

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.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

ANDY L. KING
Co-Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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MARK TREYGER

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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

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[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

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

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

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

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

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be more reliably and expeditiously responsive to questions from the Council on matters relating to budget and program operations. Before I welcome the Commissioner and the administrators and staff, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are here today; Council Members Adrienne Adams and Barry Grodenchik of Queens and Council Member Antonio Reynoso of Brooklyn. I'd also like to thank the General Welfare Committee Staff for their amazingly hard work in, in preparing for today's hearing and providing the Council Members with... and the public with information that is essential for our understanding of how these agencies operate and, and there, their work is really incredible and I want to thank them Dohini Sompura, Unit Head; Regina Poreda Ryan our Deputy Finance Director; Julia Haramis our Finance Analyst, Aminta Kilowan, Senior Counsel and Tonya Cyrus and Crystal Pond, Senior Policy Analysts for putting this hearing together, again really amazing work, thank you. I'd also like to thank my Chief of Staff Jonathon Boucher and my Legislative Director Elizabeth Adams and now Commissioner Banks our counsel will swear you in and anyone that is

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testifying today so if you could all raise your hands please.

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

STEVEN BANKS: Yes.

GRACE BONILLA: I do.

COMMITTEE CLERK: You may begin.

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

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

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

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cameras for our Peace Officers, both of which we described in our testimony last month, and 106 million for the Fair Fares program in FY 20 that we will discuss today. As the Mayor announced when the FY 20 Preliminary Budget was released last month, we are working with the Office of Management and Budget to develop savings for the FY 20 Executive Budget. These savings will build on efficiencies that we have already achieved over the last five years. For example, during my first year at HRA, we implemented a plan to repurpose more than 500 central administrative staff lines to enhance the provision of front-line client services. Let me talk first about reforming social services policies and access to benefits. Over the past five years, we have made a number of significant reforms to transform the client experience that are supported in the FY 20 Preliminary Budget. Consider, for example, these policies we have changed to benefit our clients; clients used to have to "work off" their benefits in the Work Experience Program or WEP at City and not-for-profit agencies, we eliminated the WEP program and replaced it with new opportunities in subsidized 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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unnecessary office visits, clients can now submit recertification questionnaires online, and submit documents from a smartphone through the ACOMMITTEE CLERKES HRA the ACOMMITTEE CLERKES HRA portal, clients can open an account to gain access to over 100 case-specific points of information for Cash Assistance and SNAP in real-time, including application and case statuses, upcoming appointments, account balances, documents requested for eligibility determinations and clients can make changes to contact information, view eligibility notices electronically, request a budget letter, and opt into text message and email alerts all designed to avoid unnecessary visits to our offices. Clients used to be subjected to churning due to unnecessary case closings which required clients to request State fair hearings to reopen their case, we put in place new protocols to prevent unnecessary case closings, and State hearing challenges decreased by more than 47 percent as a result, clients have access to the benefits they need, and the City is no longer subject to a potential 10 million dollar annual State financial penalty for unnecessary hearings. To prevent both unnecessary case closings and

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

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

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

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

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years for the first time in a decade; doubling down on preventing homelessness, evictions are down 37 percent since 2013; providing more permanent housing, enabling more than 109,000 children and adults to move out of shelter or avoid shelter altogether; bringing people off the streets and out of the subways, since HOME-STAT began in April 2016, our street teams have helped more than 2,000 people come off the streets and subways and remain off; and transforming the City's approach to shelter, closing more than 180 substandard shelter sites and siting 42 new borough-based shelters to offer help as close as possible to the anchors of life like jobs, schools, health care, houses of worship and family and support networks. Funding in the FY 20 Preliminary Budget will support these four key pillars of the Mayor's Turning the Tide plan that was released just two, two years ago with these results so far; the first pillar a prevention first approach, progress; evictions down 37 percent. We have provided emergency rent arrears benefits to over 50,000 households each fiscal year since FY 15, helping rent-burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in their homes. We have 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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shelter or avoid shelter altogether since 2014, with the majority exiting shelter into housing. Third pillar; transforming the approach to providing shelter, progress; shrinking DHS's shelter footprint by nearly 30 percent. Our plan calls for shrinking the DHS shelter footprint by 45 percent by ending the use of 360 "cluster" shelter and commercial hotel locations citywide while opening a smaller number of 90 borough-based shelters across the five boroughs. Through these strategies, in just two years we'll reduced the shelter footprint by nearly 30 percent citywide, getting out of more than 180 shelter sites that did not meet our standards, including already ending use of 70 percent of the units in the Giuliani-era cluster program and to help us do so, earlier this month we announced the conversion of cluster units to permanent housing in 17 buildings that will enable 1,200 homeless children and adults to be permanently housed with rent-stabilized leases and upgraded apartment conditions in buildings that will be owned by reputable nonprofit housing groups. As we phase out the old haphazard, band-aid approach to providing shelter that built up over the past 40 years, we have sited 42 new high-quality borough-

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much Commissioner and I want to acknowledge Council Member Ben Kallos who is here as well. So, I might jump around for a little bit, so I apologize for that but being that we have both HRA and DHS here that's going 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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issues that arose in this first report as we go forward with future reports.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...was the preliminary budget.

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: I don't think we do.

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

STEVEN BANKS: Yep.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

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

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

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

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registration of contracts, we'll come to amendments in a moment, for FY 19... FY 19 98 percent of the FY 19 contracts are registered, there were three... I'm, I'm sorry, there... 98 percent of the FY 19 contracts for DHS are registered and active, there are six outstanding FY 19 contracts three of which are registered and pending provider budget submissions and three of which are pending registration. For HRA 90 percent of the contracts are registered, there are nine outstanding legal services contracts that are currently at the financial control board and we expect to be able to move those through and I think that addresses the issue that first confronted us when we integrated the agencies regarding the simple registration of contracts period. In terms of model budgeting, there are currently... let me... there are 126 contracts that needed to be negotiated, they were subject to the model budget process, 104 of the providers submitted the information that we needed on time or less than six months late, 22 providers submitted them over six months late or never submitted them at all. Of the 104 that we've got timely materials... timely budget materials on, 63 of 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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sorry, 53, I did the math wrong I apologize... [cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: ...back from that in terms

of making the commitment that the Mayor made and that we are committed to, to achieve and the Comptroller's been very helpful in this process, we expect to get the contracts we can to the Comptroller in a timely fashion and each one of them is on a path to get there but again I want to go back and reiterate what I said at the beginning of, of this series of questions, we have registered contracts that are active and paying providers, the model budget process is a process about giving providers more money than they have gotten previously because of a determination that we have made that we think that a greater investment in our providers will be better for the clients and better for the providers. I think sometimes when this topic is talked about it's talked about as if there's no money being paid, that I think does a disservice to the providers and a disservice to the process. Having said that, we're very focused on the second part of the process which is completing the amendments so that we can increase the value of the contracts for the providers having made a judgement that we think it's in our client's interest

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Good morning.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Good to see you as always. Commissioner it bothers me that we are... the Mayor has talked about three quarters of a billion dollars in a PEG, a program to eliminate the gap and in your testimony today which went on for seven pages and I know it's a very large... you have a large bailiwick there is exactly two sentences about how you plan on bringing efficiencies out of budget that runs over ten billion dollars and I was hoping that we could hear more from you because as the Chair has said it is very difficult for us to do our jobs for oversight of this enormous agency without having compelling information that we can act upon and I don't know if there's anything more you can tell us this morning but I would appreciate some of your insight into that?

STEVEN BANKS: Sure, I think what's important to understand about our budget at HRA in particular is that most of the budget is actually made up of mandated entitlements for clients so Medicaid is the largest part of our expenditures, cash assistance benefits, food... and other... and other benefits if you look at our, our pie chart most of what our budget is, is actual direct mandated

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I, I

appreciate what's happened in the past, I'm worried about what's going to happen tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day.

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Hopefully not.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Thank you...

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
Commissioner.

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay, thank
you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Council Member Adams.

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

STEVEN BANKS: How are you today?

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

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STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: But, but I answer that question?

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

STEVEN BANKS: Okay...

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Can... may, may I...

[cross-talk]

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If I may

interject.

STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: So, we're very concerned with quality control, it's the reason why we've had success with 2,000 human beings and we don't use the metric of bringing you off the street if you're going to go back on, it's off the street to remain off the street, I'd be interested and we'll have someone follow up with you or your staff about those particular facts so we can see what went wrong and make sure that we can deliver on our every day work to bring people in off the streets. You asked me a number of other questions about housing, I know there's an HPD hearing on Friday in which they testified with regard to the budget, I'm going to defer to, to their testimony regarding their funding 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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STEVEN BANKS: If you can identify a site to open we will be able to proceed, I think there's a misunderstanding a little bit about how shelters open, shelters operate through reimbursement particularly families with children shelters, reimbursement from the state and the federal government that would be jeopardized by the 125 million dollar cut that I raised earlier we'd be getting only a 90 percent reimbursement rather than 100 percent reimbursement so I want to just reiterate again the point I made earlier we have a PEG coming at us from Albany in the next couple of days and I want to make sure all hands are on deck to, to help us with that.

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: We're certainly in discussions with OMB about that 50 million dollar cut but I want to encourage you particularly with your former colleagues in Albany to focus on the 125 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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colleagues in Albany about the 125 that may be coming down the pipeline and if we're going to get progressive on the issue let's talk about a looming recession that's going to slow the economy down where we're all going to have a world of trouble ahead of us but on the 50 million dollar PEG cuts that your agency is facing, have you... can you give us any insight on where that will take place?

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: 93-billion-dollar budget, that's about four billion dollars more than last years budget and yet we're looking at cuts and we're about 125 million that's beside the point. A 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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STEVEN BANKS: Right, I agree that's why we think it's so important to get the Krueger Havesi bill passed which would give us the ability to pay additional rental assistance to people to help them stay in their homes and avoid evictions, I agree with that.

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

STEVEN BANKS: I'm sorry?

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

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

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

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

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

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1
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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agency and I appreciate that you're making a general statement not specifically to our agency we have a potential state cut of 125 million dollars that we are fighting to prevent depending on the impact of that we then have to deal with a 50 million dollar cut and so we have a lot of... a lot of work to do to prevent the 125 million dollar cut from happening... [cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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STEVEN BANKS: I mean part of the challenge here is that Medicaid in our budget is, is exempt, that's part of the process and I think the other part of the process is that we have already... had already imposed limited hiring in parts of our agency previously as part of other efficiencies that we were seeking so I think for each agency they're in different places. For our agency... our budget as I had testified a little bit earlier is not discretionary funding its entitlement funding and we had been implementing staffing... we've been implementing controls in filling positions previously and so I think from a conversation about what to... what to impose for a PEG it took into account the fact that we had already been exercising position control.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, actually that's... I just want to follow up with one quick question here, I have heard that there's a, a hiring freeze for eligibility specialists in HRA, is that true?

STEVEN BANKS: There's a citywide hiring freeze.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Citywide hiring freeze... [cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: 1,500 in what
period?

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

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: 1,500 households?

STEVEN BANKS: Households, right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: I understood what you meant.

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

STEVEN BANKS: Statute.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Which, which contracts in particular?

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...richer?

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

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

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

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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay, let's
move on... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: ...I'm just going to say...
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...I... it's the
same question as we discussed last year...

STEVEN BANKS: Uh-huh...

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...at this exact
same time that the legal service providers are in the
same shoes as the human service providers and they're
just routinely being underfunded. Lastly, I noted in
the budget that implicit bias mitigation is in the
budget for 1.3 million growing to 2.9 million, is
there any jeopardy those... that money will be pegged
away?

STEVEN BANKS: I mean I know I committed
to do those things under oath to address a very
serious situation and just, you know for the record
for body worn cameras its... 300,000 is in our fiscal
year 19 budget, it's a one time expenditure and then
in order to maintain the operation of body worn
cameras for our peace officers it's 54,000 dollars
that's, that's in the... in the preliminary budget
plan, for implicit bias it's a million dollars in our

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: How are you?

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: On November 17th,
2018 my legislation to provide families with, with
free diapers, Intro 0380-2018 was enacted. It is now
Local Law 182 of 2018 and it was supposed to go into
effect last week, but the rollout instead has been
delayed and there has been little communication with
providers and parents. As you know many families in
our city struggle to afford diapers and this is
unacceptable because diapers are a basic need. Local
Law 182 of 2018 will require the city to make
available a supply of diapers and baby wipes
sufficient to meet the needs of residents and
recipients of subsidized child care centers, family
justice centers, Department of Education life
programs and city operated domestic violence shelters
and homeless shelters. How are ACS, DHS, DSS, DSS
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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making sure the communication is right for the families so that they know that which we've been funding is available to them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: I knew you would.

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, thank you Chair.

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: So, first of all thank you
for all the important work you're doing in your
district and citywide, you've been a supporter of
what we are trying to do and I appreciate that,
sometimes I know it's challenging, you know from our
agency's point of view we've got a very complex and
broad mission and I know that HPD is very focused on
what they have been charged to do in the city. For us
they've been helpful, for example helping us gain
access to 421-A units and we've gotten about 600
families moved out of our shelters, households moved
out of our shelters into those units that was
something that didn't exist before, that's helping
us. HPD has been helpful to us in our efforts to
convert clusters so, you know we have a large
mission, they have a large mission and they've been
helpful to us. I'm cognizant that there are larger
issues involved here and that you and I seek Council
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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to ask a question about cluster which you brought up
because... [cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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landlord could take out of rent stabilization through all of the gaps that you and I both know in state law through major capital improvements and everything.

So, by financing this transaction we have preserved the permanent affordability of these units in a very different situation than someone in the market place buying the units at these median prices even though our payment for the unit is about the same and as you say we have the additional cost of renovations but its apples to oranges a little bit because the landlord could have sold this building with 460 vacant units and therefore the purchase price would have been effected by selling a building that's rent stabilized with 468 vacant units. The appraiser was done... was conducted by a law department appraiser that... [cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you

Chair, good afternoon Commissioner. First, I want to...

I want to thank you and your team, this last year and

a half our working relationship has been a great one.

I know that in, in the past I've, I really have been

vocal about the amount of homeless shelters that I

have in my council district, I still feel that I am

overburdened compared to some of my other colleagues

however, we've been work together to find the

appropriate places where these shelters that are

needed where we can place them and, and actually

working with other types of populations... [cross-talk]

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

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...and so I'm,

I'm thankful for your work and your team's work to,

you know working with me and getting this addressed.

Commissioner I want to... I want to start first with

HRA. I have I believe the largest HRA office in the

borough of the Bronx on Barretto Street in the

Banknote building... [cross-talk]

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

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: ...which is

directly across the street from a safe haven shelter

which Bronx Works operates and, and that, that, that

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah, okay.

Commissioner I just have three other questions on DHS, Mr. Chair my time is going to expire, I mean can 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 we've had conversations about, support the intent of it, I think there are some issues we've got about some unintended consequences like with so many things but we'd be happy to sit down with you and try to negotiate it through but I think both your comment and we're not going to let that happen what you're alluding to, your comment and Council Member Gibson's comments really highlights the reason why we're moving forward with the Turning the Tide plan which is to make sure that we're able to provide opportunities to be housed in the borough and as close as possible to community that people lived in so we can eliminate the situation in which someone would say oh, it's better to have people from Queens for example be in the Bronx and we want to continue to work with you and Council Member Gibson and other members as well because that approach is going to end what's gone on 40 years which is no organizing principle of shelter, families with children placed all over the place and then certain communities having more shelters than, than is appropriate given 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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COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, thank
you Commissioner, thank you Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
Chair, I said good morning, I'll say good afternoon.
Fair Fares, be... I'd be lying if I didn't say I was
disappointed about the rollout this past January and
very quickly can you tell me today how many people
are enrolled, we, we had figured a possible
eligibility of around 800,000 New Yorkers and I'm
told by Council Finance the last number we got was
about 6,000 so can you update that today?

STEVEN BANKS: I'll be happy to update
you on the... on the number but I wanted to go back to
the premise of what your question was. The uptake of
the program I don't think was ever projected to be
800,000... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well I meant...
[cross-talk]

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: ...eligible, I
understand.

