

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS

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April 28, 2021
Start: 1:02 p.m.
Recess: 2:55 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing (Virtual Room 2)

B E F O R E: Ben Kallos
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Inez Barron
James Gennaro
Mark Gjonaj
Bill Perkins
Helen Rosenthal
Diana Ayala

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

Michelle Jackson, Executive Director
Human Service Council

Catherine Trapani, Executive Director
Homeless Services United

Nora Moran, Director of Policy and
Advocacy
United Neighborhood Houses

David Cohen, Deputy Political Director
32 BJ

Michael Polenberg, Vice President of
Governmental Affairs
Safe Horizons

Nicole McVinua, Director of Policy
Urban Pathways

Tierra Labrada, Senior Policy Analyst
Supportive Housing Network of New York

Nadia Chait, Director of Policy and
Advocacy
Coalition for Behavioral Health

Molly Krakowski, Senior Director of
Governmental Affairs
JASA

Towaki Komatsu, New York City Resident

Charmaine Lathan, member
32 BJ

Monique Smith, member
32 BJ

Amber Drummond, member
32 BJ

Anthony Kenna, member
32 BJ

Francisco Batista, member
32 BJ

Shaquille Shepherd, member
32 BJ

Bernice Carter, member
32 BJ

Tracey Holmes, member
32 BJ

Nefertiti Elwoods, member
32 BJ

Juan Reyes, member
32 BJ

Raphael Cruz, member
32 BJ

Quintana Omed [sp?], member
32 BJ

Terri Batson, member
32 BJ

Kofe Shutawae [sp?], member
32 BJ

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sergeants, if we can
3 begin the records. PC recording is underway.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording to the cloud
5 all set.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Back up is rolling.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sergeant Biondo, take
8 us away.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon,
10 everyone, and welcome to today's remote New York City
11 Council hearing for the Committee on Contracts. At
12 this time, will all panelists please turn on their
13 video for verification purposes? To minimize
14 disruptions, please place all electronic devices to
15 vibrate or silent mode. If you would like to submit
16 testimony, please send via email to
17 testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Again, that is
18 testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Thank you for your
19 cooperation. Chair Kallos, we are ready to begin.
20 Chair, you're on mute.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Good afternoon.
22 Welcome to this virtual hearing of the New York City
23 Council's Committee on Contracts. My name is Ben
24 Kallos and I am Chair of this committee. For those
25 of you who are watching locally, please feel free to

2 participate in the meeting by tweeting me @BenKallos.
3 Before we dive in to today's hearing, I'd like to
4 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council member
5 Gjonaj as well as Council member Ayala. Today, we
6 will be hearing three bills all geared towards
7 improving working conditions for the city's
8 hardworking non-profit human service provider
9 workers. The first bill, Introduction 1995,
10 sponsored by Council member Ayala, seeks to improve
11 the training requirements for security guards
12 employed to work at our homeless shelters.
13 Specifically, this bill would require all contracted
14 shelter operators to ensure that all security guards
15 working at Department of Homeless Services shelters
16 receive 40 hours of training after they were hired,
17 including 10 hours of shelter specific training as
18 well as an eight hour annual refresher course. The
19 second bill we are gathering feedback on today comes
20 from Council member Moya and also relates to security
21 guards working at homeless shelters. If enacted,
22 Introduction 2006 would require any entities
23 operating shelters pursuant to contracts with the
24 city to pay these security guard workers a prevailing
25 wage. Finally, legislation we've been working on for

2 quite some time, Introduction 2137, would extend the
3 prevailing wage measure to all human service workers
4 providing services pursuant to a city contract. Each
5 year, the city contracts with human service providers
6 to deliver a range of social services, including
7 service for seniors, foster care, after school care,
8 mental health counseling, shelter, and housing
9 programs, food assistance, to about 3 million New
10 Yorkers and yet these workers face their own
11 financial hardship, as you may have read about.
12 Wages within non-profit service providers who
13 contract with the city are devastatingly low and,
14 sadly, sometimes the service provider workers are so
15 underpaid that they, themselves, or forced into
16 relying on the same public assistance programs they
17 help to provide. [Inaudible 00:03:12], for example,
18 work closely with the New York Times and Catherin
19 Trapani and Josh Dean at Human NYC to uncover
20 numerous stories of homeless shelter workers who are,
21 themselves, facing closing and unsecured living in
22 homeless shelter and it's not good enough. For far
23 too long, these workers have carried out the work of
24 delivering essential services which, during Covid 19,
25 were more important than ever without being fairly

2 compensated and it is time to move beyond the
3 heartfelt thanks and appreciation and even applause
4 for the workers to a prevailing wage. And what we
5 are talking about here is it isn't the nonprofits
6 fault. The city actually sets the wages in the
7 contracts. The city is actually forcing these wages
8 down to try to cut costs wherever they can in, so
9 often, that it is on the backs of our nonprofit
10 workers. And so the city can and must do better. A
11 prevailing wage simply must become the standard and,
12 if we have to enact laws to enforce it, then we will,
13 which is why we are introducing-- Sorry. Why we are
14 hearing these bills today. Now, I wanted to also
15 note that we are still going through a pandemic. We
16 are seeing incredible financial difficulties. The
17 city received a lot of support from the federal and
18 state government. Our human services providers
19 actually faced a cut during the pandemic and one of
20 the issues being that we actually just last week
21 announced restoring that cut to indirect services and
22 we have to make sure that we keep our nonprofit
23 providers going. And another big piece of this is
24 whatever we pass in the Council cannot be unfunded
25 mandates. We need to baseline this funding in the

2 Council and in the budget to make sure that we can
3 pay for it. We can't just tell the nonprofit
4 providers to do more with less which is a frequent
5 refrain. I would like to thank all the providers
6 that are joining us today and, before we begin the
7 testimony, I would like to take a moment to thank the
8 Contracts Committee staff, our outgoing legislative
9 counsel, Josh Kingsley, who is filling in while our
10 returning legislative counsel, Alex Polinov, was on
11 paternity leave. And I am so grateful that our staff
12 at the Council is taking we. Here, at the Council, I
13 believe we offered 12 weeks leave, plus an additional
14 four weeks which, coupled together, becomes 16 weeks
15 and I am seeing the Council not that that is, in
16 fact, the case. I also want to thank our policy
17 analyst, Leah Scrupiak, who has really been stepping
18 up. Our financial analyst, Frank Sarno, and finance
19 unit head, Jon Russell, for all their hard work. I
20 want to just speak about prevailing wage because
21 people might not know what it is. I am a labor
22 lawyer. There are different wages. There is the
23 minimum wage, federally. That is around seven
24 dollars. Here in New York City, it's \$15. Not so
25 around the state of New York. There is a living wage

2 which is something that can be bargained for which
3 is, theoretically, higher than the minimum wage.
4 Here in New York City, the living wage is lower than
5 the minimum wage. And then there is the prevailing
6 wage. Prevailing wage is determined by state law and
7 it has the comptroller go to a field to find all the
8 people who perform a specific task should we then
9 what would be a bargaining unit or what would be a
10 title and find out what the salary is in that sector.
11 Then they say that this is not the prevailing wage is
12 and that would be what goes into the contracts. In
13 the alternative, if 50 percent of the people in the
14 title were represented by a labor union, then what
15 ever was collectively bargained between all labor
16 union, the nonprofit providers, and the city in a
17 three-part negotiation would become the prevailing
18 wage. This is actually a model for how we were able
19 to raise wages for specific human service workers
20 within daycare and we were able to raise wages for
21 pre-k. And so, that is actually how we were able to
22 do it. I would like to now turn it over to Council
23 member Ayala followed by Council member Moya. I will
24 turn it over to them. Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Good afternoon and
3 thank you, Chair Kallos. I am Council member Diana
4 Ayala and I am really happy to be here today. We
5 will hear my bill, Intro 1995. As was stated earlier
6 by Council member Kallos, this bill would require
7 that all Department of Homeless Service shelters
8 security guards receive upwards of 40 hours of
9 training after they are hired, including 10 hours of
10 shelter specific training, as well as an eight hour
11 refresher training annually thereafter. While strong
12 training standards are required for security officers
13 working at city run shelters, security staff at
14 privately operated shelters are not afforded the same
15 level of training. In fact, three out of four of
16 these security officers are not required to be
17 trained at all. It is imperative that all staff
18 responsible for protecting residents residing in our
19 shelters be given the tools that they need to create
20 a safe and welcoming environment. Security officers
21 protect some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.
22 Their work is demanding and, at times, dangerous.
23 This required training would require the best
24 possible services to shelter clients so that the
25 individuals and families who use the system feel safe

