what works with the  
24 right support, a coach, education, career services  
25 kids can thrive and that is what Fair Futures is

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2 about. Together we can do this. New York can be the  
3 first state to offer comprehensive support for youth  
4 ages 15 to 26 and in doing so change the system and  
5 thousands of lives in the process. Thank you for your  
6 time and your consideration.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

8 RAYSA RODRIGUEZ: Hi, good evening. Thank  
9 you, Chair Levin and Chair King, for the opportunity  
10 to testify. My name is Raysa Rodriguez, I'm the  
11 Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy  
12 at Citizens Committee for Children. COMMITTEE CLERK  
13 is an independent multi issue child advocacy  
14 organization. You have my testimony, COMMITTEE CLERK  
15 has done a comprehensive budget analysis or analysis  
16 on the impact of the preliminary budget which I have  
17 attached to the... to the testimony and I won't read my  
18 entire testimony but I'll, I'll highlight or focus on  
19 two key areas; early childhood education and family  
20 homelessness. In the area of early education I will  
21 echo what many of my colleagues have already said and  
22 what Chair Levin has already said as well earlier in  
23 the day regarding the significance of this time  
24 really to bring about much needed change to the early  
25 childhood system by ensuring, ensuring salary parity.

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I don't have to tell you the impact this is having on programs but there is a real challenge to attract and retain... and retain quality teachers, right and so if want equity in education we have to start early on and most of our early childhood UPK seats are in CBOs. In the area of family homelessness, I want to echo again the key critical services that are needed for homeless students. We fully support the bridging the gap initiative to place social workers in schools with high concentrations of homeless students. This budget fails to make significant investments in that area and we know that there are a large number of schools that still have no social workers with a high number of homeless students and so we urge the Council to, to continue its, its relentless push to make sure that this funding is made available to restore the 13.9 and also expand to reach the 100 which was last year's goal. I also... and with two other points, thank you Chair Levin for bringing greater attention on the need of children in... that are staying in hotels. While the city is, is phasing out hotels as a temporary placement there still continues to be a lot of children there that as you mentioned earlier in the day don't have access to

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2 much needed services so please continue to shed a  
3 light on that and then lastly, the need for  
4 prevention. We know, we continue to hear home base is  
5 a resource for communities, but we know that its not  
6 doing all that it can to prevent entry into shelters.  
7 Thank you.

8 JESS DANNHAUSER: Good evening Chair  
9 King, good evening Chair Levin, thank you for having  
10 us here today. I'm Jess Dannhauser, the president and  
11 CEO of Graham Windham. You've heard a lot about Fair  
12 Futures already, you're going to hear a little bit  
13 more but I, I want to echo something you said earlier  
14 Chair King that we can decide to do something about  
15 this now or our young people are going to end up in  
16 other systems. We've been talking about this issue  
17 forever. I was in graduate school in 2003 and I was  
18 studying this, I've been working in this city in and  
19 around these issues for 15 years and we've been  
20 talking about it and talking about it now is the time  
21 to do something. It seems like an awfully noisy time  
22 in our system, lots of new ideas, lots of great  
23 ideas, a lot of priorities but we cannot go another  
24 year and let down our kids again, we have to see them  
25 through one of the hardest transitions of their life.

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2 Kids who have families with resources don't have to  
3 make the choices our kids have to make, and I just  
4 appreciate your leadership on this issue, I  
5 appreciate you starting the morning and finishing  
6 your day on this issue Chair Levin. ACS says the  
7 right things, they are committed to these kids,  
8 they've done a lot of good things but we can't get  
9 away from the reality that only about 12 percent of  
10 the kids are getting this type of service post-foster  
11 care because philanthropy has stepped up its time for  
12 the city to step up and show the country how this can  
13 be done well, you know the stats at Graham Windham we  
14 started the program five years ago, we're coaching  
15 400 kids now, 92 percent of the kids who reach aging  
16 out have graduated from high school, it is doable. We  
17 have to stop blaming the kids, we act like those  
18 stats are their fault, it's not, it's the adults and  
19 I just want to ask you to try to clear out the noise  
20 and once and for all help us compel the city to do  
21 something by these kids. Thank you very much.