STEVEN BANKS: Yeah but I think that
that's actually an important point here...

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well there's
a big difference between 6,000 and 800,000.

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

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

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

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1
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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fiscal year and do you have an estimate on how much money will actually spend and how much will not be spent more importantly?

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay...

STEVEN BANKS: ...we had always said the real impact will be able to be felt when you can 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 Member Grodenchik. Commission I just... I had a follow up about that. So, in effect right now since the only people that are currently being communicated with or being invited to enroll are those on cash assistance that are working and those that are on SNAP benefits and working... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: It, it's cash assistance and we'd began some SNAP recently, the plan always was to expand to SNAP in April.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, in effect only those that are working have access to Fair Fares and so there's like a work requirement, Fair Fares... [cross-talk]

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...if you want to... if you want Fair Fares now you... there's a work requirement... [cross-talk]

STEVEN BANKS: No, there's a concern about the impact on public benefits by providing an additional cash payment, we need to work through that to expand eligibility beyond HRA clients who are working.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Yes.

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, Council Member Adams.

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Sure, let me give you the context of the program overall and then what we're doing to address the kinds of issues that you're raising and again as always, you know you and I have worked together on many issues and I appreciate the spirit in which you're asking that question. So, clients in our shelter system come to us with many different kinds of opportunities and challenges taking advantage of those opportunities, we have clients who are working and have income sources that would enable them to pay the rent but need sort of a helping hand to, to get started and they're not going to be eligible for any of our public assistance based rental assistance program, there isn't enough section eight out there for them and so we created a program in September of 2017 to enable clients who have a source of income, have the ability to pay rent, are employed, have sources of... other sources of income or are going to be obtaining employment to enable them to pay rent and you know our clients are like many New Yorkers they want the ability to choose where 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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in northern New Jersey. We have referred the matter to law enforcement and we're assisting in the follow up there. The fact that the particular individual or individuals are in court that's going to take its course but we're providing the assistance that we do for an appropriate investigation of, of these individuals. We also changed the program to be aligned with our regular rental assistance programs, when we streamlined all of our rental assistance programs last October we took a look at what the processes were for reviewing all apartments, whether they were through the old LINC program or SEPS or the old FEPS program or SOTA and we created a more intensive review process for apartments before people could move into them in New York City and in the metropolitan area if someone was going to move out through the SOTA program and part of the streamlining was to align the city programs with the old state FEPS programs, some of you know that program came out of the Jiggetts lawsuit, FEPS was, was the name that the state had and we wanted to have our inspection processes be aligned with the state processes and we added to the state processes and so SOTA was improved by adding this additional apartment review in the... in

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...anywhere in Connecticut...

STEVEN BANKS: If I could just finish Council Member.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, yeah.

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: No, I... I hear what...

[cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right...

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: You, you're not suggesting though that if a client applies for public assistance and part of their grant is a 400 dollar rent allowance that we should tell the client that they 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

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

[cross-talk]

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

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

[cross-talk]

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

[cross-talk]

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: ...we want to give them the wherewithal to do that which is what we're doing... [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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habitability of an apartment and I just want to... I just... who's responsible actually just... that's the question, who's responsible for the habitability?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Commissioner that answer is insufficient.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...nobody?

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN:the inspections?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for inspecting the apartment?

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

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But what city staff,
what agency?

STEVEN BANKS: DHS.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: DHS staff?

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what not for
profit staff?

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you.

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chair. Commissioner it's not easy the responsibility that you've taken over its overwhelming. I want to go back on two things in the... particularly in the borough of the Bronx echoing my colleagues, of the 467 shelters citywide, the buildings, the Bronx has 166 percent... 166 buildings that's roughly 30 percent of the total shelter buildings of New York City Bronxites are approximately 17 percent of the total population of the city but yet we have 30 percent of the city's shelters. I'm concerned about the 90 shelter plan and how many more are going to work their way into the borough of the Bronx, we already know that we have more scatter sites than any other borough and there's a continuation and the reason I want to harp on and please answer that question because I want to make sure I have enough time to answer... ask my second part of the question. The reason I'm so concerned about your PEG cuts and I don't want to be the verta to Albany, is because the borough of the Bronx we see the strain on food pantries and soup kitchens, 30 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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COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...and when I say talk to me about the 50 million, when have you met with this administration to talk about the PEG cuts since we don't know where they're going to be, how many times have you met with them, who have you met with and who on your staff if not you has met with this administration to determine where the cuts will be, it's a fair question?

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: When is the executive budget due?

STEVEN BANKS: It's due in May.

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: I think you're right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, in 30 days you'll have an answer for us and it'll be a big surprise to all of us where those cuts are and then we'll go through a whole second round of complaining, you understand my point and I believe it's with passion and conviction because it's the right thing to do. The borough of the Bronx is at a true disadvantage, we talk about the tale of two cities, this is the tale of two boroughs and the borough of the Bronx has always gotten the short end of it and it will continue to get the short end of it and I encourage four of my colleagues to stand up and fight for this borough against this department, this agency 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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414 to 438 and now we're at 446 so I wanted to understand from your perspective what some of the driving factors are in increasing the length of stay. I know the city is actively in litigation with landlords who are refusing vouchers, we know income discrimination is real and we hear from a lot of our constituents that they have a voucher, right, but they're not able to find an apartment where landlords are accepting the program so can you give us an update on where we are and some of the driving factors that is related to the increased shelter stay?

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Uh-huh, sure.

STEVEN BANKS: So, I mean in essence the Turning the Tide plan is to give families with children the opportunity to be sheltered as close as possible to their communities so that they can... their children continue to attend school in their community. With the opening of additional shelters, we now have at any point in time about 75 percent of our families with children are in the borough of the 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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clients to call our hotline and so that we can
intervene and, and help people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Uh-huh...

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr.

Chair thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council

Member King and we'll be seeing you momentarily co-chairing the second part of this hearing.

Commissioner I just have a, a few more questions here...

STEVEN BANKS: Sure...

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...that I think are

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

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are pieces of information that we think are important.

STEVEN BANKS: Of course.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GRACE BONILLA: 18 million...

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And about social workers in hotels?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How many are we closing a year?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

that's going to take a long time and there are children that are spending an average of 400 days of their lives in a hotel without room to run around and room to be a kid and room to do their homework and room... and a kitchen, no kitchen, no stove, no washing machine, no... you know just... no bookshelves all the things that my daughter gets to experience, children that are living in hotels don't and they, they sit in a... they're in a room that is the size of a shoebox and they don't get to eat hot meals, they're... or they're heated up, you know microwavable meals and they're not getting nutrition and there's no social workers for them and there's nobody to help them and so the very... and there's 88 of these left and if we're closing, you know one a month it's going to be like another... that's like another six years or seven years before we close all these things and, and that's, that's long past... both of us are probably going to be in these positions and we don't... and we don't have social workers for these kids, it's just... we have to, we... it is like the least that we could do as a city is provide something for these children.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But not in hotels?

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...okay?

STEVEN BANKS: Happy to do that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...for contracts.

STEVEN BANKS: Yeah, yep.

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Sure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVEN BANKS: Okay.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes sir, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Chair King.

Good afternoon everybody. I'm Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of the Committee on General Welfare here at the Council and I'm glad to be joined by my Committee colleague as well, Chair Andy King and members of the Committee on Juvenile Justice. I'll acknowledge Council Member Barry Grodenchik and Council Member Robert Holden who are with us right now. Welcome once again to the fiscal 2020 preliminary budget hearing for the Committee on General Welfare. This afternoon as Council Member King, Chair King said we will be hearing testimony from the Administration for Children Services otherwise known as ACS on its proposed budget for fiscal 2020. General agency operations within it's

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

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

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

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

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26. And going back to the foster care task force's recommendations, this includes a seven million dollar allocation that was agreed upon last year but was not implemented as part of the fiscal 2019 budget adoption deal between the Mayor and the Speaker. Let's work together to provide the kinship navigators, improved family visiting time and workforce employment support, support that was promised by the Mayor to the Speaker last year. As the father of one and soon to be two children and the Chair of the Committee for the sixth year, I feel I have an important role to play in ensuring that the city has proper oversight over the budget and policy making decisions at ACS. In partnership with you Commissioner Hansell and your entire staff, Deputy Commissioners and, and... the entire staff and this administration I hope that we can work together towards proactive budgeting that ensures that New York City's children stay safe, happy and healthy. I want to thank my colleague, Chair Andy King of the Juvenile Justice Committee for all of his hard work in advocating for New York City's children. I'd also like to thank the Committee staff for their 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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COMMITTEE CLERK: And please state your name for the record before speaking, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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qualifications to apply. While we are obligated to investigate every report of maltreatment that we receive through New York State, we are also committed to redressing historical patterns of racial disproportionality in child welfare involvement, through a focus on equity in our work, and through efforts to strengthen communities that have faced generational patterns of marginalization and disenfranchisement. Our Division of Child and Family Well-Being aims to engage families before they ever reach the child welfare system, by focusing on the factors that contribute to well-being including health, education, employment, and culture. A large part of this important work is carried out through community and family engagement, through public awareness campaigns, and through subsidized early childhood education, as well as the promotion of equity strategies throughout ACS' work. As we've previously discussed with the Committees, ACS's Family Enrichment Centers represent an innovative new model for providing comprehensive, community-focused support to families. We are proud to have launched three pilot FECs in 2018 in neighborhoods with high 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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in three foundational frameworks; collective impact, a two generation approach, and an equity framework—and it gives local organizations the space to network with each other, to share critical information and resources and provides resources that help families support their children. In Fall of 2017, we launched a citywide Safe Medication campaign to provide families with tools to help ensure that medications and potentially dangerous household items are stored out of children's reach. As part of the campaign, we partnered with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to develop informational palm cards and promotional posters to raise awareness of the dangers of unsafe medication storage. And our child protection frontline staff distributes medication lock boxes and bags to families engaged with ACS as needed to help keep medication out of children's reach, and we've also supplied lock boxes to our provider partners to distribute to other families in need. Tragically, a significant proportion of child fatalities in New York City, about 50 a year are attributed to unsafe sleep practices. To help prevent sleep-related injuries, ACS is partnering with New York City Health and Hospitals to put safe sleep

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information directly into the hands of new parents.

Earlier this month, we announced that parents who

give birth in any of Health and Hospital's eleven

delivering hospitals are now receiving a toolkit that

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

instructions, a sleep sack or wearable blanket, crib

netting to protect from household pests, as well as

educational materials about best practices for infant

safe sleep, including our own informational video

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

Sleep," which is also accessible on our website.

Early education provides a solid foundation for

healthy social, emotional and cognitive development

our children and, and helps position them for future

academic and social success. You certainly know that

New York City has made major investments in high-

quality, free and affordable early care and education

programs over the last decade and especially in the

last few years. In order to make EarlyLearn part of

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

to transfer to the, the Department of Education,

specifically it's Division of Early Childhood

Education this summer. As part of the ongoing

EarlyLearn transition, DOE recently released RFPs for

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

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

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to protect New York City children, and to support our staff and we're constantly identifying more ways to improve. While we meet the challenges of today, we have also committed to a long-term vision for transforming child welfare to serve our City's families and communities and we are leading an effort to implement that vision nationally. In doing this, we're focusing on what I think are the five key areas of the effort. First, we're using evidence as our north star. We are not making policy decisions based on hunches, or on what we've always done, but on what we know works and achieves demonstrable results. And then we measure progress in order to constantly improve. Second, in keeping children and youth safe, we are not solely focused on just preventing repeat maltreatment. We are working with a primary prevention lens to reduce maltreatment and juvenile justice involvement, working with and within communities. Third, we're looking to create an entire ecosystem of services dedicated to these goals, rather than a single agency struggling to achieve it in isolation. And this includes our other government agency partners at all levels, it includes nonprofit 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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the Age implementation. In the Preliminary Plan, ACS has also received funding in support of the Collective Bargaining Agreements for the majority of our workforce. Like all agencies across the City, we've been asked to identify efficiencies in our budget. We've been able to do so by claiming additional funding under the Title IV-E program, producing a one-time City Tax Levy, Levy savings of 27.7 million in Fiscal Year 19. And this will have no impact on services for children and families. And as with all City agencies and as Chair Levin you referred to, we have received a PEG target; ours is 68 million dollars over two years. ACS is working with OMB and the Mayor's office on proposals to address this target. Our intention is to identify savings without reducing essential services or the number of critical frontline staff necessary to keep children safe. As we work to advance the programs and practices that have positioned New York City as a national model for child welfare and juvenile justice reform, and lay the groundwork for the 21st Century systems we envision, we are deeply concerned as we know you are that the newly proposed state budget cuts, along with historical state budget cuts,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

DAVID HANSELL: Sure, yes, well as you know the state law required that the facility that was serving Riker's youth and 17 year olds who were not still under Close to Home... under Raise the Age, excuse me, had to be cooperated by the Department of Correction and ACS and so... because Horizon is the facility that serving those young people, Department of Correction has been staffing that facility together with ACS providing programming support and case management as you know Chair King. Our plan has been and, and we are on track we believe to achieving this that we will begin to transition some youth development specialists into Horizon next month and they will be working side by side with Department of 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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DAVID HANSELL: We have been working very closely with them, in fact we've already started discussions with the unions about the transition of YDS into Horizon next month, we coordinate very closely with, with both of the unions and I, I... and certainly our, our working relationship I'll let Deputy Commissioner Franco speak to this in more detail but our working relationship... certainly, certainly at the agency level between us and corrections leadership has been very good and I believe on the ground that the work of the correction officers in relationship to our program counselors and case managers at Horizon has also been very good but Deputy Commissioner can speak to this in more detail... [cross-talk]

FELIPE FRANCO: Yes, thank you Commissioner for reminding, reminding everyone that actually... we have been actually working shoulder to shoulder with the Department of Corrections since day one, actually before October 1st, we have a significant footprint of case managers and program counselors, actually the number of program counselors recently actually expanded to make sure that actually we were supporting the Department of Corrections in

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

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

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

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of Corrections and made it available in that report.

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

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

FELIPE FRANCO: Uh-huh...

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

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

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

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, absolutely.

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

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Right...

[cross-talk]

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

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

DAVID HANSELL: Thank you.

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

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COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Council Member, we've also been joined from Queens Council Member Adrienne Adams, next up for questioning would be Council Member Barron from the big island of Brooklyn.

DAVID HANSELL: Island?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: It's a... it's an island, it's a part of Long Island, the battle of Long Island was fought in Brooklyn, yes so, he's absolutely correct. Thank you to the Chairs and thank you to the panel for coming. In your testimony you talk about... you make reference to the historical patterns of racial disproportionality particularly in child care, child welfare involvement. What has your agency done in terms of its staffing to likewise address that historical pattern, those historical patterns? If I were to look at your organizational chart what would I see in terms of the ethnicity of the persons at the highest levels?

DAVID HANSELL: That's something Council Member that's very important to us and it's important that we have represent... good representation of the populations in the communities we serve at all levels in the organization and that's something that we

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strive to accomplish, and I think... I think generally we're doing well in that area but again that's an area where I don't think we can ever be satisfied that we're where we need to be. So, when we look at our recruitment at any level in the organization from frontline up to senior management, one of the things that we take into consideration is the diversity and making sure that we are representative of the communities that we're serving.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Could I get an organizational chart and the numbers that are associated with each of those levels?

DAVID HANSELL: Certainly.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Very good. Can you describe for me briefly distinction between foster care support and foster care services?

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, I will ask Deputy Commissioner Farber to do that, I will say, you know our, our goal initially... I'm sorry, the high-level goal initially obviously is to keep children out of foster care wherever possible and that's why we're happy to see that the, the number of children in foster care in New York City has continued to decline... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...but when children are in foster care our goal is first of all to make sure that they're getting all the services that they need and then also that they can return to their families or achieve a permanent family situation as quickly as possible and so... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, what's the difference between the services which is at 569 and the support which is at 51 million?

DAVID HANSELL: I'm going to ask our Chief Finance Officer Mr. Mercado to... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I mean the two distinct categories... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Yes... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...I wanted to know what's different about... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: From a budget perspective, I, I appreciate your question.