2 accessing the services they need to get back on their
3 feet. We have heard from many dedicated security
4 officers that they have deep compassion for the
5 residents that they serve and want access to the
6 tools that will help them do their jobs most
7 efficiently. Officers and privately run shelters
8 face stress not just from conditions in a challenging
9 work site, but from the risk to their health during
10 the coronavirus pandemic and also from employment
11 conditions which place many of them in a position of
12 economic instability. In this moment in time, when
13 our city and our country is reckoning with how to
14 enact racial justice, we must take the opportunity to
15 look at every aspect of how we serve and support
16 black and brown communities. The majority of the
17 city's residents, the majority of people using the
18 shelter system, and the majority of the security
19 workforce that serves them are black and brown. In
20 addition to making shelters safer, this legislation
21 will offer frontline workers an opportunity to grow
22 their skills and to create a pathway to advancement
23 and upward mobility, making these essential jobs
24 better is a matter of racial and economic justice for
25 the sake of these workers, for their families, and

2 for the people that they serve. I look forward to
3 hearing from you all today and to finally getting
4 this is bill passed. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you, Council
6 member Ayala. I couldn't have said it better.
7 Within the human services, 80 percent of our workers
8 are women and 80 percent of those women are women of
9 color and, as we saw at the beginning of the
10 pandemic, so much money was directed at big
11 corporations and, by creating prevailing wage and
12 having these training requirements, that should be
13 putting the money where it needs to go for a worker
14 led recovery. And not only that, these dollars will
15 be going right into the pockets of people who will be
16 spending it in our local economy. I would like to
17 now turn it over to Francisco Moya who, perhaps, has
18 the most realistic background. And so, I am hoping
19 that is him, but it could just be the background for
20 taking me out.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: It is me. It is
22 me, Chair. Thank you, Chair Kallos. And thank you,
23 everyone. I am here to talk about Intro 2006. As we
24 know, throughout this pandemic, we have seen over and
25 over again the health and economic disparities, the

2 rising cost-of-living, in the impact on the
3 communities that were hardest hit by Covid. New York
4 City's homeless shelter workers know what it is like
5 to be on the front lines of a crisis and that is why
6 they signed up. They signed up to care for New
7 Yorkers who find themselves in a personal state of
8 emergency. They are the very people who continue to
9 make sacrifices for countless New Yorkers, especially
10 throughout this pandemic. For us to work towards the
11 real recovery from Covid means that we cannot leave
12 behind those that have suffered the brunt of this
13 pandemic. How can we help New Yorkers get back on
14 their feet if they are barely making ends meet? We
15 cannot accept private contractors taking public
16 dollars and then paying workers poverty wages without
17 meaningful benefits. Prevailing wages can mean a
18 worker doesn't have to work multiple jobs Jamaicans
19 meet. Prevailing wages can mean that a worker has a
20 better shot of moving towards a permanent home.
21 Prevailing wages can mean a step forward to closing
22 the racial pay gaps. And while this doesn't solve
23 the issues to address the inequalities, it is a step
24 in the right direction. It is how we will recover
25 from this pandemic equitably and with dignity. Amber

2 Drummond, a homeless shelter security guard expressed
3 that she is just here fighting for an equitable
4 standard of life that all Americans should have. We
5 need to be part of this fight and this is one step
6 closer to doing that. We need to step up for the
7 respect and the dignity of all workers. I stand with
8 Amber and I stand with all my brothers and sisters
9 who are predominantly black and brown serving mostly
10 black and brown New Yorkers. I want to take this
11 opportunity to applaud the members of 32 BJ for their
12 tireless dedication and for their fighting alongside
13 me and the working class New Yorkers to build a fair
14 and more equitable city and I want to thank also my
15 colleagues who have signed on and for those who will
16 be joining me in hoping to pass this bill. So, thank
17 you very much, Chair, and thank you for the
18 opportunity to speak on my bill.

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you both very
20 much. We're going to first hear from Michelle
21 Jackson at Human Services Council followed by Captain
22 Trapani at Homeless Services United and Norma Rand at
23 United Neighborhood Houses. After that, we're going
24 to hold our questions for those three and, at the
25 conclusion of the third person's testimony, we will

2 open it up to questions. We will then hear from
3 David Cohen from 32 BJ, take questions. We will then
4 hear from SHNNY, Safe Horizons, Urban Pathways, JASA,
5 and the Coalition for Behavioral Health, take
6 questions. For those three groups, we will have a
7 five minute clock on speakers and then, after that,
8 we have about 20 people signed up to speak and there
9 will be a two minute clock and we will reserve
10 questions until those folks have all had a chance to
11 speak. So there will be five opportunities for folks
12 to ask questions and bill sponsors will have a 10
13 minute clock on their questions and all other Council
14 members will have a five minute clock. And I will
15 turn it over to committee counsel.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
17 Kallos. My name is Alex Polinov, counsel to the
18 Contracts Committee of the New York City Council.
19 Before we begin testimony, I would like to remind
20 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
21 called upon to testify, at which point you will be
22 unmuted by the host. I will be calling on panelists
23 to testify individually, so please listen for your
24 name to be called. During the hearing, if a Council
25 member would like to ask a question, please use the

2 zoom raise hand function and I will call on you in
3 order. As the Chair mentioned, we will be limiting
4 Council member questions to 10 minutes for the bill
5 sponsors, which includes the time it takes for the
6 panelists to answer the questions and five minutes
7 for the other committee members. Please note that for
8 the ease of this virtual hearing, there will not be a
9 second round of questioning outside of questions from
10 the committee Chair. All hearing participants should
11 submit their testimony to testimony@Council.NYC.gov.
12 Since the administration is not present, we will now
13 turn directly to public testimony. I would like to
14 remind everyone that, unlike during our typical
15 Council hearings, we will be calling on these
16 individuals one by one to testify. Each panelist, as
17 the Chair mentioned, will be given 10 minutes to
18 speak and please begin once the sergeant started the
19 timer. Council members who have questions for a
20 particular panelist should use the zoom raise hand
21 function and, again, we will call on you after the
22 panelists have completed their testimony. For the
23 panelists themselves, once your name is called, a
24 member of our staff will unmute you and the sergeant-
25 at-arms will set the timer give you the go-ahead to

2 begin. Please wait for the sergeant to make this
3 announcement before delivering your testimony. We
4 will now turn to--

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Just a quick
6 clarification. Five minutes for the first panelists
7 for nonprofits in large organizations and then we
8 will go back to two minutes for individuals.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you,
10 Chair. As the Chair mentioned, we will turn-- we
11 will begin testimony with Michelle Jackson followed
12 by Catherine Trapani and then Nora Moran. Ms.
13 Jackson, you may begin as soon as the sergeant calls
14 time.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