22 DAWN SAFFAYEH: Good afternoon Chair  
23 Levin and Chair King, little, little more about Fair  
24 Futures here. So, I'm Dawn Saffayeh, I'm the  
25 Executive Director at HeartShare St. Vincent's, we're

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1  
2 a... we're a nonprofit located in downtown Brooklyn. We  
3 serve over 6,000 New Yorkers every year, 600 of them  
4 in foster care and our goal is to keep every child  
5 safe and with a loving family but that's now all we  
6 try... strive to do. Removing a child from their  
7 families is the most extreme event that can ever  
8 happen in their lives, often times due to this loss  
9 and the pain associated with missing their parents  
10 and adjusting a new home youth fall behind in school  
11 and cannot catch up. The current foster care system  
12 is primarily based around a case planner model, case  
13 planners are required to work with all parties in the  
14 system; judges, attorneys, birth parents, foster  
15 parents, the young person too to work towards  
16 permanency, a permanent home. This can take months,  
17 years or for some children never happens and there is  
18 no one in the system that is just focusing on the  
19 needs of that young person. So, this is especially  
20 problematic for teens and young adults who have  
21 limited help to catch up in school and navigate  
22 middle and high school. We hear from young people  
23 that they are often forgotten by this system when  
24 they become a teenager, we heard that from Gabby this  
25 morning at our rally and this is evidenced in the

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2 data. Only 22 percent of 700 youth who age out of the  
3 foster care system every year have a high school or  
4 high school equivalency degree. We think this is  
5 shameful, we know that we can do better, we know that  
6 our kids can do it with just a little bit of support,  
7 a very small investment by the city that will pay  
8 dividends, it's not only the... morally the right thing  
9 to do it will pay dividends for the city financials.  
10 So, I'm going to leave it to Dareth to, to talk more,  
11 we have one more youth speaker.

12 DARETH OGLE: Hi, good evening Chair  
13 Levin, Chair King, members of the Committee on  
14 General Welfare and Juvenile Justice. My name is  
15 Dareth Ogle, I'm here to testify on behalf of the  
16 Fair Futures initiative campaign and the American  
17 dream program of HeartShare St. Vincent's. I'm 22  
18 years old and have recently discharged out of foster  
19 care. I entered foster care at two and a half years  
20 of age and remained in foster care for 20 years. I've  
21 been in 25 plus foster homes and about half of that  
22 is how many schools I've been in. At times I felt  
23 very misfortunate and discouraged in regard to my  
24 academic future, however, I later realized the  
25 advantages of being in care in my adolescence when I

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1  
2 entered college in 2014. I was introduced to the  
3 American Dream program aimed to help youth to  
4 successfully navigate through their higher education  
5 experience. I then was assigned a coach who would  
6 assist in that navigation. Since then I've learned a  
7 great deal. Our coaches they play an invaluable role  
8 in foster youth academic pursuits as they provide  
9 academic, moral and base, baselined emotional support  
10 while in school and thereafter. Coaches in the  
11 American Dream program act as guardrails and  
12 advocates. My coach like many other coaches often  
13 serve as a liaison between executive personnel and  
14 students. Having a coach apart from my case planning  
15 team has made a great difference in my experience of  
16 being in... being a foster youth in higher education.  
17 HeartShare St. Vincent's... HeartShare, HeartShare St.  
18 Vincent coaches assure that students receive optimal  
19 support and resources for their financial and  
20 emotional needs. In my personal experience the  
21 support from the Vice President of the American Dream  
22 program down to the coaches have, have always  
23 inspired me to keep going whether it was a holiday  
24 card containing motivational quotes or a hand knitted  
25 scarf throughout the winter, those small gestures are

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2 what made it bearable to push through in the most  
3 challenging moments of doubt and confusion, sorry.  
4 Coaches ensure... [cross-talk]

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can keep going..  
6 [cross-talk]

7 DARETH OGLE: ...that should we need  
8 anything that they're an email, text or telephone  
9 call away. As a result, May of 2018 I graduated  
10 University at Albany with a Bachelor of Arts.