JOSE MERCADO: Yeah, hi, the support services include family... like our policy... excuse me, I'm a little nervous, first time... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's okay,
welcome, is this your first time?

JOSE MERCADO: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh, well you'll
be back again.

JOSE MERCADO: Thank, thank you. Our, our
foster care support actually is our support staff,
staff specifically our lawyers, our, our policy
program... [cross-talk]

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

JOSE MERCADO: ...budget people, all those
people... [cross-talk]

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

JOSE MERCADO: ...things of that nature.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I'm on the
clock so thank you for that. Can you briefly tell me
about your adoption services program, what... how do we
try to encourage parents to adopt children?

JULIE FARBER: Thank you Jackie, Julie
Farber, Deputy Commissioner for Family Permanency
Services. So, I mean our, our first goal typically is
for children to be able to be reunified with their

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families and then when that's not possible we look at alternative options for permanency and we look at both kinship guardianship because there is now a... you know a kin gap option where you can become a permanent guardian and then receive financial support and all of that and then there's also the option of adoption and so all of those options are presented to foster parents and to... and to parents and to families and the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, what would be the attraction for a person who has a foster child to be incentivized to go all the way through adoption?

JULIE FARBER: Well I think, you know a primary incentive of most of our foster parents is, is wanting to care for a child whether it's a... you know a relative and, and it's... they're caring for another family member or even if it's a non-relative that they're, they're looking to provide a loving home for a child in need and then in addition we are fortunately able to provide financial and other service supports for families because these are children who have experienced trauma and, and have you know special needs and so forth and so there are

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financial subsidies that come with either an adoption or a kinship guardianship which we call kin gap.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay and finally can you talk about the relationship that your department has with CUNY in terms of ensuring that there are slots for children who are in foster care to be able to go to the CUNY... into the CUNY system, what is that current number, how do we make sure that all children in foster care and their families know about it and how can we increase that number?

JULIE FARBER: Thank you for asking that question, that's something that we've been doing a lot of work on in great partnership with CUNY. So, there are several hundred kids in foster care who are in college either in CUNY or elsewhere, you know elsewhere are ten state, some of them are out of state which is great. With CUNY we have a particular and very special partnership that we call the Dorm program or the foster and college success initiative and right now there is about 120 young people in that program and they are residing in dorms on campus and getting special supports including tutoring and social support and just sort of a sense of community that is built around them through a partnership with

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CUNY and, and the New York Foundling. Those students also are benefiting from a mentorship program that we have in partnership with Goldman Sachs in which Goldman Sachs employs or are providing mentoring to the young people.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And how many... what are your plans to expand this program, what numbers are you looking to increase over the time?

JULIE FARBER: So, the program started had just about 40 young people in its first year at Queens College, I think it grew to 93 youth in the next year and then currently the program is at about 122 youth.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, do you have a number that you're annually looking to increase the program?

JULIE FARBER: So, we're in the process of sort of analyzing that now.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And most importantly, thank you Mr. Chair, how are we making sure that children and their families know about this program because I've spoken to families and they don't know that it exists, we know they perhaps can't all get in at this point... [cross-talk]

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JULIE FARBER: Right... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...of course when, when we're successful and we get CUNY to be back as tuition free it won't be an issue but until we reach that point how are we making sure that families know about this option to apply?

JULIE FARBER: Well just to clarify for the kids in foster care that tuition is covered... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Correct and once we get tuition free it'll be open to everybody, so it won't be an issue.

JULIE FARBER: Okay...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

JULIE FARBER: But, but... so, so there's a tremendous amount of outreach that happens to our foster care agencies, we have monthly meetings with the education specialists at all of the foster care agencies where they are informed about not only the CUNY Dorm program but the many, many other education initiatives that we have. We also have created a foster parent guide to education that has a lot of information for foster parents, we also provide information directly to youth, we, we try and use...

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there's many different venues through which we try to share this information so that young people are aware and, and so that their case planners are aware.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, thank you, thank you Mr. Chair.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you and before we got to Holden I just want to add you, you mentioned in regards to what information is being shared with young people in the system to know they can go to college, you know there are... when I talked about... earlier about certain terms and advertisements that we use, you know it's been a conversation I've been having for the last three years, we passed it in the City Council about what the constitution stated with the three fifths clause compromise where it established a system of inequities from their male, white counterparts who created the system to the black slave in the system. To date we still have those same inequities based on the system that created a rule and conversations and agendas move like that so when you have the conversation are we talking about from school to prison pipeline we should be advocating that if you have a foster care program to college we should know about that, freely

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just like the advertising and marketing of some schools to prison pipeline conversations that people are having... well cross. I as the Chair I get a number of conversations about the juvenile foster care system is the pipeline to the juvenile system which is a pipeline to the adult jail system. So, this is the mentality and... I talked about and toss... and talk... alternative to detention and incarceration, ACS we're counting on you to have a paradigm shift in your conversation when it comes to our children to tell them how great they are and it doesn't start when they're 14, it starts when that child is three and four and five so as you partner up or how you partner with the Department of Education that there's better messaging with the kids or the child early on so they never even come into your system, that we don't even have these stressful conversations of why you haven't taken care of communities of color because when I hear... black males make up five percent teens, make up five percent of New York City's system but they make up over 43 percent of the juvenile justice system something is wrong because not every black child out here is messing it up so it's the little things that this unbalanced system utilizes to make sure that

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there's somebody who has to go into the system, we're asking you for your help today to have a paradigm shift in all of your conversations and all of your marketing and make sure that that young black child or young black boy has a chance, an equal chance to their whiter counterparts in the city of New York.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah. No, I, I hear you and I agree and, and that's actually... that's why we have built our Division of Child and Family Wellbeing on the foundation of our early childhood program because you're absolutely right, we have to start from very young children and make sure they're getting positive messaging not negative messaging and so we really see it as a continuum from early care in education through you know teenage programs to adulthood and we are trying to incorporate what we call a primary preventative approach meaning the goal is to avoid child welfare involvement or juvenile justice involvement by working with young people and their families as early as possible from the perspective of building their capacity to have strong families to support their children and have their children be successful and minimize the possibility of ultimately being involved in the child welfare

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system, being involved in the juvenile justice system. It is a paradigm shift, you're absolutely right, it's something that we have committed ourselves to but we really need to continuously look at everything we do as an agency and frankly everything we do as a city to make sure we're aligning with that perspective, I think that's absolutely right.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Commissioner, it's amazing how you turned around the agency. Just reading this it's truly remarkable, I want to congratulate you...

DAVID HANSELL: Well thank you, we, we have a long way to go but... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I know, I know... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...we're moving in the right direction... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...but listen there's some very innovative measures you've taken so far with the tablets and the, the safe measures dashboard. I wanted to just ask a question about that software, that's in real time so when you, you input the information a supervisor can see it immediately?

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DAVID HANSELL: Yes, actually the information is pulled from the state system, the state has a system called connections which is the state child welfare system of record that we are required to use, safe measures pulls data from the state system and then presents it but it presents it, you're right simultaneously from every level from the case worker to theoretically up to me so at whatever level in the organization staff, supervisors, managers, directors and so on can see in real time the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, so would that software trigger an alert let's say something is... like a red flag and you would see it or... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Yes... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...a supervisor... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...or the super... yeah, I, I... you know I'd be having a lot of red flags if I were seeing them but certainly yes, the supervisors and managers can see them and if they need to then do some work with their line staff they... that empowers 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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JULIE FARBER: So, most children return home to their families... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right... [cross-talk]

JULIE FARBER: ...and, and for those that don't the majority are adopted or, or go home to kinship guardianship fortunately, the numbers of kids who age out has been coming down and down and down. We've had I think, and my colleague Andrew White will correct me, but I think it's somewhere around a 38 percent reduction in the numbers of kids in care who have been in care for two years or more over the last four or five years.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: That's great, that's great.

JULIE FARBER: Six years Andrew tells me.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, great. We, we had some trouble at Horizons and Crossroads initially, I know about Horizons, I don't much about Crossroads we're going to... we're going to visit I think in, in April, what was done at Crossroads to improve the situation and, and tell me how its improved, is it just hiring specialists or...

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DAVID HANSELL: Well no, there are a number of things and I'll let Deputy Commissioner Franco speak to the details but the challenge... you know the challenge at Horizons I think you're more familiar with and there was a lot more public... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...discussion about, the challenges at Crossroads had to do with the fact that because we had dedicated Horizon to the Riker's youth and the 17 year old youth that meant that we had to manage all of the other populations in the juvenile justice system within one other secure detention facility Crossroads so we had multiple groups of kids with... of different statuses and of course the population was larger than it had been prior to the implementation of Raise the Age so both the population and the range of populations we were managing created challenges but there's a lot that we've done to address that and I'll let Deputy Commissioner Franco speak to that.

FELIPE FRANCO: Yeah and I think you mentioned both facilities corrections which you are

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familiar and you went to visit with some of your colleagues, things are actually getting much better and I think that's really the Department of Corrections has reported like more than a 50 percent reduction in the use of force. Crossroads we had our challenges too, I mean we were suddenly moving every young person from every neighborhood in New York City into a smaller facility and on top of that Raise the Age created a new category called, called adolescent offenders who actually had to managed just on their own separate from juvenile delinquents and juvenile offenders. So, imagine suddenly having the most challenging 16 year olds in New York City all of them having to live within the same living unit so it was rocky at the beginning, our trainings are actually getting much better the number of incidents continues to go down and as we've been implementing sort of our therapeutic approaches to help young people learn how to regulate their emotions and behavior as we get YDSs that are amazingly good at connecting to young people though we're turning the curve and things are getting much better. Things will get even better when in October 1st, 2019 the system is a juvenile justice

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system and we can recalibrate the move kids, kids easier in 2020 between the two facilities.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, just one question Commissioner, there's... in CPS there's been I think a high turnover rate in the... in the supervisors because they don't get overtime, is that... and some of their subordinates might get more because... with overtime?

DAVID HANSELL: Supervisors do get overtime, the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: They do get overtime... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...managers... the managers... we have... our hierarchy is child protective specialists, supervisor level one, supervisor level two and then child protective managers, the managers... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: The managers don't get... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...because they're managerial do not. We actually have not had I, I would say I don't think significant turnover, actually we've had more stability at the more senior 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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and, and how did they arrive at that number because as I said in my... in my opening statement HRA and, and, and DHS have like a... you know one percent or less than one percent PEG and you know this, this puts a huge, huge burden on ACS.

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah... no, I very much appreciate your concern Chair Levin. No, OMB did not consult with us or to my knowledge other city agencies... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...in establishing the amounts of the PEGs, we are working with, with OMB on determining how we're going to meet the PEG and we're in active discussions with them right now and the goal is and I think actually the OMB Director spoke to this a couple of weeks ago when she testified, ACS like some of the other human services agencies have access to a number of state and federal revenue streams and so our hope is as much as we're able to do that to utilize that revenue to meet the PEG target so that we don't have to have an impact on, on programming and certainly there's a commitment that there will not be an impact on our frontline, you know sort of core safety responsibilities...

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But that's not... that's not state and federal dollars currently going towards programming?

DAVID HANSELL: No, we have... we have some revenues that we've been able to actually... as, as we already done to meet our savings target, its basically unexpended state or federal revenues that we can put towards meeting these, these targets.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I'm, I'm very concerned but you have not been able to... you have, have you identified what your PEGs are going to be or...

DAVID HANSELL: Not, not specifically yet, we're still working with OMB on that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay and I said this to Commissioner Banks as well, you know there's a... there's an institutional issue here not directed just at ACS or, or DSS but the administration as a whole, in the past when we had PEGs under the Bloomberg Administration my recollection is that we... those PEGs were put forward in the preliminary budget so that we were able to discuss it at the preliminary budget, work through the issues throughout the budget process for the administration to announce that they were

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going to do PEGs at the preliminary budget, 750 million dollars, 12 percent of that is coming from ACS and then... and then wait... and, and then... and then wait until the executive budget to put those forward puts the public, the Council, advocates, clients, recipients of services kind of on their heels a little bit when these PEGs come forward because there's going to be less time to react to them so that's just a... something if you could take that back to OMB that would be very helpful because there's a lot of frustration on our end and I could tell you, you know the Speaker is particularly incensed about the PEG to ACS being so disproportionately high.

DAVID HANSELL: Okay, I appreciate that and I'll certainly... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I am too... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...I will certainly take it back to OMB.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. There is a question about last year's budget agreement for FY 19, as you can see we were informed and this is, you know the Speaker, our finance director and our chief of staff from the Mayor that there would be about

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eight million... 7.8 million dollars to implement foster care recommendations that's 3.3 for kinship navigators, 2.8 for family visiting services and 1.7 for workplace employ... workforce employment for foster care agencies preparing youth for the workforce, these were all... we were very excited, the Speaker came back, I'm on the budget negotiating team it was at the last minute he says they agreed to 7.8 million dollars for some of the foster task force recommendations and obviously to date you know less than a million of that has been spent and I just... you know I'm a little frustrated with that and was wondering what the story is there?

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, well I... and I know we've had some discussions at the staff level about this... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...it appears there was some miscommunication all... what... all we know is we at ACS were never informed by OMB after budget adoption that we were expected to self-fund at that... at that level, if we had been I have to say I'm not sure how we would have done it because we would have had to take money from other programmatic initiatives but

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1
2 anyway we, we weren't, what we were told was that we
3 had the authority if we wanted to initiate pilot
4 programs which is what we did at, at the budget level
5 that we were able to identify funding to do and so we
6 launched them in the two areas as you know of kinship
7 and family visitation and then also in the... in the
8 area of transition age youth but that's where the
9 council had put additional money into the budget so
10 we... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, as far as I'm...
12 oh, go ahead.

13 DAVID HANSELL: I'm sorry, so all I can
14 say is we, we did what we... basically... what, what was
15 communicated to us after the budget was adopted.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, as far as I'm
17 concerned OMB owes ACS about seven million dollars
18 for FY 19 so I'm going to have to take that up at the
19 OMB hearing and in further discussions with the
20 Mayor's Office but... and I'll obviously report this
21 back to the Speaker but if you could also communicate
22 that to OMB as well that we're quite irate about this
23 because it wasn't just one person it was numerous
24 people in that meeting that had that takeaway that
25

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they were... obviously it was rather specific so, it would be... it would be helpful, thanks.

DAVID HANSELL: Okay, we'll do that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You know in terms of new needs, you know looking back at the last 11 plans there, there have only been... so this is prior to your tenure obviously that there have been only three new needs put forward during those 11 plans and they were usually in response to, you know an incident that had come up during the proceeding months and so we would... we would like to... we would like to see kind of new needs put forward, I mean obviously it's a tough... it's a difficult budget environment right now to do that but, but I think it's important that we are putting the resources out there for new needs and obviously that... this might, you know might be a private discussion between ACS and OMB but we would love to see ACS really push for new needs such as Fair Futures or other new needs that, that we think can benefit the, the children that are... that have involvement with ACS.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh. Yeah and I appreciate that and I, I've only been in this role for a couple of years, but I did... I have worked for

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the city in other agencies at other positions, so I have watched the process and I think in a typical year this is in some ways not a typical, at least not typical of recent years, I think... I think new needs tend to show up more in the executive budget than the preliminary budget and that's been the case for, for ACS. This is a particularly as you acknowledged Chair Levin this is a particularly difficult budget year so I don't know what, what will be possible but we were certainly in discussions with OMB about a number of areas and you know this, this usually involves getting made and reflected in the executive budget.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have you and your team identified potential new needs?