16 MICHELLE JACKSON: Great. Thank you so
17 much. Good afternoon, Chairperson Kallos, members of
18 the New York City Council Committee on Contracts, and
19 other Council members who have joined today. My name
20 is Michelle Jackson. I am the Executive Director of
21 the Human Services Council, a membership organization
22 representing over 170 human service organizations in
23 New York City and they range in services from
24 childcare to senior services, mental health services,
25 homeless services, and everything in between. I

2 first really want to thank you Chair Kallos, and that
3 Council members here today for your work in helping
4 pass the restoration of indirect funding and
5 baselining for next year. That is a huge win for the
6 sector. Council member Kallos, you have been a real
7 champion for this and we really appreciate your work.
8 And all of the Council members who really To this
9 issue alive. It is definitely in the weeds and, but
10 real important money and you will hear from members
11 today who will testify also about, you know, how much
12 that money means to them. So, a huge win for us.
13 Unfortunately, the cuts to indirect are not the only
14 crisis that demands an immediate solution in the
15 human services sector. The need to invest in the
16 human services workforce is amendments and something
17 that the Human Services Council and other coalitions
18 you will hear from today have talked about over the
19 years city contracts currently pay essential human
20 services workers poverty wages which is simply an
21 outrage. Tax dollars, in particular, should not be
22 asked to fund poverty level wages and there must be a
23 dedicated effort at the city level to lift all of the
24 salaries and this is not, by the way, not just a city
25 issue. It is also a state issue that we are also

2 advocating for at the state level. HSC is in support
3 of any effort to lift wages of not just human
4 services workers, but any labor force that is not
5 paid an equitable wage. The Human Services sector
6 exists to eliminate poverty and one way to do that is
7 to pay equitable wages across sectors. The human
8 services workforce is primarily women and people of
9 color who do lifesaving work as we have seen in Covid
10 in our communities and have seen low and stagnant
11 wages for decades. Establishing a prevailing wage
12 could be an important vehicle to move to higher and
13 more appropriate wages established not using current
14 salary levels, but comparable salary levels in
15 government and the private sector. The average human
16 services worker is paid between 20 and 40 percent
17 less than they would if they were employed by
18 government or in hospitals or the private sector.
19 So, while we support the prevailing wage for all
20 human services workers, we are very-- you know, the
21 wage schedule would be very important because the
22 wage schedule only looks that current salaries. It
23 will just kind of create a system of poverty wages
24 for the human services workforce. If the city is
25 ready to make that necessary adjustment and then also

2 fund this on human services contracts, this will be a
3 huge positive step for human services workers. There
4 isn't a wage schedule for human services workers.
5 Government sets the salaries on contracts or doesn't
6 set them, but certainly doesn't provide enough money
7 in the contract to pay equitable wages and, in fact,
8 we've had some providers who have one RFPs with the
9 city and been told that they pay their workers too
10 much on certain contracts in those have to be
11 adjusted and usually downward. So, we are in full
12 support of a prevailing wage for human services
13 workers that does holistic we so that we do not
14 support the bill only for shelter workers or shelter
15 security guards because we need to have a holistic
16 view of the human services sector. And we need to
17 raise wages across all salary lines and staff lines.
18 If you do want at a time, you create further
19 disparity and organizations and, if it is also
20 unfunded, it creates an unfunded mandate on
21 organizations who are already struggling before
22 Covid, certainly during Covid more so to make ends
23 meet. If the city is ready with this prevailing wage
24 bill to create a schedule that lists the wages of all
25 human services workers then make the necessary

2 investment to fund this on government contracts--
3 and, by the way, when you find it on government
4 contracts, nonprofit still have to come to the table
5 with their own private fundraising part of city
6 contracts, but many are willing to make that decision
7 in order to lift up the wages of their workers. It
8 is something that they absolutely want to work in
9 partnership with the city with. So, if the city is
10 ready to make that necessary investment, it well,
11 perhaps, be the largest investment nationally in the
12 sector and would help ensure fair and equitable wages
13 for essential workers that will uplift our
14 communities most impacted by Covid 19 and better
15 prepare our city for the next disaster. Human
16 services workers were out there from day one keeping
17 people safe at home and alive and they have not been
18 rewarded for their work in a meaningful way. We have
19 seen the disparities of it being a women centered,
20 people of color centered workforce exacerbated during
21 Covid and they couldn't stay home while others could
22 and so, in closing, I just want to, again, thank you,
23 Chair Kallos, for creating this legislation and for
24 an important step forward in talking about the

2 importance of the human services workforce and the
3 need to--

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 MICHELLE JACKSON: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.

7 Trapani. Or Ms. Jackson. Excuse me. Unless there
8 any questions from the members, we will move to the
9 next panelist.

10 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We are going to
11 hold questions until all three are done.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Got it. Okay. In
13 that case, we will next hear from Catherine Trapani
14 followed by Nora Moran and then David Cohen. Ms.
15 Trapani, you may begin once the--

16 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Just one moment. I
17 just want to acknowledge we have been joined by
18 Council member Helen Rosenthal who was integral in
19 getting the indirect to begin with and has been a key
20 partner since. You may now begin. Sorry.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

22 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Thank you so much
23 and I will never mind pausing to say thank you to
24 Council member Rosenthal for helping with indirect
25 and I owe a lot of thanks to you, Chair Kallos. So,

2 thank you very much. My name is Catherine Trapani.
3 I am the Executive Director at Homeless Services
4 United and we are a coalition of about 50 nonprofit
5 agencies surveying homeless and at risk adults and
6 families in New York City. Every day are member
7 programs work with thousands of homeless families and
8 individuals preventing shelter entry whenever
9 possible and working to and homelessness through
10 counseling, social services, healthcare, legal
11 services, and public benefit assistance among many
12 other support. We are really grateful to you, Chair
13 Kallos, and members of this committee and the Council
14 and your commitment to supporting our workforce and
15 for everyone and everything that you do and your
16 leadership on homeless issues in general. I think
17 that we are going to disagree a little bit on the
18 mechanisms, but on the merits, we are with you. Our
19 workers work incredibly hard and have been here as
20 that deserved to be fairly compensated. As Michelle
21 pointed out in her remarks, a prevailing wage
22 schedule doesn't actually exist for human services
23 workers, so we are concerned that this mechanism to
24 get to the wage parity in equity that we all seek may
25 not be a viable pathway to get to our shared goals.

2 Homeless Services United supports increasing wages
3 for all human services workers and frontline staff in
4 our programs. For decades, the city has paid our
5 nonprofit workers a fraction of what they pay their
6 own city employees for the same work and that
7 absolutely must change. The intention of the Council
8 to increase wages for nonprofit workers is
9 commendable and, like I said, we are just so proud of
10 our staff. We agree that it is time to increase
11 their pay and wholeheartedly support the mechanism to
12 do so in your budget response. We should give
13 everybody equal of at least three percent now and set
14 aside a fund to reserve for wage increases that can
15 be applied on a contract by contract basis so that
16 the wages are actually funded in advance of a mandate
17 taking place. Sorry. I'm trying to summarize. I
18 have more detailed remarks and written testimony that
19 we will be emailing to the Council, but I think like
20 the point is that, you know, city agencies like DHS
21 had a model budget process and in that process, they
22 were supposed to update the rates that shelter
23 providers were paid in order to provide high quality
24 service. Throughout the time that we were working on
25 the model budget, our members repeatedly asked the