11 [applause]

12 DARETH OGLE: Thank you. Moving forward,  
13 foster youth need to know that there are measures and  
14 resources in place that are intended to continue  
15 investing in the... in their academic success. Foster  
16 youth also need to know that there are people in  
17 their government who want to see them succeed and  
18 will continue to provide opportunities to, to do just  
19 that. Programs like the American Dream... like the  
20 American Dream allow foster youth that, that chance  
21 as well as the opportunity to break many generational  
22 cycles of formerly uneducated working-class families.  
23 Allocating the proper resources and funding for  
24 programs relative to academic success of foster youth  
25 is vital to society as well as the upholding of the

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2 mission and values of human service organizations  
3 throughout New York State. Thank you for allowing me  
4 the opportunity to testify before you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
6 thank you.

7 GEORGIA BOOTHE: My name is Georgia  
8 Boothe and I'm the Vice President for Child Welfare  
9 at the Children's Aid Society and I am here today..  
10 you have my testimony so I'm not going to read it. I  
11 want to just highlight a few things in the budget  
12 that I think are important you... important that you've  
13 heard from my colleagues today, you were at the, the  
14 rally, thank you very much for being there and for  
15 having us here today Chair Levin and Chair King. To  
16 talk about Fair Futures, it... at Children's Aid we  
17 have our next generation center in the Bronx in the  
18 South Bronx and we, we work with young people that  
19 are aging out of the foster care system to make sure  
20 they continue their educational goals, that they hold  
21 on to the housing that we're able to, to get for  
22 them, that they see... you know that they see that they  
23 can, you know get a job and keep a job and we provide  
24 training and internships with the support of a lot of  
25 private funders to allow us to do that and so young

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1  
2 people have that opportunity. As you heard from my  
3 colleagues it's a small investment, we need to be  
4 able to do this to help young people, you know get on  
5 their feet and, and, and move forward. I also want to  
6 just give a, a quick example of the importance of,  
7 you know funding our nonprofits appropriately. Our  
8 homemaker program has been around since 1933, started  
9 in partnership with Eleanor Roosevelt and the Junior  
10 League and we've been providing support to families  
11 in their homes helping them to take care of their  
12 little children and preventing them from ending up in  
13 foster care. We've not had a COLA increase in that  
14 funding since 2011, actually we had one COLA  
15 increase, since 2011 and we're at the point now where  
16 every year we're subsidizing a 300,000 dollar deficit  
17 on that contract because it's not appropriately  
18 funded and we're at the point as a nonprofit as  
19 you've heard through the human service council that  
20 we can't continue to operate these contracts without  
21 the support and resources that we need and so, you  
22 know that's an important thing to mention and just  
23 one final point that I want to make. I know ACS we're  
24 all of us going through the RFP process for our  
25 preventative programs, we know preventative programs

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2 work, you've heard about that in terms of the lower  
3 amount of kids coming into foster care and how many  
4 families we're, we're supporting as we, we work to  
5 implement family first at the federal level in New  
6 York City. One of the things I, I just want to  
7 highlight as we're implanting more evidence-based  
8 models into our preventative portfolio is the need  
9 for support for our child welfare work, workforce.  
10 You've heard about parody in, in, in child care and  
11 in other areas, this is desperately needed in our  
12 child welfare workforce, we can't keep kids safe, we  
13 can't do the work that we need to do if we don't have  
14 the right staff that's trained and that's being  
15 compensated well and so as we're moving through this  
16 process I would ask you all to keep that in mind in  
17 terms of making sure that these contracts and the  
18 budget models support nonprofits to pay our staff  
19 well so we can do the work that's needed for the  
20 city. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Yes, now  
22 I... it's as if we're playing a game of chicken with,  
23 with the not for profits sector that we entirely rely  
24 on to deliver services by perpetually underfunding  
25 the contracts and daring not for profits not to bid

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on the RFPs and I think that that's shameful and I think that we need to stop that and fully fund these contracts and fully fund our not for profits sector because if we were to try to rely on ourselves as a city government to deliver services we would never be able to do it and you have the expertise and, and the passion and the, the ties to the community, all of these agencies to do it and, and we rely on you so I want to thank you and, and I want to thank you very much for your amazing testimony and for, for being here today and for continuing to advocate, thank you very much. So, we actually have to move over now because they have to prepare this room for, for the charter revision, they, they didn't think that we could go this long but we proved them wrong so thanks everybody for your patience and we'll just move over and it'll just a couple minutes.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

April 28, 2019