DAVID HANSELL: We've raised a number of, of issue areas with OMB, you know some of them obviously depend on what happens with the state and federal funding issues we talked about... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...the state issues we'll know... well assuming there's an on time state budget we'll know in a week what the outcome of that is, the federal issue is, is more complicated because we may

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not know until as late as September basically after
the city budget is closed... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...and that's going to be...
that's going to be tricky because you know we'll have
to sort of think about how we deal with that but, but
yes, we are in discussion with OMB about a number of
different areas.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just a couple more
questions here. There have been reports recently
about physical fighting and overcrowding inside the
children's... the, the Nicholas Capeta Children's
Center in Manhattan which serves as the official
foster care intake center for ACS, employees have
said that they are particularly concerned about a
dangerous mix of young children and babies with
special needs living alongside teens and in some
cases even adults, what, what's the status right now,
I mean obviously there was a, a decision that was...
that was released by a judge in family court that,
that held the agency in contempt I believe... [cross-
talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and raised a number of issues I think we're going to be having a hearing next month to examine these further but can you... can you tell us what's going on right now at the Children's Center and what's happened over the last several weeks and is there... I mean is there an additional... is there an additional budgetary need here that we should be looking at?

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, no, I appreciate your raising that, it is an area that has been a major focus for, for all of us and, and particularly for me in recent weeks and months. The Children's Center is actually our only directly operated ACS facility for young people who when they are removed from a home because they are at risk of, of serious harm and we don't have an immediate foster care placement for them, the Children's Center is the facility that, that we use as a temporary residence. Most young people are there for a very short period of time, usually less than 72 hours but in, in recent... in recent months and years... in a couple of years we've had an increased population of older teenagers and actually some even in their early 20s who have come into the Children's Center, have

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complex needs, are difficult to place in a foster home and therefore they have tended to stay at the Children's Center for a longer period of time and that has resulted as you said in the overall census of the overall number of children or, or young people at the Children's Center going up. And then you alluded to the incident that I know got a lot of, of media coverage in the last couple of weeks and while I can't talk to the details of that, they're confidential but I can say it was very concerning and we have done an intensive review of that situation, that child's situation and frankly all of the time that that young person spent at the Children's Center and we are developing recommendations for changes and policy and protocol to make sure that that never happens again. We are very focused on two things really, one is making sure that every child at the Children's Center is getting the appropriate level of, of care both medical care and all other support services that they need and second to make sure that children and, and staff at the Children's Center are safe and so in the last few weeks we've done a number of things from both of those perspectives. Our agency medical director, Dr. Angel Mandoza has done a review

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of every other special needs young person there to make they are receiving appropriate care, I'm happy to say that, that report... that analysis I guess that they were. We have brought from a safety and security perspective we brought additional... of our ACS special officers into the Children's Center to provide additional security within the facility, we also have enhanced partnership with NYPD to ensure safety in the surrounding community and, and the external environment, we have brought additional senior level leadership from ACS into the facility, our Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders is now working very closely with Deputy Commissioner Farber and her team specifically around security, safety and programming issues at the Children's Center, we are very shortly in just a matter of days actually we are bringing on board a new assistant commissioner for residential care at the Children's Center but will overseeing all of the residential services there and someone who has extensive experience in, in residential care programs. We are very close to hiring an outside consultant to come in and give us sort of an outside set of eyes to look at the... at the Children's Center and give us some additional recommendations and then

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to address the specific issue that you mentioned of sort not just the high number but also the, the age groups and, and, and range of, of young people there we are looking at potential alternative facilities where we might be able to move some of the young people of the Children's Center to reduce the census and, and do a better job of, of managing different populations in different places. We also... you know many of... many of the young people who are there have needs that really should be addressed by other service systems, some of them have severe mental health or behavioral needs and really ought to be served in programs operated by the state Office of Mental Health, there are some young people there... and actually throughout our foster care system who have developmental disabilities who at the age of 21 are supposed to be the responsibility of the state Office of People with Developmental Disabilities. We've historically had a difficult time frankly getting those state agencies to take responsibility for young people that really should be served in their systems and not ours but more recently and actually with OPWD we've been in litigation with them for a number of years about that exact issue. With regard to the

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Office of Mental Health we actually are now engaged in an intensive process with them and with the state Office of Children Family Services to design some new service systems for young people with serious and complicated mental health and behavioral health issues and we're hoping that too will provide some additional resources. So, there are many things that we're doing to address this, it is a very important priority and making sure that the young people that are there, our staff that are there safe and that the young people are receiving the best quality of care is absolutely critical to us.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so, what specifically has changed like in the last... in the last week or two?

DAVID HANSELL: Additional leadership support... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...additional special officers for security purposes, you may have some additional items as well.

JULIE FARBER: Sure, there's some changes and, and Deputy Commissioner Saunders maybe could, could speak to some of these but there's also some

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changes being made around the actual security protocols as well.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then kind of from a... from a step... taking a step further back and looking at the kind of longer trajectory at the Children's Center there's... over time the census has increased from a few years ago so what, what is different about... what's different about the overall picture that would lead to an increase in the census at the Children's Center when, you know the number of youth in foster care has... continues to decline, the number preventative services continues to go up, you know particularly evidence based preventative slots continues to increase, our investment continues to increase in preventative services why, why does the census continue to go up at the Children's Center of all things?

JULIE FARBER: So, like the Commissioner mentioned the primary issue that has emerged over the last number of years is a little bit of a shift in the population where there is a, a group of teens who are over the age of 14 and who present with issues and serious mental health issues, developmental delays and so forth who's needs really should be met

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in either the OMH or OPWDD systems and, and so the Commissioner listed out a number of the strategies that we're working on to move those young people out of the Children's Center because most of the kids leave the Children's Center within a few days.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But, but what... there wasn't that population with serious mental health needs several years ago or is that... I mean I, I'm... is that not a, a population that, you know would be... would be somewhat persistent based on the... just the kind of nature of mental, mental health issues?

JULIE FARBER: So, it's become a more significant population which is why we're actively working with OCFS, OMH and DOHMH actually on looking at new models for serving this group of young people.

DAVID HANSELL: There are two other things I guess I would add, one is while the overall population of young people in foster care has dropped as we've talked about, that's also led to a shift in the composition and so we have seen a shift in the direction of, of the older youth with more complex needs so... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right and that...
[cross-talk]

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DAVID HANSELL: ...that... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...would... that would maybe shift the, the proportion but I wouldn't think that that would shift the, the, the kind of base number of, of youth in... at the Children's Center and you know I, I could... you know it makes sense that it would be a higher proportion but... and that would... that would have an impact on, on obviously on, on service and programming and you know service delivery but, but I, I still don't understand why... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Right... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...what... you know nothing in the greater population I don't know why there would be more people between the ages of 14 and 21 now that have a serious mental health need than there would have been four or five years ago.

DAVID HANSELL: Right, well it's, it's a function of how many young people we have that have those needs and, and what facilities we have to accommodate them... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...and we, we talked about 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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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I mean that's something that like really we should be examining whether we have the capacity and the appropriate type of facilities, the appropriate type of programming, the appropriate type of support services to, to reissue those contracts, you know as quickly as possible to... you know to, to bring on capacity.

DAVID HANSELL: We, we very much agree and we... you know as we... as part of our re-upping of the foster care program and as a whole will be looking at this but that's a couple of years away and... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...this is a more urgent need obviously so we're also looking at things we can do in the short term... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...to both strengthen the residential care providers that we have and see if there are ways that we can expand that part of the system.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, I mean... you know residential programs present their own challenges, nobody is saying that they're... it's a

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perfect solution I think but, but in the instance where it's, it's exceedingly difficult to find a foster family you know it's, it's, it's more appropriate than having an extended stay at the Children's Center which is, you know not equipped to, to work with young people with, with serious mental health needs I don't believe.

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah... no, we completely agree.

JULIE FARBER: The, the other thing I would mention is as we've had success bringing down the numbers of kids in foster care and as Dr. Martin's portfolio, you know has grown so much larger it stands to reason and we actually have the data to show it that you... the, the kids who are coming into foster care tend to be kids with a higher group of needs, right... [cross-talk]

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

JULIE FARBER: ...because we're meeting the lower risk and lower issue families and in Dr. Martin's systems and in... and in Lorelei's area... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right... [cross-talk]

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DAVID HANSELL: There is one other thing I, I should mention which we're doing which we are very hopeful will have an impact on this program, as you may know we actually two tiers of family foster care, we have regular family foster care and then we have therapeutic foster care which is intended for, for young people which have more severe needs, more serious needs, we've very recently within the last couple of months have taken a number of slots from providers that were underutilized that were not fulfilling, fulfilling their capacity of regular family foster care and we have reallocated those slots as therapeutic family foster care slots to providers that have been doing a good job of, of utilizing the program and so we're hoping that that in the short term will help us build up an inventory of foster care beds that will be appropriate for some of the young people that we hope to move out of the Children's Center.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you. Thanks, I'll turn it over to Council Member Adams for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Thank you Chairs. 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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high level of detainees in this particular facility and Deputy Commissioner if you can help me out and just let me know how many youth right now are in the Close to Home facility in South Ozone Park?

FELIPE FRANCO: I don't have the number in front of me but I know that actually we haven't gone above 12 ever so I mean kind of testament to what the Commissioner and I mentioned before, you know Close to Home actually being reduced by 90 percent in terms of placements since the opening in 2012.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Uh-huh, so we've never gone over 12 in South Ozone Park and at both incidents where we've had youth go AWOL, I dare say no more than four or five if I'm not mistaken were residents in that facility at any given time. Now I am hard pressed to, to continue to justify the existence of this Close to Home to my community that opposed it vehemently since 2015 and if you can help me today to justify the existence of this particular facility existing and continuing to maintain a contract with Sheltering Arms in this community where we have had a two year old terrorized because a youth jumped the fence in April where in December a youth

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pulled the, the fire... the fire alarm and was able to escape very simply with minimal effort from people that were supposed to be watching out for his safety and for the safety of my district so again if you can let me know how I can possibly justify the continued existence of this particular facility in South Ozone Park I would greatly welcome your assistance.

FELIPE FRANCO: So, I mean Close to Home was premised under the concept that young people should be close to their families and actually the law requires that young people should be in New York City or within 40 miles of New York City and we... you know we meet the standards and actually do above that. In terms of our understanding of where young people are placed we look at their special needs first and then we look to proximity to home so at any one moment the majority of young people in Ozone Park are actually young people that are... their families reside in Queens but as you and I have discussed in the past there may be young people from Brooklyn or other boroughs in that facility in Queens within the limited secure facility. I think to the context of why do we need the facility is be... again we only have 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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make sure that we can turn that around, I mean I think... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah and... [cross-talk]

FELIPE FRANCO: ...you have been particularly good at demanding from us to, to provide public safety but at the same time you always remind us the importance of serving these young people well and I think that even the neighbors and the residents of the community have actually turned around their conversations to us now about not just making sure you're not here but make sure you do it well if you are in my neighborhood.

COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: Yeah and certainly Deputy Commissioner I certainly appreciate all of the efforts that you've made over... you know over these years to always answer our questions, my problem still is that there have been substantial questions and the community has been right unfortunately which I would have preferred that not to be the case but the community has been right with this particular facility and... you know and, and the subsequent actions that have gone on with this particular facility, I'm not still convinced that this is good...

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that this is a good situation understanding that our youth and their priorities are at the top of everyone's list hands down but not convinced that this was the appropriate placement number one for this facility and number two that we need a facility of this size and capacity when there has yet to be that capacity limit met or come close to there so I'll just end it there and thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Council Member Gjonaj.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you Chairs. I just want to point out that its wonderful to see more monies now going to our preventative services than protective services, that means we're proactive and that's spending money wisely and investing to prevent the most vulnerable from being hurt or taken advantage of.

DAVID HANSELL: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Eight out of the ten community districts that rank highest in the overall risk are in the borough of the Bronx which leads to my next question and the only question that I have. We have a four billion dollar increase in this budget from last year but yet your agency, your

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department is being forced to take a 7.6 percent cut, that's the highest by percentage of all of the agencies and departments and only ranks second in dollar amount to DOE. When this percentage came out of the thin air you were never consulted?

DAVID HANSELL: No, the decisions about agency PEG targets were made by OMB without... certainly without consultation with us and as I understand without consultation with other agency Commissioners.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And you indicated in the last few weeks you have spoken with OMB?

DAVID HANSELL: We're in discussions with OMB about how to meet the PEG target, yes and as I had said earlier our goal is to as much as we're able to use revenue streams that we have at ACS to avoid impact on programs as much as we can do that.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: So, can you share with us what you anticipate whether you anticipate cuts to be in what programs or where in your...

DAVID HANSELL: I can't yet, we're in discussions with OMB about that and no decisions have been made at this point.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: How many discussions have you had with OMB?

DAVID HANSELL: A number.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And at any of those discussions no programs have come up as a potential for cutting?

DAVID HANSELL: There have been discussions about different programs but there haven't been any decisions reached.

COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Right. Well that's... I'm interested in those discussions because the concern is if eight out of the ten highest overall risks are in the borough of the Bronx any cuts are going to impact Bronxites by proportion over any other borough in the city and this is a tremendous concern and the earlier hearings that we had I pointed this out as well that the borough of the Bronx has many needs and we often refer to the Tale of Two Cities but we never talk about the Tale of Two Boroughs and that's the borough of the Bronx and the rest of the city when it comes to services and investments but we are first in many other areas from obesity and health concern and unemployment and the dumping grounds for the rest of the city when it

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comes in proportion to supportive housing and shelters. We're 17 percent of the population, we have 30 percent of the city's shelters, we're 17 percent of the population and we have 41 percent more than Brooklyn, 99 percent more than Staten Island, 100 percent more than Queens and 13 percent more than Manhattan in supportive housing. Any cuts are felt by the borough of the Bronx hardest so I would hope that whatever cuts you do agree to or in your discussions keep the borough of the Bronx in mind, we just simply need more and can't afford any cuts. Thank you.

DAVID HANSELL: I hear you and I will certainly communicate that back to OMB as we talk with them.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Council Member Gjonaj. I do just have a couple before we go to Holden who has another question and I believed Chair Levin might have another question or follow up and I do want to follow up first on what Chair Levin mentioned about the PEGs, the 68 million and as Council Member Gjonaj alluded to in regards to how did that number come about, you were never in the room, my question to you would be first is that when 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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working out, that program is not working, we're not getting the most out of it we can cut here but if you need everything are you ready, is your team ready and prepared and tell your... people on the other side of this building we just... we just can't cut seven percent?

DAVID HANSELL: Absolutely. Chair, Chair King I would not have taken this job if I didn't believe that the work that ACS does is as important if not more important than the work that any other city agency does and I advocate on behalf of our programs and our budget every single day and I will continue to.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good, good to hear that. I do have another question. I have not heard from my sister here, she's been a silent soldier here, but I do want to ask the question in regard to when it comes to children who have mental health or other challenges that we say that they have and I want to... I want you to give us an accurate account of what's real because as Chair Levin said you just didn't recognize all of a sudden that five years ago we didn't have a mental health issue with our children now all of a sudden now that this one

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population is going down, I just want to make sure no one is labeling kids when they're not really meeting that code and saying we're going to put them over there so we can continue to fund that system because we just don't have enough children who are... who... it's almost like getting arrested for not jumping the turnstile and staying, you know five nights in jail as opposed to locking up the person who really just robbed somebody or hit somebody over the head, my question... can you give me a real answer on that?