2 Department of Homeless Services to look at wages and
3 we were repeatedly told know. It has been an uphill
4 battle to get them to adjust salaries at all and to
5 do so, you've had to prove that a job is vacant for a
6 certain amount of time or the turnover is abnormally
7 high and it was just a really inadequate exercise.
8 So, I think that the Council's proposal to create a
9 fund to set aside some money restricted to personnel
10 cost increases and apply it on a contract by contract
11 basis is the way that we are going to get to know
12 more equitable wage scale because if you were to pass
13 a bill that has a mandate for a schedule that doesn't
14 exist, I just worry that we will never get it done.
15 So, like we have learned a lot of lessons. I think
16 the indirect is a good one where the city can make
17 this promise and say, oh, we're going to do this
18 thing and then on a whim change their minds and you
19 are sort of stuck with a mandate and a process for
20 calculating a rate and then no way to actually pay
21 for it. And so, when I looked at these bills, I just
22 had that fear that that would happen again. So, I
23 think that if we want to pay people, the best way to
24 do that is to put the fund in the contracts that the
25 contract level and baseline it and be done. So, that

2 is really the gist of our position. Our workers
3 deserve the money. We want to see it. But we have
4 some details in our testimony about some technical
5 challenges that we have with the bills as presented
6 that we would urge the Council to address if you
7 choose to go down this path to make sure that the
8 commitment that you are making is really real and
9 viable and something that can actually sustain our
10 workforce in the long term. So, with that, I will
11 and my testimony and thank you for your commitment to
12 our workforce and certainly, you know, answer
13 questions when the time comes at the end of the
14 panel.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.
16 Trapani. We will now hear from Nora Moran, the last
17 member this panel. At which point, we will turn to
18 the Council members for questions. Ms. Nora Moran,
19 you may begin when the sergeants call time.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

21 NORA MORAN: Thank you so much for the
22 opportunity to testify today. My name is Nora Moran.
23 I am the director of policy and advocacy at United
24 Neighborhood Houses. I also want to echo the thanks
25 that both Michelle and Catherine said about indirect.

2 It's really wonderful that that funding has been
3 restored and that, you know, community based
4 organizations are able to be, you know, in a more
5 sustainable and financial path going forward. So I'm
6 here to testify today specifically about Intro 2137.
7 I want to share some comments and perspectives from
8 the settlement house perspective and from UNH's
9 perspective. As folks may know, settlement houses
10 employ nearly 25,000 New Yorkers. These people often
11 live in the communities and neighborhoods that they
12 serve. Many of them have gone through and come up
13 the organizations themselves and now have decided to
14 commit their career to working there. UNH recently
15 conducted a study of settlement house employees which
16 the Fordham University graduate school of social
17 service where we found that a lot of these workers
18 see this work as their life's mission. They are very
19 dedicated to the settlement house model, to the
20 communities that they serve, but due to chronic
21 underfunding, many of these employees are subsisting
22 on wages far below the cost of living in New York
23 City. Settlement house staff, in our study, reported
24 that they were, quote, everything from skating by
25 financially to severely underpaid. They have many

2 financial debts around student debts and loans and,
3 you know, definitely a struggle with receiving wages
4 that are below a living wage. And so, you know,
5 regarding 2137, we absolutely support any effort to
6 raise wages of human services staff. We stand in
7 solidarity with the settlement house workforce who
8 have identified that, you know, low wages are problem
9 as well as their leadership. And we want to testify
10 today with comments and suggestions to strengthen
11 2137 should it move forward. So, the first
12 recommendation that we would offer is that, you know,
13 this legislation should have a section that covers
14 the exact job title that would be covered by the
15 bill. Right now it doesn't list specific titles.
16 There's a very broad range of titles in the human
17 services world. We want to make sure that this
18 legislation targets those positions that most need a
19 prevailing wage and most need to be supported with a
20 prevailing wage. So it would be, you know, great to
21 have a little bit more detail in the bill that
22 constitutes that out so that we are really targeting
23 support to, you know, lower wage frontline workers
24 who really need this additional support. The second
25 would be adding language that would really target the

2 requirements of the bill to employees whose salaries
3 are paid for by city contracts. A lot of, you know,
4 human service organizations, as you know, provide
5 services through city contracts as well as state
6 contracts, funding from the federal government, and
7 philanthropic funds. So, right now, 2137 does not
8 specify, you know, that the prevailing wage
9 requirements would apply just to employees whose
10 salaries are paid through city contract funds. We
11 think that, you know, targeting that could help
12 potentially ease some of the burdens that, you know,
13 human service organizations might face and also would
14 make sure that we were not, you know, leading New
15 York State and the federal government off the hook
16 for increasing funding for prevailing wages, as well.
17 We would hope that, you know, if something like this
18 did pass that there would be companion legislation in
19 a similar investment made at the state level in order
20 to make sure that, you know, the state was also
21 supporting organizations in the right way. And the
22 final is, you know, obviously that, you know, any
23 prevailing wages and any higher wages that are set
24 absolutely need to be paid for. We have seen, over
25 and over again, that, you know, unfortunately, when

2 times get tough, city government cuts funding to the
3 human services sector. We just experienced this with
4 indirect and we certainly would not want a scenario
5 where there was a mandate to pay a prevailing wage
6 and no funding in the contract in order to do that.
7 So, we would like to, you know, see provisions in the
8 bill that would nullify the line item funding tests
9 that to that prevailing wage. You know, we would not
10 want a scenario where, you know, the prevailing wage
11 was not able to be implemented because there was no
12 money in the contract and, at the end of the day, you
13 know, that only hurts the workforce who then would
14 not be able to have these higher wages. And the
15 final point that we will just raise is actually one,
16 you know, relating to the current budget. It is
17 great that the indirect cost rate initiative was
18 restored. It's also important to now, you know, look
19 at the nonprofit workforce and look again at the need
20 to increase cost-of-living adjustment and include
21 that in the FY 22 budget and we are asking that the
22 FY 22 budget include a three percent cola on the
23 personal services of all human services contracts and
24 I see my time is up, so thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.
3 Moran. We will now turn back to Chair Kallos for
4 questions for the panel.

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: I want to thank the
6 panel for working with us on this legislation to
7 begin with, working to try to get it as close as
8 possible. I understand the mandate that this can't
9 be unfunded. I understand the mandate that it can't
10 be just a requirement on providers to pay a
11 prevailing wage in the absence of actually a payment
12 and I completely support the call. So, I want to
13 thank you and I think the lack of questions from me
14 is just because of the fact that we have been working
15 so well and, with five minutes to testify, we have
16 gotten very good testimony that we can work with as
17 well as what you have submitted. Do any other
18 members have questions who wish to raise their hand?
19 I would like to acknowledge we been joined by Council
20 member Barron.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Seeing no
22 additional questions, Chair, if it is okay with you,
23 we will move to the next panel.

24 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Yes, please.
25

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay. Next, we
3 will hear from David Cohen followed by Michael
4 Polenberg and Nicole McVinua. Mr. Cohen, you may
5 begin when the sergeants call time.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

7 DAVID COHEN: Great. Thank you everyone.
8 My name is David Cohen. I'm the deputy political
9 director at 32 BJ. I'm just getting my zoom
10 logistics in order here. I'm reading testimony today
11 on behalf of 32 BJ president, Kyle Bragg. 32 BJ is
12 the largest building service union in the country
13 with 85,000 our members living in New York City Metro
14 area. 32 BJ strongly supports Intro 1995 and Intro
15 2006. These two bills provide needed and overdue
16 reforms and working conditions of security guards
17 that ensure the safety of the city's contract in
18 shelter system. It is something that 32 BJ has been
19 working on for a long time around contracted security
20 work throughout New York City. Intro 1995 addresses
21 the need for additional training for shelter security
22 guards and we thank Council member Ayala for carrying
23 that bill. And sorry if I didn't say good afternoon
24 to Chair Kallos and members of the committee. Good
25 afternoon. I'm trying not to read specifically.

2 Under the current practice, shelter regards may not
3 receive more than the minimum training required under
4 law. While the legal minimum might be sufficient for
5 a typical business, shelter, as we know, is not a
6 typical business. According to a report by the
7 Coalition for the Homeless, the primary reason for
8 homeless persons not returning to the shelter system
9 was safety. So, the city is commendable outreach
10 efforts to on housed persons will yield only small
11 returns along with the city shelters-- excuse me.
12 Sorry. Will yield only small returns so long as the
13 city shelters are perceived to be unsafe. With 40
14 hours of additional training, and that is the
15 industry standard, the city shelter guards will be
16 able to provide a more secure environment for shelter
17 residents and themselves. Crucially, in addition to
18 providing more advanced training that is not context
19 specific, Intro 1995 also requires training
20 specifically related to the shelter environment and
21 that is what, you know, we're going to year from
22 workers later on about the need for the shelters--
23 the need for this training in the shelters. I know
24 I'm out of time, so Intro 2006 would require shelter
25 security guards be paid prevailing wage. Security

2 guards at city run shelters are already paid the
3 prevailing wage and some security guards all their
4 wages fall after certain shelters were privatized.
5 As recently as highlighted in the New York Times
6 article, the competition among contractors for city
7 contracts, while perhaps to achieve lower costs, can
8 also create a race to the bottom on as to worker pay.
9 And I think we heard from previous panels about the
10 importance of paying our workers fairly, so, as a
11 result, those working at security and in shelters may
12 also be living at a shelter or facing housing
13 insecurity. So, our shelter system is supposed to
14 help solve the homelessness crisis, not create
15 additional homelessness. Paying these workers a
16 prevailing wage is not oppositional to the goals of
17 our shelter system, but furtherance of its goals.
18 So, lastly, these bills should ensure that those
19 workers that ensure the safety of the shelter
20 residents in compliance with the city's fire code are
21 also covered. These workers are also we need of
22 family sustaining wages. Moreover, many of these
23 workers provide security services and would benefit
24 from the additional training. So, we urge members of
25 the committee and the Council to pass Intro 1995 and

2 Intro 2006. 32 BJ strongly supports them. You're
3 going to hear from many workers today on why they
4 need the standard and why we need the training and I
5 greatly appreciate the committee's time and thank
6 you, again, to that Chairperson holding this
7 committee and, if I didn't think we sponsor on Intro
8 2006, Francisco Moya, also thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you so much.
10 We have been working with 32 BJ on this issue dating
11 back to before we had a hearing on Acacia. So, thank
12 you. I don't have questions just because of how much
13 work we have been doing on this. Do we have any
14 questions from Council members? Please feel free to
15 raise your hands if you do. Seeing nine, we will
16 thank David Cohen from 32 BJ.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
18 We are now going to continue with the next panel.
19 Next up is Michael Polenberg followed by Nicole
20 McVinua and then Tiara Labrada. Mr. Polenberg, you
21 may begin when the sergeants call time.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MICHAEL POLENBERG: Good afternoon,
24 Chair Kallos and members of the committee. Michael
25 Polenberg. I am vice president of government affairs

2 for Safe Horizon, the nation's largest nonprofit
3 victim services organization and I am here to testify
4 about Intro 2137. We are grateful to the Chair for
5 recognizing the need to address historically
6 inadequate wages that so many staff in our sector
7 receive. The long-standing belief, the reinforced
8 time and again through contracts that failed to cover
9 the full cost of service delivery that the efforts of
10 those who feed shelter and ensure the safety of
11 vulnerable New Yorkers can be purchased at a discount
12 must be refuted out right. The fact that the lowest
13 wages in our sector are so often reserved for our
14 staff of color is a stark example of the systemic
15 racism that is built into our contracts. These jobs
16 are also underpaid because they are seen as women's
17 work, a reality which compounds the role of
18 structural racism. At Safe Horizon, our staff have
19 continued to provide in person direct services
20 throughout the Covid 19 pandemic to victims of
21 violence and abuse in our domestic violence shelters,
22 our five child advocacy centers, and our street work
23 project for homeless youth. Where in person services
24 couldn't be offered safely, we quickly pivoted to
25 offer critical services remotely, including at our 24

2 our hotline, legal services, and many other programs.
3 There is no question our staff deserve a salary
4 commensurate with the difficult and complex work
5 inherent with responding each week to children and
6 adults with experienced harm. We greatly appreciate
7 the intent of 2137 and we have a few questions and
8 concerns about how it will be operationalized, some
9 of which have already been mentioned so far. You
10 know, we are worried when we don't see funding
11 attached to legislation that the administration will
12 say, fine. We will do this, but we are going to take
13 away on the indirect cost increase that we fought so
14 hard to get and that Council member Rosenthal and
15 others fought so hard to win. We would hate to see
16 the city decide to pit one of these funding sources
17 against the other. We are not sure, but in this has
18 been referenced today, what measures the comptroller
19 will take to set prevailing wage schedules for our
20 sector when no such thing exists currently and that
21 the already low rates will be codified, further
22 compounding the problem for the foreseeable future.
23 And the bill considers anyone who works for human
24 services provider, whether or not they are paid
25 through by the city contract to be covered by this

2 bill. That means staff covered by state contracts,
3 federal contracts, or other means. We are not sure
4 how operational you want would pass on a rate
5 increase to somebody paid for by estate contract.
6 So, we urge the Council to consider these and other
7 questions from stakeholders in our sector. We look
8 forward to continued discussions. I don't think in
9 all of-- you know, we have opened staff meetings at
10 Safe Horizons and quite regularly and I don't think
11 there is an issue that rises to the forefront as much
12 as the need to address salary inequities. So, we are
13 grateful to you, Chair Kallos, and to the full
14 Counsel for really trying to tackle this complex
15 issue and I am happy to take any questions. Thank
16 you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Mr.
18 Polenberg. Seeing no questions, I will move on to
19 the next panelist. Nicole McVinua is up next
20 followed by Tierra Labrada I and then Nadia Chait.
21 Ms. McVinua, you may begin when the sergeants call
22 time.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

24 NICHOLE MCVINUA: Good afternoon, Chair
25 Kallos and members of the committee. My name is

2 Nicole McVinua and I'm the director of policy at
3 Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to
4 provide testimony today. Urban Pathways is a
5 nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing
6 provider. We serve single adults through street
7 outreach, drop-in services, safe havens, extended
8 stay residences and permanent supportive housing.
9 Last year, we served over 3900 New Yorkers in need.
10 Wage equity in the human services sector is a
11 critical issue. I would echo Mr. Polenberg and that
12 this is the number one issue that is raised by our
13 staff. You know, employees working for nonprofit
14 organizations contracted by the city have their wages
15 set at much lower rates and receive fewer benefits
16 since city employees despite providing essential
17 services on behalf of the city. Wage equity is also
18 an issue of race and gender equity. 80 percent of
19 human services workers are people of color and 82
20 percent are women. Prior to the pandemic, 60 percent
21 of the workforce qualified for some sort of public
22 assistance and a recent New York Times article, as
23 was mentioned earlier, chronicled individuals who
24 work in our cities homeless shelters while also
25 living in them themselves. And we simply cannot

2 allow this to go on any longer. It is wrong to
3 design an industry that puts its own workforce in a
4 position to require the very services that they
5 provide. The poverty wages that are provided in our
6 contracts also make hiring in maintaining employees
7 extremely difficult and the high turnover rate of our
8 staff is reaching a level of crisis. And this also
9 negatively impacts, you know, the people that we
10 serve because they build relationships with these
11 folks that are really critical to their success. So,
12 that is why we are testifying in support of Intro
13 2137 today. The creation of human services
14 prevailing wage has the potential to increase wages
15 to a more appropriate level for the essential work of
16 the sector, but for this potential to be realized,
17 there are several factors that need to be considered.
18 Some have already been mentioned. The prevailing
19 wage must be based on comparable salary levels in the
20 government and private sector and not just on the
21 current low wages of the human services sector that
22 we see now because we don't want to codify those low
23 wages. In the sector should be included in creating
24 the methodology for studying the prevailing wage
25 schedules and, you know, it also must be backed up by