JACQUELINE MARTIN: My name is Jacqueline Martin, I'm the Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Prevention Services at ACS. Thank you so much for your question Chair King. I have been working in prevention services for 30 years now, I started my career with runaway youth and also, I worked in the South Bronx for many years. So, I can say definitively that we as a child welfare system we have struggled with getting mental health services for children and families and communities, it didn't just begin. What I am very proud of today is that we have the opportunity at ACS to try to address those needs and so we have been aggressively doing that with, you know designing and innovating services and

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bringing programs to communities that we think will meet those needs. For example, we had the opportunity in 2017 to partner with Montefiore Hospital and to bring group attachment based, you know in, in... intervention to families receiving prevention services with very young children, zero to three year olds and so our commitment is to continue to do that because the services are needed in communities of color where we see long wait lists for mental health services, the challenges that families face unable to actually get proper evaluations to be done so that we know exactly what the needs are so I think, you know the Commissioner would agree that we are going to continue that commitment so that the children and families that we see in prevention services will have those services that they need.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: I, I thank you for that answer and I just want to get more clarity on, you mentioned Montefiore, you mentioned communities of color, I do know that a Caucasian child could experience the same issues at 15 that a 15 year old or a nine year old... or a nine year old... [cross-talk]

JACQUELINE MARTIN: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER KING: ...and the reason I...

and I share... and I'm just going to give a quick

story, when it talks about the Tales of Two Cities of

how this system has worked to say that young brothers

and sisters of color are less than and we've created

systems to trip them up I tell the story of being in

a middle school and a principal standing in a hallway

as I'm there visiting, a young dark skinned brother

about... in middle school, had to be no more than about

12 comes out of the staircase, the bell had rung so

he was late, she berated this young brother who was

about your complexion then all of a sudden a little

light skinned Latino kid walked out and she called to

him and said what are you doing, you're lost, the...

you see what I'm... you see where I'm going, see how

they look at the child differently so when we talk

about our system I want to make sure that our system

doesn't do the same thing because when we come, I

listen to the numbers, I look at the numbers and its

like every child who is of color is part of your

system and then everyone else getting it right. So,

how are we telling that nine year old that they are

super great if everything we tell them is that they

need help, I've been in the ACS system and I've

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watched some things that I didn't really like so I'm asking us how do we change it on our end and how our numbers reflect because everybody got issues, if you're not... no matter... make a difference what color you are now you all do stupid things all the time no matter where you... where you live in New York but when we come in this room like this our data seems to be skewed to a certain set of people in the city of New York and I have a... I have a problem with that so I'm asking you to help me be real in the whole conversation and say hey are we servicing all of... people have problems with right... Close to Home program because you're taken kids from different neighborhoods and you put them in a community because they look like a community, they have no connection to it but because they look like the community you said we're going to put them in a Close to Home program and then when they run amuck the neighborhood that's around it has to deal with it so what I'm... the problem that I'm having is that you're going to tell me that nobody in Lower Manhattan has an issue, nobody in Upper Manhattan has an issue, nobody in parts of Park Slope has an issue it's just only Edenwald and Bed Stuy got issues. That's what I want

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to get... I want us... I want us to start having real conversations to help us all the parts of the system peers to be fair and neutral because right now it doesn't seem to be that way. Somebody please respond.

DAVID HANSELL: I'll say... and actually Dr. Martin can respond as well because she has been a real leader in addressing this issue at ACS. So, as I talked about in my testimony Chair King child welfare and juvenile justice have a history of racial disproportionality that reflects both disproportionate involvement by race and disproportionate involvement by geography as you're saying and there's some parts of that that we don't have control over at ACS, we are required... in the child welfare side as you know we're required to investigate every report that we get, we don't determine who reports, which families, which kids and on the juvenile justice side any child that a family court judge sends to us in the Raise the Age or in Close to Home we're required to serve that young person so that we can control but we do think that there are things that we can do to address the underlying issue of racial disproportionality and geographic disproportionality that you're referring

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to and primarily there are two things. One is we can try to intervene in a positive way in those communities before kids get involved in the juvenile justice system or the child welfare system and then we can make sure that we as an organization when we're working with families are not reinforcing those patterns. And so those are the two things that we're focused on so the work that we're doing in our division of child and family wellbeing through our family enrichment centers, through our community partnership programs and other activities are focused directly on how can we intervene in those communities to help the families in those communities get the services that they need to support their kids and help their kids grow up in a way so that they don't ever end up in the child welfare system or juvenile justice system and the work we're doing around implicit bias and the equity assessments that we're doing similarly are focused on how we within ACS can hold our selves accountable for making sure that we are dealing with every single family that comes through our doors in the same way regardless of race, regardless of geography, regardless of other factors that shouldn't have any impact on, on our interaction

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with them. Those are not easy goals to achieve, those as you... as you're pointing out these are deep seated problems in our society and we know that there are some parts of it that we can only respond to but there's some parts of it that we think we can proactively intervene with and that's what we're trying to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: So, my next question goes to your 21st century new bill system that you just talked about inequities that you're looking to challenge. My first question is that how much do you... how much does a system like that you think cost and as you create a system like that what responsibilities will you... will this system have in holding other systems accountable for their... for their discriminatory practices that puts more burden on your system?

DAVID HANSELL: That's... those are both very good questions. On the first... I mean I... on the first one I can't attach a price tag to it and actually I think I would say its less about more resources, its more about how we use the resources that we have, are we using them in positive ways? So, I think the first thing we have to do is make sure

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that all of our programs and all of the ways we're using our resources currently are aligned with this perspective and this way of doing things. On the other that's a very good question, you know we are one of... I don't remember exactly how many city agencies, but we are one of the city agencies under Local Law 174 that was required to do an equity assessment, we are working... and actually there is a... I'm not sure if it's exactly a task force but there's a group of those agencies that is overseeing that process with the Mayor's Office of Operations and part of the reason for that structure is to make sure that we're not each individually moving in this direction but that we all as an entire city government that we are moving in this direction. So, I think... I think that's very important; I think if it doesn't happen across the board it won't be effective.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: And my final question before I turn it back over to... I turn it over to Holden who has a follow up question. First I want to thank you for your answers, as we continue to talk more about the budget and we wrap up with budget I hope in your conversations with this 21st 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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money or do you have anything left over, what's your status?

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, well we need more money from the state that's for sure. We have... we have spent a significant amount of capital money and I think you have those numbers but if not we can certainly get them to you, you know we... the two facilities, the two detention facilities, Crossroads and Horizon are about 25 years old and so they required quite a bit of renovation work just on, on really basic systems and so that work had to be done before October because we had to make sure that they were safe for the increased population of young people that we're going to put there. With regard to the recreational facilities we've been working... not just, just the gym but of course the outdoor space... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: The outdoor space, yeah... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...which is also a big concern, I'm happy to say actually we understand that just today the construction work on the, the outdoor basketball court has started... [cross-talk]

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

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DAVID HANSELL: ...and the Department of Design and Construction is overseeing that, and I know they're working as quickly as they can and then also will be working on the, the other sort of grassy area in the interior courtyard so those, those will both be available for young people. There is some outdoor space now, but we want both the basketball court and the grassy area to be available as soon as possible. So, yes, we are working on those.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, thank you. I'd like to turn it over to Council Member Holden for a follow up.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair King. I just have a couple of questions on the mental health area. We had heard from some providers that they have trouble keeping... hiring and keeping mental health professionals, are you seeing that with your providers?

DAVID HANSELL: Well most of our providers are in our prevention system that, that Dr. Martin oversees and it, it includes programs, we don't call them mental health programs per se but they provide mental health services and we did have and I think we talked about this actually from the

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first times I, I appeared before you, we did have providers telling us they were having difficulty retaining workers and so we worked with the Council to achieve some additional investments in enabling the providers to raise salaries, to make other kinds of investments to address the attrition that they were seeing in their... in the workers that were supporting these prevention programs and we are seeing benefits from that, we are seeing providers that are better able to maintain their contracting capacity of service which was more challenging a couple of years ago so I think we've made progress in that area but you know the issue of sort of trained and licensed mental health providers and clinicians is a problem in New York City, it's probably a problem across the country, there is a limited supply of them and so I think you are putting your finger on something that is a challenge to all of us... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because they're, they're saying... the provider is saying the, the area that they have the most trouble with is mental health and that's the area that we have to actually invest in and that's the area that Thrive

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NYC is investing in, do you... do you work with them or are they... you seeing a benefit from that program?

DAVID HANSELL: We, we are... one of the partner agencies, we have... we have several Thrive programs at ACS in our preventative services, in our foster care agency... our foster care programs and so... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, so do... sorry, do they... you've seen... there's an... there's an increase in funding in that area or, or new programs that come about from... in the mental health area from Thrive?

DAVID HANSELL: From Thrive specific... well so we have a total of four programs at ACS that are part of the Thrive portfolio, only one of them is actually funded through Thrive and that is a program we call trauma smart and it works within our early care and education system so there, yes, in that... in that program we did get an infusion of funding several years ago to basically do trauma informed training for staff in our early care and education program... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, it's just for training, it was not directly helping individuals, it's the training... [cross-talk]

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DAVID HANSELL: Well... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: ...of staff?

DAVID HANSELL: It is for training of staff, but the goal is to help children and actually we have outcome data that show that it has succeeded in doing that. The other three Thrive programs are considered part of the Thrive portfolio, but they're actually not funded through Thrive, they're funded either through other federal or state funding sources.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council Member Holden. Just following up on that, so two areas that struck me as potentially opportunities for Thrive resources is first the Children's Center obviously and also the Family Enrichment Centers, you know making sure that children and families that are, you know availing themselves to that really great resource in the community as a primary preventative model, you know have access to, to mental health resources I think would be a fantastic opportunity in the kind of continuum of services that are available to them.

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DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, so both good points
Chair Levin, in, in terms of the Children's Center
we, we have a very close working relationship with
the Bellevue adolescent psychiatry program and they
do provide mental health services both within the
facility or for young people who need to actually go
to Bellevue at Bellevue and we're in constant
dialogue with them about the, the quantity and the
quality of services there so they have been a
fantastic partner and a fantastic provider... [cross-
talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, there are no
additional resources for mental health services at
Children's Center that you see right now in... [cross-
talk]

JULIE FARBER: Like the Commissioner said
so we have an onsite team from Bellevue, they
literally work, you know full time at the Children's
Center and then in addition we send kids, you know as
necessary... [cross-talk]

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

JULIE FARBER: ...to the CPEP as well but
we are in conversations as the Commissioner mentioned
with OMH and DOHMH as well as OCFS about

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opportunities for kids at the Children's Center as well as kids in other foster care placements whether it's residential or other foster homes around increased mental health resources.

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

JULIE FARBER: So, the Children's Center is in the mix of that conversation.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

DAVID HANSELL: And with regard to the, the Family Enrichment Centers as you know Chairman the Family Enrichment Center model is a... is a community generated model so we began the process by working with families in the community to identify their needs and then to develop services that would address them. I was just asking Deputy Commissioner Vargas and of the three thus far none of those three communities have identified mental health services as a priority that they want the family enrichment centers to address but if they did, we would... we would respond to that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Okay, I'm going to jump around a little bit because there's some topic areas I want to get to before, before we go. Over time at ACS is... has come up as an issue

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particularly because overtime is not... is not a budgeted line item in PS so we'll go through an adopted budget, November Plan, January Plan, you know executive budget and then after the end of the fiscal year we see the overtime costs and at ACS it's gone up as you can see very significantly over the last... you know in just the last four... it's a very nice neat trajectory as you can see and it's going in one direction and you know I understand that A, the work needs to get done and we want people to be doing the work, you know effectively and that the cost associated with increased head count include ever escalating fringe costs and that is expensive in and of itself but at least with an increased head count we're, you know adhering to our, you know negotiated budget or at least the budget put forward during a... during the November or January plans so can you speak a little bit to this, you know rapidly increasing overtime, you know 254 percent over budgeted amount on, on, on personnel?

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, this is something we're taking a very close look at. The two major areas where we have seen significant overtime increases in the last two years have been our child

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protective specialists and youth development
specialists... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...and there are different
reasons for those two, we have... we've actually talked
about them this afternoon, on the child protective
specialist side until fairly recently we still had
caseloads that were significantly higher than they
are today and when the caseloads are higher that
means obviously more work involved and more overtime
that goes into that. On the youth development
specialist side we are still in the hiring ramp up
period, we have 250 out of the 700 so that means
we're, you know still currently managing with less
than our ideal complement of YDS and so that means
the YDS we have are working more overtime. Both of
those should be largely resolved, right, our, our... at
least now our, our child protective specialist's
caseloads are significantly lower which should mean
we should be able to control our overtime and by the
end of this year we expect to have hired up to our
full complement of youth development specialists and
so there too there should be less need for those YDS
to work overtime so as we address those issues and

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those two, you know core front line areas we expect to be able to really get more of a handle on it and be able to monitor, monitor our overtime costs in a better way than we've been able to over the last couple of years where we've been dealing with, you know particular concerns.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, our FY 19 we should... we should be less than 254 percent over our budgeted amount?

DAVID HANSELL: I would certainly hope so.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So, moving over for a second here, so recently I had the opportunity with, with you and your team to visit a CPS office and meet with CPS staff and supervisors and managers and it was a really great experience, I had a lot of takeaways from it, I won't go into all of them right now, one of them by the way was that at 5:30 when I left almost the... every CPS was still working... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Right... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...and so I'm assuming that they were working overtime, I mean like literally like the whole office was still there, I

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said when do you guys leave, they said well you know we, we work late, we might... you know go exercise and then come back, I was like okay, you know that's a lot of hours. It's a... it's, it's a lot of work and obviously the work they do is incredibly serious and difficult, but it spoke to the... spoke to the overtime issue I believe. The other is that one thing that was recommended as I was talking to them as you recall I'm sure around implicit bias was that they go through an implicit bias training by ACS and so they're doing everything that they can to recognize the disparate impact of the Child Welfare System on children of color and that is... that's a... that's a tremendous undertaking what they recommended was that mandated reporters also do some type of implicit bias training, now that is a very wide swath of New Yorkers, there are many, many mandated reporters throughout our society and our city but if the cases... if they are being called... you know if, if, if a CPS is... if a case is called in a CPS has, has no choice but to go knock on that door and this is something to kind of just think about and I don't know... I mean obviously it would... there would be some, some budget implications to this, have we looked at this issue

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of, of mandate... of just... the bias of mandated reporters because that, that is the... that is the genesis of, of the disparate impact that we're seeing... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...on children of color in New York City which is very real and the... I mean to hear the CPS worker speak to it so passionately and eloquently was, you know a real eye opener for me.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah, I know I remember that conversation very well when you were there. I think it's a very interesting question, the mandated reporter system is overseen by the state actually and in fact there have been, and I think... I think actually even in this session of the state legislature I think there are some legislative proposals around training of mandated reporters so this is an issue I think is interesting, I'm happy to, to raise it with the state and see if it's something that we'd be into but I think ultimately... obviously you know the organizations that mandated reporters work for could voluntarily decide to do it... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...but to do it as sort of
a system wide initiative I think would require state
legislation... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...but that's something we
can certainly discuss with the state.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure, absolutely and
I think maybe it's a conversation to have with, with,
with the union as well because the... I think, you know
obviously CPS are, are union members and you know,
and I think that it, it... I think it, it's something
that they have to, you know wrestle with and it's a...
it's a difficult... it's difficult for them, the stress
that they take home with them every night when they
go home to their families has got to be incredibly
wearing on them and intense and, and so this is
something that I think that we should explore and
maybe with the family enrichment centers as an
opportunity to engage with the, the local... their
local schools and their... and, and their local
pediatricians and, and so on and so forth, it might
be an opportunity.

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DAVID HANSELL: Yeah or actually really with the community partnership programs which are really their job is to sort of create those networks of, of providers within communities so that might be an appropriate place to introduce the conversation.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And being sensitive to the time I have two more issues that I, I need to address. One and this is, you know also an issue for the Department of Education but as ACS prepares to hand over the early learn system to the Department of Education there is still this structural problem of pay parody that is persisting and I believe threatens to undermine the entire early childhood education system if we don't resource the early learn system to pay the teachers what they need to be paid to survive and what they need to be paid in order to be on a level playing field with their DOE UPK counterparts and its... I mean as you know, I mean it's just... it's just... it is so galling to see that teachers in early learn setting who are working a longer day and a longer school year, it's... the entire year is their school year are getting paid so much less and I brought this up with the Mayor when he presented the preliminary budget, I did not get a good answer about

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how we're going to address this and I got kind of a well maybe we need to look at the whole system, I don't know that that meant, I don't know whether they... whether that meant that we were going to stop doing early learn but we can't stop doing early learn and so it's expensive, it's going to be a huge commitment of resources probably over 100 million dollars a year to right this but it is... we can't continue to... we can't continue to, to mistreat our teachers and expect them to continue, continue to educate our children and I... and I... this has to be resolved and I hope that it's part of the process of the hand off to the Department of Education but it just has to be resolved, it cannot continue to persist.