2 full funding from contracting city agencies on both
3 our current human services contracts and future human
4 services contracts going forward and for current
5 contracts, if this legislation were to pass, it would
6 be important for amendments to be put in place prior
7 to the law going into affect as to not place
8 financial burden on organizations. But, we come into
9 the comprehensive approach of Intro 2137 and that is
10 aimed at lifting the entire sector at once and
11 providing the necessary funding to do so. And with
12 that, we do not support Intro 2006. Creating a
13 prevailing wage for shelter security guards alone
14 would only deepen the wage disparity between
15 underpaid employees. Currently, our security staff
16 and our cooks in our maintenance staff are all paid
17 at similar wages and creating a prevailing wage for
18 just security staff, we think, would really just deep
19 in the disparity. And Intro 2006 also fails to
20 provide a funding mechanism. So, you know, we would
21 like to see 2137, you know, move forward. That would
22 also accomplish the goal of raising shelter security
23 guard wages while also uplifting the whole sector.
24 And we would also like to comment on Intro 1995
25 Which requires additional training for DHS security

2 guards. We would like to recommend that the proposed
3 additional training requirements be provided by an
4 organization and instructors with expertise in social
5 services and/or mental health rather than by a
6 security guard training school and instructors with
7 security guard or law enforcement experience which is
8 what is currently indicated in the bill. We believe
9 that the additional training needed by security
10 guards working with people experiencing homelessness
11 are in de-escalation, recognizing symptoms of mental
12 health disorders and trauma, communicating with
13 people in crisis. And we think this type of training
14 would be better provided by social service and mental
15 health experts rather than, you know, folks in law
16 enforcement. So, we would like to recommend that
17 that change implemented into Intro 1995. And to
18 conclude, we would like to thank Chair Kallos, and
19 Council member Rosenthal and other members of the
20 Contracts Committee for championing the full funding
21 of the indirect cost rate initiative. We really
22 appreciate that and we look forward to ensuring--
23 working with you further to ensure that our workforce
24 is--

2 NICOLE MCVINUA: Thank you very much for
3 your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. We're
5 going to hold questions. Next up, we have SHNNY,
6 JASA, and the Coalition for Behavioral Health, at
7 which point, we will open up for Council member
8 questions.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
10 So, first up is Tierra Labrada followed by Nadia
11 Chait and then Molly Krakowski. Ms. Labrada, you can
12 begin when the sergeants call time.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

14 TIERRA LABRADA: Hi. Thank you so much.
15 Good afternoon, everybody. Good afternoon, Chair
16 Kallos and all of the members of the City Council
17 Contracts Committee. It's going to be hard to say
18 anything different than what all of my colleagues
19 have said before me. I think, you know, we are all
20 feeling the same way. So I'm just going to jump in
21 my testimony. My name is Tierra Labrada. I'm the
22 senior policy analyst at the Supportive Housing
23 Network of New York. The network is a membership
24 organization representing the nonprofit developers
25 and operators of supportive housing, their staff, and

2 tenants therein. I want to thank you for the
3 opportunity to submit comment today regarding Intro
4 2137. For years, the network and our partners have
5 called on the city Council and the administration to
6 recognize the deep wage inequities on city funded
7 contracts in supportive housing and the nonprofit
8 human service sector more broadly. Our women led
9 workforce has carried the cost of economic and equity
10 for far too long and deserves bold, systemic change
11 to address this problem. We are happy that the
12 Council and Chair Kallos and so many others are
13 behind us, but given historical precedents, there are
14 some of our members who are hesitant to support this
15 legislation for fear that, once again, the city will
16 demand compliance without appropriate compensation.
17 However, we are optimistic that this is a step in the
18 right direction, provided that there are
19 clarifications in the bill language and continued
20 partnership between our sector and the city. With
21 that, we do want to express our support for Intro
22 2137, but noting the following: we would like to see
23 the term the human service workforce, quote unquote,
24 defined and expanded to include building workers who
25 may not fall under city contracts. We would like to

2 be coalitions the nonprofit community to be active
3 participants in the process as the comptroller sets
4 the wage schedule and, like many of my colleagues
5 said before me, making sure that the wage schedule is
6 not based on current wages so we do not codify those
7 low wages. Again, fully funding the mandate, we want
8 Intro 2137 to be fully funded. With historically
9 underfunded contracts, there is really no room in our
10 provider budget to cover the cost up front and so the
11 bill should stipulate that the city must have all
12 necessary contract amendments in place before that
13 increased wages are paid out. Also, I think it is
14 important to note that state contracts would not be
15 included in this and a lot of our providers, some
16 within even the same residences, have staff who are
17 funded under city contracts and some who are funded
18 on the state. So, we would like to see the city
19 really advocate at the state level to ensure that
20 these inequities get addressed there, too. With
21 regards to Intro 2006, like Nicole said right before
22 me and Catherine before, we don't want to support a
23 standalone bill that only raises wages for one type
24 of worker. Shelter staff, including security and
25 other building workers should be included under Intro

2 2137. And, with that, I am done. I thank you for
3 the opportunity and we look forward to ensure proper
4 compensation for our workforce. Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.
6 Labrada. Next, we will hear from Nadia Chait
7 followed by Molly Krakowski and then Towaki Komatsu.
8 Ms. Chait, you may begin when the sergeants call
9 time.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 NADIA CHAIT: Good afternoon, Chair Kallos
12 and members of the Council and thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify today. I'm Nadia Chait, the
14 director of policy and advocacy at the Coalition for
15 behavioral health. We have about 100 community based
16 mental health and substance use providers as our
17 members who collectively serve over 600,000 New
18 Yorkers. And this has been a year where their
19 services are in demand more than ever before and
20 where they are dealing with a society that has
21 experienced such amendments trauma and yet we know
22 that our workforce, you know, as all of the other
23 coalitions have mentioned today that the workforce
24 that is handling these problems is deeply underpaid
25 and that, as we have asked them to not only deal with

2 Covid in their own lives, but the help all of New
3 York through this message pandemic and that were
4 asking them to do this for some claps instead of a
5 living wage and instead of truly thanking them by
6 compensating them appropriately. So, we strongly
7 support the efforts to raise the wages for that
8 sector. You know, it's a critical issue and, for our
9 sector, our low wages contribute to a substantial
10 vacancy crisis and turnover crisis. We operate with
11 about 20 percent vacancy in most programs and 40
12 percent annual turnover. Yesterday, the city
13 announced plans to hire new social workers for
14 schools which is wonderful and my members are also
15 now deeply concerned that the city moving to expand
16 mental health services will actually result in a
17 contraction because we know that the city will pay
18 far more for these positions than our members are
19 able to provide. And so, they will lose capacity in
20 the community. So, we very much appreciate the
21 attention to this issue and the acknowledgment that
22 the low wages are not coming from the nonprofits
23 themselves, but are coming from the city and the
24 rates that the city sets and contracts. But I would
25 mirror many of the concerns that other folks have

2 raised in terms of just really ensuring sufficient
3 funding for this and that this is adequately funded
4 across the board on contracts. We are concerned
5 about how this would apply to work at covered-- to
6 employees at covered employers but who don't work on
7 city contracts. In our sector, much of the funding
8 comes through Medicaid-- as well as some funding
9 from commercial insurance and state contracts and
10 while all of those staff, of course, should receive a
11 higher wage, we want to make sure that this is
12 adequately funded to allow that or not encompassing
13 of those wage streams. And then I would certainly
14 agree with all of my colleagues concerns that we want
15 to make sure that a prevailing wage scale would not
16 codify the current low wages of the sector. And so,
17 we would want to ensure that, in the development of
18 the wage scale that we would look to the wages that
19 the city pays its own employees as well as, in our
20 case, the wages of, you know, hospitals and managed-
21 care companies and other organizations in the private
22 sector to ensure the wage scale that does not codify
23 low wages. But, again, we really appreciate that
24 Council's attention to this issue and the work that
25 you all put it on indirects. You know, it is

2 wonderful to have Council members who really
3 understand the difficulties of our sector and the
4 challenges that we face and are looking to support
5 our workforce. Thank you so much.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Ms.
7 Chait. We will next hear from Molly Krakowski
8 followed by Towaki Komatsu. Ms. Krakowski, you can
9 begin when the sergeants call time.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Hi. Good afternoon. My
12 name is Molly Krakowski. I am the senior director of
13 government affairs at JASA. I would like to thank
14 Council member Kallos and the members of the
15 committee for the opportunity to testify today. We
16 really welcome the opportunity to share some of our
17 concerns regarding Intro 2137. JASA is a nonprofit
18 organization serving older adults across New York
19 City. We have over 40,000 individuals that we serve
20 and programs in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, and
21 Queens with a wide range of services. The intent of
22 Intro 2137 which seeks to establish prevailing wage
23 requirements for city contracted human services
24 workers is a very positive event, unfortunately, JASA
25 cannot support the legislation as it is currently

2 written. The human service provider community will
3 attest to the remarkable workforce providing critical
4 services to the most vulnerable while simultaneously
5 burdened in their own minds with inadequate wages.
6 For years, JASA and our colleagues in the nonprofit
7 sector have urged the city to increase contract
8 funding to provide appropriate salaries and salary
9 parity across and within city agencies, as well as to
10 institute an annual cost-of-living adjustment for the
11 contracted workers. For example, throughout the
12 pandemic, these individuals have worked the critical
13 front line in the field traveling to the client homes
14 and to work sites in order to ensure the safety of
15 our clients. We have continuously asked to the
16 administration to recognize our staff as essential
17 workers and compensate them appropriately. In
18 failing to provide funds to compensate essential
19 social service workers who are predominantly women of
20 color and immigrants, the city contributes to the
21 very problems of inequality and financial insecurity
22 that we seek to address. JASA recognizes that
23 Council member Kallos and the sponsors of Intro 2137
24 have the very best intentions for the human services
25 employees, however, as it is written, Intro 2137

2 leaves the financial burden in the hands of the
3 nonprofit providers and there is just no way that the
4 human services community can absorb the cost of the
5 prevailing wage. The financial obligation lies
6 exclusively with the administration. While there may
7 be temptations to pass a prevailing wage and work out
8 the details later, and unfunded mandate to pay
9 prevailing wage will devastate our chronically
10 underfunded budget. Each year, agencies must
11 supplement government contracts with private and
12 philanthropic dollars to make up for the gaps in our
13 program budgets. JASA turns to the New York City
14 Council annually to help and help you do through
15 discretionary funds and Council initiatives, adding
16 nearly one and a half million dollars to our budget
17 and we still have a gap. And while this week we
18 learned that the administration will follow through
19 on its promise to pay contracted agencies the
20 approved indirect rate and we're very grateful for
21 that and those are for services in FY 21 and FY 22,
22 it's important to recognize that it took two years of
23 advocacy to see the promised funds from FY 20 put
24 into the executive budget. JASA is appreciative of
25 the support of the Council for the human services

2 workforce and we will eagerly support future
3 legislation for decreased wages in the human services
4 contracts once the language makes it clear that the
5 city is responsible for the funding and we look
6 forward to your leadership on this issue when we
7 thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony
8 and look forward to working and continuing to work
9 with the city Council and the administration as a
10 valued partner. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. We are
12 going to conclude this group of people that we were
13 holding questions. We are going to ask any Council
14 members who have questions to raise their hand before
15 we move to the next group of testimony. I just want
16 to echo the sentiments. I agree that we do have
17 contracts where there are city and state funding
18 sources and that, if we did a prevailing wage at the
19 city level, we would need to immediately go to Albany
20 and perhaps even contemporaneously get all of them to
21 agree to manage the city, although I will say that it
22 becomes a little bit of a chicken and egg scenario
23 and conversations with some providers, if we get the
24 prevailing wage here, it may be easier to get it up
25 there. And then, in the same guys as the fact that

2 we are considering doing prevailing wage for the
3 security workers, I believe that-- I'm not sure
4 anyone is questioning whether or not that would be
5 funded or if it would be an unfunded mandate, but, in
6 the same way as being security workers would have to
7 be funded, the same thing goes with any mandate with
8 the prevailing wage. In terms of that concern about
9 being walked into the low wages because the statute
10 for the state requires a survey of existing working
11 conditions, I hear that sentiment completely and hope
12 that there is a way through bargaining and, if there
13 are other solutions, I will be reviewing the
14 testimony to try to find that. I'm seeing if there
15 are any other questions or remarks. Seeing none, I
16 want to thank the representatives for so many of our
17 cities nonprofits and many of you represent coalition
18 groups that represent all of them, perhaps even
19 overlap. So, I want to thank you all for coming out.
20 Please stay in touch because I believe that a lot of
21 this legislation is moving quickly and I want to make
22 sure that we make sure that your voices are heard as
23 part of the budget conversation. I am now going to
24 call, and we are going to have a two minute clock.
25 We have Towaki Komatsu who are seen at a number of

2 hearings I'm always happy to welcome him. I wanted
3 to make sure that we brought him up as an individual
4 before we bring up the next panel which will be
5 considerably longer. You will have two minutes.
6 Chairs you wish and thank you for joining us and
7 coming to so many city Council hearings.

8 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi. Can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We can.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

11 TOWAKI KOMATSU: The agenda for this
12 hearing is to, I guess, determination whether to
13 raise the wages for security workers in shelters.
14 Yesterday, I visited the headquarters of Urban
15 Pathways. I gave them a copy of the motion that I
16 gave to the Second Circuit yesterday for
17 authorization to file a motion in excess of their
18 page limits meaning I have a deadline of May 10 to
19 submit a motion by. I also have an oral arguments.
20 With the Appellate Division first apartment on May 10
21 against HRA. So, I've had conversations with Mr.
22 Kallos previously, as well as Ms. Rosenthal. I was
23 assaulted in want of Urban Pathways facilities only
24 because of the fact that HRA and Urban Pathways
25 jointly committed a criminal bait and switch with

2 regards to an apartment lease agreement. That was
3 after an attempted assault. I had a conversation
4 with the Bronx DA last month. That phone call was
5 recorded on audio. He told me that he subpoenaed one
6 of Urban Pathways' workers to testify at trial. That
7 worker did not appear. Bronx criminal court judge,
8 Corey Weston, was aware of that and did not compel
9 that person to appear. So, I guess, with regards to
10 today's hearing and the fact that we are still in a
11 pandemic, why the heck are you guys considering
12 giving Urban Pathways more funding whatsoever when
13 people are being assaulted in the facilities when
14 that assault has severe repercussions that I have
15 discussed with you previously? I also got discovery
16 [inaudible 01:01:26] by federal lawsuit against the
17 city on February 1st. I think we have subpoena
18 power. I read something recently about subpoenaing
19 records. Do you want to issue a subpoena to the New
20 York City law department to get you what I got on
21 February 1st? Because judge Gabriel Gorenstein won't
22 let me talk about that due to a confidentiality order
23 that he issued on January 15th of this year. He used
24 to be the general counsel of HRA in the 1990s. so,
25 thing about it. I've had litigation against HRA

2 since 2016 and then, when I get to federal court, I
3 have to go against its former general counsel. So,
4 like I said, with regards to--

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

6 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Close out, can you issue
7 that subpoena to get those records and then see what
8 all this has been about?