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah Chairman I appreciate your concern very much, obviously having qualified teachers who are appropriately compensated is critical to making sure that the children are getting the quality of services that they need and that they deserve in the early learn system. What we've been doing at ACS and we've talked about this in previous hearings is implementing the agreement 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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pay our teachers in early learn, really we do need to do that.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There's a, a few questions around the RFP that I think I'm going to have to follow up with in writing... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, okay... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...just in the interest of time here and, and my last question is about Fair Futures which is this, this new initiative. So, this is a program to have coaching or mentorship for youth in the continuum of, of, of... as they're in adolescents and into aging out of the foster care system particularly those that are not, you know being adopted but are, are aging out into their own... you know into their own cognizance and have, have... has ACS examined this proposal to see what the fiscal impact would be because presumably based on programming that is now done I think that's either self-funded by some of the not for profits or foundation funded by the not for profits, they're able to show... they have data that shows how effective it is have we been able to extrapolate from that data

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what the fiscal impact would be of something like this?

DAVID HANSELL: That's interesting. So, let me start by saying that the, the issue of making sure that we are adequately preparing young people who are aging out of foster care to enter the workforce is a critical issue for us and talked about it in my testimony, we now have a dedicated office under Deputy Commissioner Farber that focusses on exactly that, we invested in a number of programs that I... we, we talked about today the why I work program, the foster and college success program and others so we are very focused on the issue. We've had... and you know in addition to the things we're doing we're always looking for other, other programs or other interventions that we think we would be appropriate additions to the services that we have in place. We've had discussions with the providers and the advocates from Fair Futures, I don't know that we have looked specifically at the financial sort of modeling or estimates with Fair Futures... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because I know that's very compelling to, to First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh... [cross-talk]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...is... yeah... no, he's...

I mean but he was... you know that's the kind of thing I've talked to him before about, you know the long term fiscal impacts of, of different types of programming and understanding partnership and.. when he was budget director and, and you know that's just something to examine if it's a... you know... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: Yeah, we can certainly do that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah. Okay, I would strongly encourage that and do you... do you have it... have you... have you developed an opinion on it or have you examined it to, to see if you think it would be impactful?

DAVID HANSELL: Not specifically on the program itself yet but we're continuing to have dialogue with the providers around it and also, you know as part of the many discussions we're having with OMB in the development of the executive budget we're looking at a range of options including options in the area of additional support for older youth aging out of foster care.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because those... I mean and you have seen though the impact that it has had on youth in the programs that do do it, right, it's a very small percentage of programs that... of youth that are... that age out that actually have a, a mentorship or a coach, I think it's like ten percent or 12 percent but, but you've seen the impact of, of, of the programs that do do it.

DAVID HANSELL: We have and as you know very well this was a subject of considerable discussion in the foster care task force so... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh... [cross-talk]

DAVID HANSELL: ...we've looked at a number of different models in this area and you know we're very interested in what... in addition to what we're currently doing would make sense.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because we do have this new needs opportunity coming up in the executive budget so it would be a great time in addition to making sure that those commitments that OMB made to our finance director and our Speaker last year that they also fund Fair Futures as part of a

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new need, it would be great to see that. And then, I'm sorry my last question is around non mandated vouchers. So, I just want to reiterate as I've reiterated many times that the number of vouchers that were in place... my understanding is that the administration had commit... has committed to making sure that there's not a decrease in the number of vouchers year over year that... then... what was... there in, in 2014 when they started and so if we can continue to have a conversation to make sure that as we're budgeting for 2020 that, that we can continue to, to, to fund non mandated vouchers so that they're... so that they're staying at the, the same level that they have been over the last five and a half years.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yes, I mean as you know we've now baselined something over 27 million dollars... [cross-talk]

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

DAVID HANSELL: ...in this area, this has been a conversation, every budget year I assume it will be a conversation again, this year I can say from, from our perspective at ACS we have... you know we have committed all the funds that have been

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available to us, the vouchers are, are fully committed and we'll continue to be and to the extent that, that funds are made available to us for the non-mandated vouchers we will make sure that they're made available to provide child care for young people that need them.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great and lastly and this is going to be my last question, on... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Final, final, final?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Final question. So, the last PEG that the Bloomberg Administration did in 2013 was post transitional child care so it was that... it was that year after the transitional child care that ACS funded in the past with CTL to extend I think for another year and... or maybe even beyond that, it was around... at the time it was around 13 million dollars I believe and that was the PEG, this is something that could help a lot of families as they get back to work and are not receiving public assistance any longer but still have a need for child care so I think of Jazmine Headley's case actually as very instructive here, she... it's not exactly... she

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wasn't there... a post transitional child care would not necessarily have kept her from having to go in that day but here's a young mother who went back to work, was no longer receiving public assistance and that... and she lost her child care as a result, now she was supposed to get that, that, that transitional child care for the next 12 months but in thinking about families that rely on child care in order to stay working that post transitional child care is very important and it was cut during a time when, you know we were kind of having our austerity in New York City and its something that has not been restored yet and I think that it's something to, to reexamine so I would hope that ACS could look again at that.

DAVID HANSELL: Uh-huh, yeah, we can certainly do that, and we can talk with OMB about that, it's... I mean we're unfortunately in a period of austerity again, I'm, I'm not sure how it compares to 2013 but yes, that's certainly something we can take back and have discussions with OMB about.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, thank you Commissioner and I went to thank your entire team here.

DAVID HANSELL: Thank you very much.

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JULIE FARBER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Turn it back to my
Co-Chair.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you Chair
Levin and I want to thank you all, we don't have any
more questions, we just want to say thank you for
your time today but I do have a closing comment just
to use the phrase piggy back off my Co-Chair and when
it does come to looking at our young people as
opposed to having them age out at 21 I think there is
some precedent that when, you know the federal
government decided to move health care you stayed on
your parent's health care to the age of 26 then you
know when the city takes the responsibility to say
that the parents no longer can handle the child and
you're going to have a child for the duration of
their teen years into their early, early 20s than
yeah, you might want to consider continuing the care
for them so... because what's happening is that if
they're not stable either they go into the world of
homelessness or they end up in being locked up and
then they go into another adult system that's not
designed to help them get themselves together but
designed just to have them there so if we're going to

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do it right let's figure out how to do it right and then... and finally, any criteria that we have like the sister who had to go in there and it became a whole fiasco because she lost her child care services maybe you might want to start looking at a parameter of grey area so even though the bottom line is that if you make 27.50 and if you were at 29 that doesn't change your whole existence, you know and that's what the system looks at those hard numbers as opposed to having a great up and down place... space knowing that because I'm a dollar over doesn't mean that I'm able to... I, I get it all together but the system is really kind of unfair and it goes back to how, how bias is our system towards certain people in the system so I'm asking you to please take a look at that see if you can find some fairness and equity amongst all the people who are sitting at the table and yes, someone mentioned diversity a little earlier maybe... our, our team needs to look more diverse as we do this work as well so that compassion will be right there at the table so again thank you for your conversation and anything you need to get to us to any questions I'm asking that you get it to us in a timely manner so that we can review it and then you... we can be... and

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1
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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energy and the Department... ACS is still in the room so they will hear you so I thank them for sticking and staying but we will say due to... and we want to give everybody an opportunity to speak and it's been a long day so we're going to ask each panelist you're going to have two minutes to speak, we want to get you on the record, we've just trying to be fair because if we were to try to do it the other way we'd be here till 9:30 and I know somebody got to go home and cook, children... food for their children and I don't want any... somebody calling ACS on you because you're not home so we want to make sure that you get home in time, alright. So, Rosemarie Sinclair, First Vice President please come up CSA Council School Supervisors; Lisa Caswell, Day Care Council and Ralph Palladino, Local 1549, DC 37, 2nd Vice President. Thank you. Okay, we can start left to right, right to left, we'll leave it in your capable hands, just identify yourself for the record and go.

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Can you hear me now?

Okay, great. Hello, my name is Rosemarie Sinclair, I'm the First Vice President of CSA Council School Supervisors and Administrators. We have over 16,000 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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frustration and we believe our members should get the pay and respect that they so desperately deserve.

Thank you and please help us with this.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you for staying within your two minutes, next.

LISA CASWELL: My name is Lisa Caswell;

I'm the Senior Policy Analyst for the Day Care

Council of New York and I'd really like to...

appreciate whoever it is that scheduled the two of us

to sit next to each other because we are together

along with 1707... [cross-talk]

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Yes.

LISA CASWELL: The Day Care Council of

New York for more than 70 years has served the needs

of nonprofit organizations that sponsor child care

programs across the five boroughs. Currently we have

91 members operating 200 programs. We are responsible

for negotiating collective bargaining agreements on

behalf of our member agencies with the two unions

1707 and CSA. First of all, we'd like to thank you

for your persistent support of our membership even

earlier today the continued raising of the issue. Our

concerns are really in three areas; salary parody,

program vacancies and the overall physical

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infrastructure of the system. The recent release of the DOE's birth to five RFP will have long ranging repercussions on the matter of salary parody. Our members continue to struggle with the hiring and retention of qualified teaching staff in the face of ongoing professional staffing competition with the DOE. Entry level early childhood education teachers who have their master's degrees and are state certified are paid 17,168 dollars less than their entry level counterparts at the DOE based on last month's salary bump for the UFT. For more than a year the Day Care Council has been engaged in complex, complex research on salary parody to determine the fiscal impact. Our goal is salary parody for all staff; however, we are starting the analysis by focusing on CBO directors and masters and bachelors' level certified teachers for two reasons. Our members have repeatedly discussed the difficulty in hiring management and state certified teaching staff for their agencies and Article 47 of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's regulations require the staffing for all early childhood programs. Our calculations are based on the UFT's collective bargaining agreement salary scales with

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specific attention, excuse me for going over, with specific attention to cost of living adjustments and longevity increases in calculating the funding amount consideration has been given to the current employee benefits structure which includes salary, FICA, a pension and health insurance. Salary parody is the only path forward for an integrated early ed system and we are committed to laying a proper foundation for long term stability. We will be releasing our research findings very shortly and are preparing for a City Council briefing as well. I'm just going to summarize our concerns related to the RFP and program vacancies. Right now, the average provider would not be able to get their full funding if they were going to be paid within the pending formulas with the DOE. And we've spoken with the DOE about how they came to their decisions, right now what they're going to be doing is they're... the RFP states that programs with enrollment rates of 58 percent or less will receive 65 percent of their monthly contract value, programs with an enrollment rate between 58 and 93 will receive funding for their monthly enrollment plus seven and programs... seven percent and programs enrolled at 93 percent or higher will receive 100

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percent. The issue is this, they have centralized the enrollment process for UPK already, they've done well with head start recently, they have made changes to be able to try to accommodate the nonprofits, we are not saying that they are unaware of the problem of children going to the school system instead of staying in the CBOs but right now there's a new formula that risks underfunding for the nonprofit sector and it is not necessarily going to be working for us. Finally, physical infrastructure, many of our programs are in NYCHA, you're aware of the problems there. At this point we have parent testimonies that they're choosing school-based settings over CBOs located in NYCHA settings. And so that's our final concern. We must see as, as Council Member Levin has said we... this has to change, it, it isn't right, and we can't make it and we're doing better than the school-based settings academically. So, we want to thank you and that's it, yep.

RALPH PALLADINO: Good day, I'm Ralph Palladino, 2nd Vice President of Local 1549, clerical administrative employees representing the eligibility specialists in the food stamp and the SNAP program 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 ESs 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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COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, thank you for your testimony and... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you all... to this panel every... we very much appreciate all the work that your membership does in serving all New Yorkers, thank you.

ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The next panel Dominique Dylan Tatom; Michael Leake; Sophia Gurley and Kevin Nicholson. Yes, okay. Okay, whoever wants to begin. You can start.

SOPHIA GURLEY: Hi, my name is Sophia Gurley and I have been... I am one of the individuals who were speaking out against the homelessness, the Department of ACS and so forth. I have been one of the victims who unfortunately have been in the circumstances of being homeless and being biased in the system and I felt like personally that the system is, is an error in it and it needs to be fixed. Some of the things that need to be fixed is the judgement towards the people that are in the system because not everybody that is in the system has a mental illness, that's for one. Not only that, yes, it is very biased against people of color because I am one of those

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people who unfortunately have been through ACS system numerous time due to false allegations and stuff and I have had my children taken from me. My children have been out of my care for a whole month and a half before I was able to get my children back and when I did get my children back everything was unfounded so how does that right there consist of ACS working on the issues that they have presented today, that was my first concern when I was sitting in the back listening to them. Second, the school system is corrupt because not only are they not paying attention to our children, but they are failing to properly educate our children in a manner to catching there, their attention. I know because I am a teacher's aide in the state of New York, you can... you cannot sit there and constantly call parents day in and day out when you feel like the child has a problem, not all children have problems, every child comes from a different background, not everybody came from good backgrounds, not everybody comes from bad backgrounds but you do have a mixture of both and that needs to be addressed. Third, on the homelessness, I am a victim of, of being in the system, I know my time is up. I have been a victim of

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being homeless and I have been one of those families who was moved out of New York and placed into New Jersey, I have been on the news three times already due to this incident so I know what it feels like to be in the corrupt system going through the corrupt system and still in the corrupt system and the system is not being fixed, it's not being adjusted and it's not being handled. You're welcome, thank you.

DOMINIQUE TATOM: Good afternoon Chair Levin, Chair King, members of the Committee on General Welfare and Juvenile Justice. I'm here to share my personal experience with having a coach and advocacy for the Fair Futures program. My name is Dominique Tatom, but I prefer to be called Dylan. I entered the foster care system when I turned 13. I moved from foster home to foster home twice a year with the hope of finding a genuine connection with my foster parents unfortunately that was unsuccessful. Adapting to being in foster care where I was separated from the only family, I knew was an emotional journey for me and at one point it reflected in my poor academic performance. I quickly realized that I had to change because I knew that my circumstance wasn't and then as a result I graduated

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from high school on time. If you would have asked seven years ago if college was an option, I would have quickly replied by saying no. If you would have asked me four years ago if college was an option I would have said perhaps or maybe. But if you would ask me today if college is an option I would not hesitate to respond and encourage others like myself that college is absolutely, positively not only an option but a reality for many youth in care who are afforded the support of a coach that is committed to their personal development and future goals in life. I was introduced to my coach Lauren Petit during a pivotal moment in my life, I chose to attend LaGuardia Community College however I was unprepared for the obstacles that awaited me during the enrollment process. I lacked the knowledge of this process because no one I lived with went to college or cared to assist. I was guided through the extensive process because being a youth in care meant that there was additional paperwork to handle. Lauren eagerly advocated on my behalf to obtain the necessary documents that my enrollment status was contingent upon. In the end I not only was successfully enrolled but Lauren made it a priority

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to connect me to resources on campus that were
fundamental to the college experience. It is safe to
say that without the support of my avid coach I would
have struggled with registration and the motivation...
I'm sorry... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can keep going...

[cross-talk]

DOMINIQUE TATOM: ...for going over...

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...okay, go ahead...

[cross-talk]

DOMINIQUE TATOM: ...thank you, to remain
in school. I graduated from LaGuardia Community
College in June 2017 and currently attend John Jay
College of Criminal Justice. Attending college is
something to feel good about, you're staying in
school and making the firm decision to continue in
pursue higher education expands one's access to
opportunities. To my coach the options are endless,
college is an option which so is vocational training.
Entrepreneurship is attainable because there is no
limit. To my coach I am a valuable person with a
unique skill set, I am not just a case number. To my
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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prominent that we ensure that every foster youth has a fair future, a fair shot and a fair opportunity to transform into the best versions of themselves because every kid deserves a chance. Thank you.

[applause]

DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Dylan.

SADE COLLINGTON: Hello everyone, my name is Sade Collington. I am one of the forgotten families that's been on the CBS2 news. Today I'm here just to advocate for my family and let you guys know that in June 2018 my family moved into unlivable conditions through DHS and now we're back in the same predicament, we're back in the shelter system going through everything all over again. I'm really here just to reach out and wish that certain programs change such as the SOTA voucher. I wish that DHS took the opportunity to really understand that cutting a check and dumping your problem onto another state is not fixing the problems, it's only making the problem worse and it's only making things worse for our families. I have an eight-year-old and a two-year-old who's chronically asthmatic and during our stay we have endured conditions that are unspeakable. So, I

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just really wish that everyone is able to help our family and really be there to vouch for us and understand that things aren't black and white, there are definitely grey areas. DHS has not helped my family as of yet and I'm hoping that by speaking out today they are willing to at least come to us and apologize for the lack of communication between themselves and other states and really just shake our hands and be willing to work with us for future endeavors.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, thank you.

KEVIN NICHOLSON: Good afternoon, my name is Kevin Nicholson, I'm the husband to Sade Collington and the father to Kevin Nicholson Junior, right there eight-year-old and I have a two-year-old, Caden Nicholson. I was one of the families on the news. My family was the first to get the news I... to our situation which led other families to get onto it. The first night we were dropped off to an apartment in New Jersey, they dropped us off, the workers were still working on the house, so they told us why did DHS send you guys? So, the first three nights we got there me and my family stayed outside, we slept outside the first three nights as soon as we

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got there because the workers weren't done on the house, so we stayed there outside. From there on it has been... it has been like downhill, declining. Raining inside of the house over the stove, over beds, over couches. My son was sleeping in negative 12-degree temperature which caused him to go to the hospital anemic and everything. We stood in the hospital for two weeks for my son and his asthma. It was just the worst experience that I ever felt and Steven Banks I watched him over the news say that we had choices and choices, no we didn't have no choice of anything, we was forced that if we denied housing more than twice or three times then they saying that we're denying it and we got to leave the hotel or the shelter and go back to PATH and start over. So, we have to take these options whatever choice they've given us we have to take it, there's no choice, there's no... so we took it and right now we're back in this hotel, nothing is happening, we've been here for three to four months. If it wasn't for me and my wife sticking together it would be the worst thing so I'm just reaching out and asking for help in, in the midst of just apologies and understanding because I don't think that Steven Banks and other people that's

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in the DHS chairs understand what we're going through.

SOPHIA GURLEY: I'm sorry, can I also like kind of piggy back off of them because we're all going through the same situation. I, I just have... I just find it mind boggling that people can sit and say that they strategically thought about a plan to help families move into permanent housing but yet there's an issue that is still going on and on and on where nobody is placed in permanent housing, you can't even get yourself together because of the other issues that you are facing, you understand and when you strategically think of something that means you planned it out, you mapped it, you have a... you have a strong plan. Me, personally giving people 17,000 dollars up front for a family is not strategic thinking, that's not... now when you strategically think about something and you have a plan and especially if you move the families out of where they are comfortable out then that means there should be a plan in place. Okay, what's going to happen after this family moves into... right, what's going to happen when this family moves into this next state, you know what I'm saying because I was also one of the

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families that was moved out of New York into New Jersey and I didn't have any family there, I learned New Jersey as I moved there and... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Where, where in New Jersey by the way?

SOPHIA GURLEY: I'm in Newark, New Jersey.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Newark...

SADE COLLINGTON: Right, I'm sorry... [cross-talk]

SOPHIA GURLEY: And I was also one of those families as well, when I saw their story that's what prompted me to speak up as well and about the, the, the... the foster care, my children was placed in five different homes within a month and a half time frame, five different homes. So, right now I could relate to everybody on this table and I really do have way more that I could speak on but I know we don't have that type of time today but I just wanted to piggy back off of them and let you all know that this is a major problem that has to be... that has to be addressed... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you... [cross-talk]

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SOPHIA GURLEY: ...not only that the Mayor of New Jersey is calling for the Mayor of New York and the Commissioner to come and meet with him because of this and no one has reached out to our families or nothing like that yet...

KEVIN NICHOLSON: Yeah, no one.

SOPHIA GURLEY: ...not the Commissioner, not DHS, not the Mayor, nobody and I do have a meeting with the Mayor coming up soon.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay...

SOPHIA GURLEY: ...because of this, because I also now have a DCP case in Jersey because of my living arrangements which is ACS in Jersey.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank... yeah, thank you. And just one question for Sade and Kevin, did, did you choose the apartment, you did not choose the apartment?

KEVIN NICHOLSON: No, we didn't choose it, like I said we, we seen two apartments before that prior to it which was messed up, the third one we were told if we don't choose this one, we're denying housing... [cross-talk]

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

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KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...so we would have to
leave... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...go back to PATH,
yeah...

KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...we'd go back to PATH
and start all over again and so it was like you know
what, let's just go ahead and then... [cross-talk]

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

KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...we went... they told us
in two weeks it'd be ready, they knocked on the door
of the hotel, they packed all of our stuff up, they
took us there, dropped the bags off, the workers were
there, they said why did DHS send you guys it's not
ready, first three nights me, me and my kids and wife
stood outside, the first three nights.

SADE COLLINGTON: Everything was done
through DHS.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Everything was done
through DHS... [cross-talk]

SADE COLLINGTON: The, the van run...
[cross-talk]

KEVIN NICHOLSON: Yeah... [cross-talk]

SADE COLLINGTON: ...taking us to... [cross-
talk]

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KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...everything.

SADE COLLINGTON: Taking us there to the actual property, from my knowledge they were supposed to conduct some sort of inspection and ensure that everything was done, nothing... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Obviously they didn't.

KEVIN NICHOLSON: None, they did nothing... [cross-talk]

SADE COLLINGTON: Right, nothing was done... [cross-talk]

KEVIN NICHOLSON: And we went back to the hotel to show them pictures like two weeks after we got there... [cross-talk]

SADE COLLINGTON: They threatened to call the... [cross-talk]

KEVIN NICHOLSON: ...and they said that we were trespassing so they can't do nothing right now because we're no longer tenants in the house.

SADE COLLINGTON: We reached out and made several 3-1-1 complaints, the only thing I received was someone from the ombudsman office, her name was Miss Singleton she told me that we had the right to go back to PATH but they were not going to do

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anything for us until the SOTA voucher ended which is
in June... [cross-talk]

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

SADE COLLINGTON: ...and as of right now
that's what it seemed like it's, it's happening, we
have to wait because we haven't even received a
voucher.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank you
for, for calling a lot of public attention to this
program and we're, we're looking at it in depth but I
don't think that, that wouldn't have happened
without, without your story coming to light and I
just want to wish you and your family well and, and
you know urge you to, to keep up... you know advocating
and, and, and working for your family, thanks.

SADE COLLINGTON: Thank you.

KEVIN NICHOLSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then Dylan I just
want to thank you, you did an amazing job at the
rally earlier and you know inspired I think everybody
that was there, all hundreds... you know hundreds of
people and, and I want to, you know wish you the, the
best at John Jay and I know you said you wanted to go
to law school afterwards so I, I, I want you to, to

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keep on with it because you're, you're doing an
amazing job and I want to thank you.

DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thanks. Council
Member, okay. Thank you so much to this panel.

DOMINIQUE TATOM: Thank you.

KEVIN NICHOLSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Have a good day,
thank you. Next panel; Reed Vreeland, Housing Works;
Ted Houghton, Gateway Housing; John Sentigar,
Covenant House and Sarah Chiles RH Capital. Thank you
all, whoever wants to begin. Sorry, make sure that
the light is on, sorry. There you go.

SARAH CHILES: Can you hear me? Good
evening, my name is Sarah Chiles and I am the
Executive Director of the Redlich Horwitz Foundation.
We're a philanthropy dedicated to improving the
foster care system in New York. In recent years, we
have granted close to one and a half million dollars
to ACS for technical assistance and over four million
dollars to New York City foster care agencies. Thank
you to Chairperson Levin for unwavering commitment to
children in foster care and to the members of the
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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people educated, employed, housed and thriving.

Several foundations are raising close to two million

dollars to match public funds so that we can scale

these successful programs. The private funds are

being invested to create the infrastructure to track

results and to train staff. But we need 50 million

dollars to scale these successes to even more

deserving young people and we have creative ideas for

where that money can come from. We urge you to make

New York the first city in the nation to ensure all

our young people have a fair shot at a successful

future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

JOHN SENTIGAR: Good afternoon, my name

is John Sentigar and I'm a member of the advocacy

team at Covenant House New York where we serve

runaway and homeless youth ages 16 to 24. I'd like to

thank the Committee on General Welfare and Council

Chair Levin for the opportunity to testify today. In

2018 Covenant House served over 2,000 young people in

our residential programs including pregnant women and

mothers with their children, LGBTQ youth and

commercially sexually exploited youth and trafficking

survivors. Many of our youth have experienced abuse

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or neglect at the hands of parents or their care
givers and a disproportionately high percentage of
our youth struggle with pervasive impacts of trauma,
mental health issues and substance abuse. We provide
young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical
care and mental health and substance abuse services,
legal services, high school equivalency classes and
other educational programs including job training
programs. I just wanted to highlight some of the
initiatives that we are applying for discretionary
funding for this fiscal year and these include LGBTQ
youth mental health, we're requesting 50,000 dollars
to improve and expand our mental health offerings at
Covenant House New York specifically as they relate
to LGBTQ young people. We're also requesting money to
support our homeless student's initiative and job
training and placement initiative; education
employment is extremely important especially for our
young people at Covenant House and we want to be able
to provide more of that. Finally, I'm also requesting
on behalf of Covenant House expanded funding for our
metro card program. We really applaud the city's
effort in rolling out Fair Fares unfortunately for
our young people though Fair Fares would not cut it

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for them, we need to be able to provide full subsidized metro cards for them to be able to get to job interviews, medical appointments, and the like so I urge you to consider those requests on behalf of Covenant House New York. Thank you very much.

BRENDAN CHENEY: Good afternoon Chair Levin, Chair King and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Brendan Cheney, I'm an Associate Director at Gateway Housing, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the shelter system by helping to create model nonprofit owned, purpose built transitional residences, with innovative financing methods and evidence-based practices. You've got our full testimony before you, but I will try and summarize and, and be brief. The Mayor's budget shows a commitment to improve the city's homeless shelter system. We support the Turning the Tide plan and we support the model budget process though we think the process should be improved to allow some more flexibility with providers during negotiations. And now we want to talk about some of the concerns we have in the... in the budget. We think the City Council 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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dollars to expand the program. And we also hope that the client care coordinators are not vulnerable despite the sort of criticism that's come from Thrive NYC. Lastly and briefly, I'll just say that Gateway fully supports the house our future campaign to set aside 30,000 units of the Mayor's housing plan for homeless families and individuals and we support Intro 1211. And finally, we support the human service community's calls to address the chronic underfunding in their sector by investing 250 million dollars this year to fill the gap between their indirect costs and the contract reimbursement rates. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and I just want to thank the work that you guys do at Gateway Housing for providing an effective model to help transition people into permanent housing and I think it's something that we should be, you know replicating, you know all over the city so thank you.

BRENDAN CHENEY: Thank you.

REED VREELAND: Hello, thank you Chairs Levin and King for hearing our testimonies today. My name is Reed Vreeland and I'm with Housing Works, one of the largest HIV/AIDS... community-based HIV/AIDS services organizations in the city. I'm here today

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to, to really thank the Council for the... ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic initiative that the Council has, has funded. Due to this initiative both at this... the, the Mayor and the city... the city's investments we've been able to decrease new HIV infections in New York City by 36 percent by... since 2013. So, that's a really considerable achievement. I'm here today to specifically talk about the HASA Healthcare Integration Pilot Project. So, as we know housing is healthcare especially with... for people with HIV and it's almost impossible to stay on antiretroviral treatment for HIV if you don't have a stable place to live. We have proposed and are in the middle of HASA Healthcare Integration Pilot Project and we hope for continued funding and support from the Council for this initiative. Despite current services, many HASA clients continue to face structural psychological barriers to effective care that can result in high utilization of healthcare services yet poor health outcomes. Since 2016, working groups composed of staff from HASA, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Healthix and community-based organizations and health care providers have worked together to develop demonstration projects to improve

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outcomes and health opportunities of people living, living with HIV who are a part of HASA. I am... I look forward to future opportunities, but I do want to be here and say thank you on behalf of Housing Works and people with HIV for the Council's continued attention on how to continue to help people with HIV who need housing assistance.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Reed. I just want to say I, I apologize for not getting to ask questions about HASA during the DHS/HRA testimony because we were running late but we do plan on having a hearing in this Committee sometime hopefully before the summer on the HASA Demonstration Projects to see if we can get a clear update as to how the progress is and what's working and what's not working as well so... but we're looking forward to, to doing that and we'll be in touch with you and Housing Works.

REED VREELAND: Great, thank you very much Chair Levin. Also, I wanted to note that Housing Works does support the House our Future campaign request too.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Excellent, thank you. Thank you to this panel, thank you for all the work that you do. I look forward to continuing to work

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with you and, and your... and your organizations for many years to come so thank you. Next panel; Chelsea Goldinger, LGBT Center; Ariel Savranski, UJA Federation; Michelle Jackson, Human Services Council; Gregory Brander, United Neighborhood Houses; Catherine Trapani, Homeless Services United; Michelle Yanche, Good Shepherd Services; and Kristina Coleman, Children's Village. I think six... and I apologize to everybody who's name I did not call yet, we're doing this is a somewhat random fashion so... you know I, I appreciate everybody's patience with this annual marathon that we do here at the General Welfare Committee. Okay, whoever wants to begin.

MICHELLE JACKSON: Alright, I'll go first. Good afternoon, my name is Michelle Jackson, I'm the Deputy Executive Director for the Human Services Council. Thank you so much for providing me the opportunity to testify and for staying with us on the marathon day that happens every year. HSC represents 170 human services organizations, your very familiar with our work and familiar with the work of our providers who help over 2.5 million New Yorkers every year. This year I really want to focus 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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budget better, the city knows that when they pay providers they're not covering the real indirect expenses and that leads to some of the issues that we're talking about, about how providers can better serve people in our communities and make sure that the quality programs that New Yorkers deserve and that you're hearing from today are, are really implemented in the right way. So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you, thank you Chair Levin and, and Chair King for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender, I'm here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses. Wow that was quick. We are New York City's federation of settlement houses and I wanted to talk today specifically about early childhood and the RFPs that are now coming out. Most of the issues or actually I think all of the issues that I'm going to talk about are things that this committee has been fighting for, for many years. DOE has now released two requested proposals to replace programs that are currently run through ACS under early learn, the birth to five RFP and the head start RFP. In both these RFPs we found

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five major issues that are so severe that many providers who have been longstanding providers are actually questioning whether they can apply or if they can apply to serve the number of children. The first of these is around the salary disparities, which I know you've heard about from... earlier from the folks in the union as well as the Daycare Council. Truly stark disparities that are leading to turnover in the programs. Secondly, it's the failure of these contracts which are eight-year contracts to include any provision for cost escalators. It's reasonable to expect that rent and other expenses would increase over eight years and there's not even a method with, within the RFP for future budgets to include that funding. Thirdly as Michelle mentioned these RFPs do not fund indirect costs. Fourth, the program brings back the pay for enrollment system which had actually been phased out by ACS, it started in the Bloomberg Administration over the objections of then Council Member De Blasio and phased out so it's been... it's really surprising and disappointing to see it return in the birth to five RFP. And finally, in the birth to five RFP they create a new distinction between program... the extended day

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programs between the pre-K hours and the hours that are not covered by Pre-K splitting them into what they're calling core and non-core hours. This, this goes away for a model of early childhood education that, that uses the understanding that children are learning all the time that there's not a separation between learning and recreation in early childhood. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to working with you on it.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

CHELSEA GOLDINGER: Hello, my name is Chelsea Goldinger and I'm the Manager of Government Relations at the LGBT Center, the largest center... LGBT center on the East coast and the second largest nationally. We've covered a lot of important content already and I can't thank the advocates enough, I wish they were still here. I just wanted to collaborate the attention to the disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth in the homeless population. An estimated 43 percent, yes 43, almost half of homeless youth identify as LGBT, LGBTQ and LGBTQ young adults have 120 percent higher risk of ultimately ended up... ending up homeless. Ones within the system, hopefully folks from ACS are still here, finding affirming care

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from providers and families it becomes even more
challenging especially for... especially for those most
vulnerable within our community, the transgender and
gender nonconforming folks. So, often they end up
kind of stuck between families because they can't
find placement whether with the actual families or
the case workers and staffers are just not trained at
an affirming language. Secondly, at the center we
don't actually have housing services but one thing we
provide is what we call our LIFT program which aims
to actually keep families together. We know that the
best way to actually keep children out of the foster
system and lead for the best future outcome is to
help those families stay together so providing the
direct counseling and support especially for LGBTQ
youth who often face... actually have to leave their
homes due to not welcoming environments from their
families. So, we just urge the inclusion of that
within whatever trainings ACS is working to include
for those services. And the only other thing I did
want to just point out we also do a youth advocacy
program which again this is to help connect folks
who've been within the system and helping with mental

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health support afterwards. So, I have 18 seconds so yes, affirming training, next.

ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Good evening, my name is Ariel Savransky, I'm an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA Federation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for holding this hearing today. So, my colleagues Michelle and Gregory did a pretty good job of summing up the concerns of the human services sector so I'm just going to echo everything they said and highlight just a few other things from our testimony. So, I'd just like to discuss the importance of investing in the Elie Weisel Holocaust survivor initiative. I know the Council has been very supportive over the past few years and we really appreciate that support. It's essential that we continue to invest in this program. Many of our nonprofit partners provide services such as case management services, personal care and assistance, legal services, entitlement counseling and whole host of other services that are really important to this population and their specialized needs. So, we would just request that we increase funding by 500,000 dollars to four million in FY 20. And then I would just like to highlight the

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importance of increasing access to meals especially
Kosher meals. There are over 500,000 people living in
poorer and near poorer Jewish households in the
greater metropolitan area. The high cost of a kosher
meal presents a unique challenge for many of our
agencies that work with this population, SNAP
benefits often run out after the third week of the
month for a majority of people who live in New York
City it happens even earlier in the month for those
who keep kosher because of the high cost kosher food.
So, its essential that the city invest resources in
ensuring that food pantries are equipped with enough
food to serve their clients especially culturally
competent foods such as kosher and halal. We've also
supportive of other initiatives meant to increase the
access to meals throughout the city including
increased investment for EFAP, congregate and home
delivered meals for, for seniors, investment in
expanding the anti-hunger safety net and increasing
access to kosher and halal school meals. Thank you
for the opportunity to testify and I'd be happy to
answer any questions.

CATHERINE TRAPANI: Hi, good evening

Chair Levin and Chair King. I'm Catherine Trapani,

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I'm the Executive Director of Homeless Services United. [bell] Actually I've run out of time pretty early. I'm going to speak on a couple of different areas of the budget. The agency represents the nonprofit providers of both preventions so under the HRA umbrella as well as shelter and after care on the DHS side. So, before I get into the specifics, I want to echo certainly we're all human services providers and I echo the request for increases to the indirect rate so that the full operations of our program could be funded. On the prevention side I want to talk a little bit about rental assistance and the vouchers. The, the, the CBOs that do FEPS applications for persons living in the community used to be handled by the state, they were transferred over to the city. The city is now considering eliminating that three million dollar program where the CBOs facilitate applications for rental assistance, they do much more than just push paper and applications, they actually have a tremendous role in preserving housing for people in our communities so we would urge HRA to continue funding the FEPS CBOs. We also would urge the city to finally extend rental assistance 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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have not seen any rate increases since the inception of those programs. And in addition, we need assistance for opioid treatment and those programs with those... with those clients so, clearly have a lot to say, you have my written testimony with all the different program areas, but I just want to thank you for your advocacy.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And just with the DYCD population, I thought that was supposed to happen by now...

CATHERINE TRAPANI: It was supposed to happen about two, two to three years ago, when was the 90-day review, that was one of the initiatives so... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, 2015... [cross-talk]

CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...we've been waiting, yeah, for every iteration of the program and... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right... [cross-talk]

CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...I'm becoming increasingly concerned that it's a savings initiative to delay the implementation.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, I mean I saw in the new... the new rules for the... you know for the new... the new program it allows... [cross-talk]

CATHERINE TRAPANI: Right... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for, for a referral from DYCD but I don't know whether it actually... [cross-talk]

CATHERINE TRAPANI: It... yeah, I'm told they're close... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...facilitates such a thing... [cross-talk]

CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...I'm told they're close so that was November 2018, I've been... [cross-talk]

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

CATHERINE TRAPANI: ...talking with DYCD, I know the intent to, to, to do this and that they almost have regulations but we're, we're all still waiting.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, really frustrating, totally unacceptable at this point so...

CATHERINE TRAPANI: Right.

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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80... over 80 percent of our youth that are currently in school are registered with some type of education program, we have 100 percent of our kids that currently have stable housing and about 92 percent of our kids that are employed through our program so... the funding is really important for us.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sounds successful.

KRISTINA COLEMAN: It is very successful.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's perhaps something that we should be expanding, congratulation Kristina... [cross-talk]

KRISTINA COLEMAN: Thank you... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...look forward to continuing to work with you on that. We should be funding it by the city... [cross-talk]

KRISTINA COLEMAN: Yeah... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: ...for sure, supplementing your private funding.

KRISTINA COLEMAN: Yes, you should.

MICHELLE YANCHE: Hi, Michelle Yanche, Associate Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services, we're a member of human services council so I want to underscore what Michelle said about the

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need for rightsizing our contracts and a particular funding indirect and I also want to join with my colleague Gregory as a member of the Campaign for Children and lending our voice for the need for salary parity in early childhood. I won't be reading my testimony, but I want to use my time to underscore two and focus on two areas in foster care. One... the first is the crisis in residential care and the second is to lend our voice and support of the need to fund Fair Futures and expand the incredible model that is having such great success with young people. First on residential care, the recent media coverage of the Children's Center shined a spotlight on what has been a really ongoing crisis. Councilman Levin at your budget roundtable you may remember me talking about our staff who are under the most incredible stress dealing with our most traumatized youth and who are the most likely to be physically assaulted at work. These are the same young people that we're... that we're talking about here. We of course, are in full support of addressing the crisis at the Children's Center but we want to underscore that the crisis is, is not limited to the walls of the 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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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, couldn't have said it better myself, thank you. I want to thank all of you for the amazing work that you do day in and day out on the front lines helping and advocating and supporting, you know New Yorkers in need and, and I just want to thank you for all that great work and your organizations as well. Thank you.

MICHELLE YANCHE: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Ditto.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to let everybody know that there is at six p.m. scheduled to be a charter revision commission hearing in the chambers so I think we might have to move next door if we, we go past six but just right there into the Committee Room. Okay, next panel Georgia Boothe, Children's Aid; Danielle Fuller, Forestdale; Dawn O'Toole, Forestdale; Dawn Saffayeh, HeartShare St. Vincent's; Jess Dannhauser, Graham Windham; and Raysa Rodriguez, Citizens Committee for Children.

[off mic dialogue]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry and one more Dareth Ogle.

DANIELLE BROWN FULLER: Alright, thank you honorable Council, ACS leadership, staff and

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esteemed guests. My name is Danielle Brown Fuller,
and I am Director of Youth Development at Forestdale,
a family service organization out of Queens. I am
here today to ask for your support for the Fair
Futures initiative to make sure all young people in
care are given the supports they need to succeed and
I'm also here with a message, together we can do
this. Since 1854, when Forestdale was founded, we
have helped tens of thousands of youth, adolescents
gain skills that will serve them long after they
leave the child welfare system. Samantha, not her
real name, after being separated from her family in
foster care, struggled with trusting people, sharing
her feelings, she needed what any young person
needed, a safe home, education, healthcare among
other things. In working with our life coach, she has
been able to go back to college and she's studying
psychology, she rents an apartment with her... near her
sister, she has full medical coverage, but the
statistics are staggering for other youth. There's
joblessness, homelessness, pregnancy but there is
good news, we have discovered what works with the
right support, a coach, education, career services
kids can thrive and that is what Fair Futures is

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about. Together we can do this. New York can be the first state to offer comprehensive support for youth ages 15 to 26 and in doing so change the system and thousands of lives in the process. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

RAYSA RODRIGUEZ: Hi, good evening. Thank you, Chair Levin and Chair King, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Raysa Rodriguez, I'm the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens Committee for Children. COMMITTEE CLERKC is an independent multi issue child advocacy organization. You have my testimony, COMMITTEE CLERKC has done a comprehensive budget analysis or analysis on the impact of the preliminary budget which I have attached to the... to the testimony and I won't read my entire testimony but I'll, I'll highlight or focus on two key areas; early childhood education and family homelessness. In the area of early education I will echo what many of my colleagues have already said and what Chair Levin has already said as well earlier in the day regarding the significance of this time really to bring about much needed change to the early 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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much needed services so please continue to shed a light on that and then lastly, the need for prevention. We know, we continue to hear home base is a resource for communities, but we know that its not doing all that it can to prevent entry into shelters. Thank you.

JESS DANNHAUSER: Good evening Chair King, good evening Chair Levin, thank you for having us here today. I'm Jess Dannhauser, the president and CEO of Graham Windham. You've heard a lot about Fair Futures already, you're going to hear a little bit more but I, I want to echo something you said earlier Chair King that we can decide to do something about this now or our young people are going to end up in other systems. We've been talking about this issue forever. I was in graduate school in 2003 and I was studying this, I've been working in this city in and around these issues for 15 years and we've been talking about it and talking about it now is the time to do something. It seems like an awfully noisy time in our system, lots of new ideas, lots of great ideas, a lot of priorities but we cannot go another year and let down our kids again, we have to see them through one of the hardest transitions of their life.

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Kids who have families with resources don't have to make the choices our kids have to make, and I just appreciate your leadership on this issue, I appreciate you starting the morning and finishing your day on this issue Chair Levin. ACS says the right things, they are committed to these kids, they've done a lot of good things but we can't get away from the reality that only about 12 percent of the kids are getting this type of service post-foster care because philanthropy has stepped up its time for the city to step up and show the country how this can be done well, you know the stats at Graham Windham we started the program five years ago, we're coaching 400 kids now, 92 percent of the kids who reach aging out have graduated from high school, it is doable. We have to stop blaming the kids, we act like those stats are their fault, it's not, it's the adults and I just want to ask you to try to clear out the noise and once and for all help us compel the city to do something by these kids. Thank you very much.

DAWN SAFFAYEH: Good afternoon Chair Levin and Chair King, little, little more about Fair Futures here. So, I'm Dawn Saffayeh, I'm the Executive Director at HeartShare St. Vincent's, we're

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a... we're a nonprofit located in downtown Brooklyn. We serve over 6,000 New Yorkers every year, 600 of them in foster care and our goal is to keep every child safe and with a loving family but that's now all we try... strive to do. Removing a child from their families is the most extreme event that can ever happen in their lives, often times due to this loss and the pain associated with missing their parents and adjusting a new home youth fall behind in school and cannot catch up. The current foster care system is primarily based around a case planner model, case planners are required to work with all parties in the system; judges, attorneys, birth parents, foster parents, the young person too to work towards permanency, a permanent home. This can take months, years or for some children never happens and there is no one in the system that is just focusing on the needs of that young person. So, this is especially problematic for teens and young adults who have limited help to catch up in school and navigate middle and high school. We hear from young people that they are often forgotten by this system when they become a teenager, we heard that from Gabby this morning at our rally and this is evidenced in the

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data. Only 22 percent of 700 youth who age out of the foster care system every year have a high school or high school equivalency degree. We think this is shameful, we know that we can do better, we know that our kids can do it with just a little bit of support, a very small investment by the city that will pay dividends, it's not only the... morally the right thing to do it will pay dividends for the city financially. So, I'm going to leave it to Dareth to, to talk more, we have one more youth speaker.

DARETH OGLE: Hi, good evening Chair Levin, Chair King, members of the Committee on General Welfare and Juvenile Justice. My name is Dareth Ogle, I'm here to testify on behalf of the Fair Futures initiative campaign and the American dream program of HeartShare St. Vincent's. I'm 22 years old and have recently discharged out of foster care. I entered foster care at two and a half years of age and remained in foster care for 20 years. I've been in 25 plus foster homes and about half of that is how many schools I've been in. At times I felt very misfortunate and discouraged in regard to my academic future, however, I later realized the advantages of being in care in my adolescence when I

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entered college in 2014. I was introduced to the American Dream program aimed to help youth to successfully navigate through their higher education experience. I then was assigned a coach who would assist in that navigation. Since then I've learned a great deal. Our coaches they play an invaluable role in foster youth academic pursuits as they provide academic, moral and base, baselined emotional support while in school and thereafter. Coaches in the American Dream program act as guardrails and advocates. My coach like many other coaches often serve as a liaison between executive personnel and students. Having a coach apart from my case planning team has made a great difference in my experience of being in... being a foster youth in higher education. HeartShare St. Vincent's... HeartShare, HeartShare St. Vincent coaches assure that students receive optimal support and resources for their financial and emotional needs. In my personal experience the support from the Vice President of the American Dream program down to the coaches have, have always inspired me to keep going whether it was a holiday card containing motivational quotes or a hand knitted scarf throughout the winter, those small gestures are

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what made it bearable to push through in the most
challenging moments of doubt and confusion, sorry.
Coaches ensure... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You can keep going...

[cross-talk]

DARETH OGLE: ...that should we need
anything that they're an email, text or telephone
call away. As a result, May of 2018 I graduated
University at Albany with a Bachelor of Arts.

[applause]

DARETH OGLE: Thank you. Moving forward,
foster youth need to know that there are measures and
resources in place that are intended to continue
investing in the... in their academic success. Foster
youth also need to know that there are people in
their government who want to see them succeed and
will continue to provide opportunities to, to do just
that. Programs like the American Dream... like the
American Dream allow foster youth that, that chance
as well as the opportunity to break many generational
cycles of formerly uneducated working-class families.
Allocating the proper resources and funding for
programs relative to academic success of foster youth
is vital to society as well as the upholding of the

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mission and values of human service organizations throughout New York State. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, thank you.

GEORGIA BOOTHE: My name is Georgia Boothe and I'm the Vice President for Child Welfare at the Children's Aid Society and I am here today... you have my testimony so I'm not going to read it. I want to just highlight a few things in the budget that I think are important you... important that you've heard from my colleagues today, you were at the, the rally, thank you very much for being there and for having us here today Chair Levin and Chair King. To talk about Fair Futures, it... at Children's Aid we have our next generation center in the Bronx in the South Bronx and we, we work with young people that are aging out of the foster care system to make sure they continue their educational goals, that they hold on to the housing that we're able to, to get for them, that they see... you know that they see that they can, you know get a job and keep a job and we provide training and internships with the support of a lot of private funders to allow us to do that and so young

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people have that opportunity. As you heard from my colleagues it's a small investment, we need to be able to do this to help young people, you know get on their feet and, and, and move forward. I also want to just give a, a quick example of the importance of, you know funding our nonprofits appropriately. Our homemaker program has been around since 1933, started in partnership with Eleanor Roosevelt and the Junior League and we've been providing support to families in their homes helping them to take care of their little children and preventing them from ending up in foster care. We've not had a COLA increase in that funding since 2011, actually we had one COLA increase, since 2011 and we're at the point now where every year we're subsidizing a 300,000 dollar deficit on that contract because it's not appropriately funded and we're at the point as a nonprofit as you've heard through the human service council that we can't continue to operate these contracts without the support and resources that we need and so, you know that's an important thing to mention and just one final point that I want to make. I know ACS we're all of us going through the RFP process for our preventative programs, we know preventative programs

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work, you've heard about that in terms of the lower amount of kids coming into foster care and how many families we're, we're supporting as we, we work to implement family first at the federal level in New York City. One of the things I, I just want to highlight as we're implanting more evidence-based models into our preventative portfolio is the need for support for our child welfare work, workforce. You've heard about parody in, in, in child care and in other areas, this is desperately needed in our child welfare workforce, we can't keep kids safe, we can't do the work that we need to do if we don't have the right staff that's trained and that's being compensated well and so as we're moving through this process I would ask you all to keep that in mind in terms of making sure that these contracts and the budget models support nonprofits to pay our staff well so we can do the work that's needed for the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Yes, now I... it's as if we're playing a game of chicken with, with the not for profits sector that we entirely rely on to deliver services by perpetually underfunding 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