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you for
10 testifying. Thank you for your work and I'm so sorry
11 for what you went through. Subpoenas are an act of
12 last resort. I can request certain documents. And
13 as with any time we see you-- or I see you and you
14 share something that is as disturbing as you have
15 shared, I will follow my mandatory reporting
16 requirements and share with the Department of
17 Investigations which I also know you have not been
18 thrilled with them, either. But thank you for
19 joining us. I'd like to-- we now have about 15 to
20 20 folks who will be testifying. Because of the fact
21 that everything is remote, my understanding is that
22 they already the space that is a rowboat with
23 telecasting capabilities and videoconferencing, but
24 it seems like it might be impractical for us to try
25 to call people individually as folks will be all on

2 one camera. So, I believe we have about 15 people.
3 We are doing a two minute limit per speaker, but for
4 the sake of convenience, we are just going to run one
5 30 minute clock for everyone present on the 32 BJ
6 team zoom. So, if that works, if we can get the
7 camera on and let the audio on from the 32 BJ zoom--
8 and does that sound satisfactory to folks that 32 BJ
9 team zoom? Can we unmute them, please?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: One moment, Chair.
11 We are trying to unmute them. We should note,
12 though, to the folks at 32 BJ, for each person who
13 speaks individually, to please state your name before
14 you begin speaking.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Let's hold the
18 clock while we work out the technical difficulty for
19 a moment.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yep. Got you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: And we will leave
22 them unmuted while they figure that out. Sorry. You
23 are currently muted. We're asking you to unmute.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: 32 BJ, you need to
25 unmute when we give you the request. There you go.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: [inaudible 01:04:56]

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Major echo.

4 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: There is a second
5 32 BJ team zoom which we have just asked to unmute.
6 And it seems as though we've lost that-- You are
7 currently unmuted in your main zoom.

8 CHARMAIN LATHAN: Good afternoon.

9 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Perfect. We will
10 start the clock. Please hold.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

12 CHARMAIN LATHAN: My name is Charmain
13 Lathan. I am a shelter security guard at Travel and
14 Family Shelter. I have been working as a shelter
15 security guard for over a year and I strongly support
16 Intros 1995 and 2006 which would raise up standards
17 for workers like me. I love working in the shelter
18 system. I have been in the client's shoe until
19 November 2020. I was living in a homeless shelter
20 with myself and my three daughters. I was working
21 full time as a shelter security guard, but I still
22 had no way of affording a place of my own for me and
23 my children. It wasn't until I received the public
24 housing voucher that I was able to move out into an
25 apartment in Harlem. The reality of private shelter

2 jobs are clear. We still have to rely on public
3 housing or other government services to simply afford
4 a living and put a roof over our heads. We don't get
5 paid enough and we do not have the necessity-- the
6 necessary health benefits to sustain ourselves,
7 either. I was on Medicaid when I had to have a
8 hysterectomy. We work in stressful environments and
9 perform jobs that are, at times, very dangerous but
10 when it comes to having the wages and the benefits to
11 sustain ourselves, we are only a few dollars away
12 from many of the clients that we serve. Just because
13 I was fortunate enough to get a housing voucher
14 doesn't mean I am living a comfortable life. My
15 youngest daughter, who is 16, has dreams of going to
16 college. If we had good paying jobs and higher
17 salaries, I could save up some money to put towards
18 her education. I am barely able to pay all of my
19 bills on time. Every paycheck can be the difference
20 between going-- Sorry. Could be the difference
21 between going into the shelter system or holding on
22 to my apartment. Security guards protect the welfare
23 of our shelter neighbors and staff and allow vital
24 social services to be provided in a fake environment.
25 The city shelter system is the largest in the

2 country. Security guards working at shelters managed
3 by private operations under contracts with the city
4 are currently excluded from the prevailing wage law
5 and are not covered by the same training
6 requirements. Without these standards, there is
7 nothing to ensure that privately run shelters are
8 providing decent wages, benefits, and training
9 opportunities to security workers. I ask the Council
10 to pass these bills without delay. The Safety in our
11 Shelters Acts will make a real difference in my life
12 and the lives of my three daughters. I know what it
13 feels like to be homeless. In order to help these
14 who are living in shelters, I need the training to
15 address critical situations and the safety net of
16 living wages and health insurance. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: The clock is
18 running if the next person can please join us.
19 Please start.

20 MONIQUE SMITH: Yes. Hi. My name is
21 Monique Smith. I am a shelter security guard at
22 Manhattan Times Square Family shelter. I've been
23 working as a shelter security guard for three years.
24 I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which will
25 raise up standards for workers like me. When I was

2 pregnant, I moved out of my parent's house. I was in
3 a shelter system until I received my first apartment.
4 Currently, I live with my 10 year old daughter in a
5 one bedroom apartment in public housing. I make
6 16.50 an hour and this isn't enough to sustain a life
7 in New York City. I rely on Medicaid for healthcare.
8 Through 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic has devastated
9 the city I call home and it has also pushed our city
10 to a breaking point. We have been working on the
11 frontline this entire pandemic. It's time we were
12 paid a fair wage. Because of my experience, I
13 understand how important it is for New York City to
14 improve the standards of the city shelter system and
15 expand access to permanent affordable housing. But
16 how can you address homelessness and poverty while
17 creating jobs that don't allow people to get by in
18 this city without public assistance? Security guards
19 are vital to keeping shelters safe and are necessary
20 for shelters to operate. The city's shelter system
21 is the largest in the country. We can and should do
22 better. When we make these jobs good jobs, we make
23 shelters safer. We help lift people out of poverty
24 and depending on social services. All cards working
25 at any shelter contracted by the city should have

2 access to affordable healthcare and access to real
3 trading. Guards did not all city contracted shelters
4 should be provided with decent wages. I asked the
5 Council to pass this bill without delay. The safety
6 and our shelters will make a real difference in my
7 life. I would pay my bills, be able to take care of
8 my kid. Right now, with the money we have, I cannot
9 afford anything. I would be able to afford more
10 school supplies for my child. It would also mean
11 having access to better training so that shelters
12 would be safer.

13 AMBER DRUMMOND: Hello, everyone. Thank
14 you for your attendance and your time. My name is
15 Amber Drummond. I work and I live in the shelter. I
16 work in Queens at a shelter by JFK. I work at
17 Brookville Holiday Inn. So, after long days of work,
18 I go home-- Well, go to the shelter and I try and
19 relax and I look for housing and I've been working in
20 the industry for over two years and I strongly
21 support 1995/2006 to raise awareness and raise
22 standards for workers like myself. In addition to
23 that, it's for a better training. I actually make
24 16.50 an hour and it is not enough to lift myself out
25 of the shelter system. And decent wages would mean

2 that I can actually save up enough to move out
3 somewhere else without any subsidies. As a shelter
4 officer, we work in dangerous environments, highly
5 stressful environment. Shelters security officers
6 protect the welfare of our shelter neighbors and
7 staff and allow vital services to be provided in a
8 safe environment. Within the last year, I suffered
9 multiple injuries at work including an open wound
10 near my I and a rotator cuff breaking up a fight
11 between staff and residents. In order to de-escalate
12 dangerous interactions between clients and to protect
13 ourselves better, we need access to the real and
14 continuous training. In addition, we need affordable
15 healthcare that these bills will provide us. I
16 cannot remember the last time I went to see a doctor,
17 even through the pandemic. I rely on teas and herbal
18 remedies to keep myself while unable to fight another
19 day. If we cannot keep ourselves healthy and aware
20 of our environment, we will all fail. So, today, I'm
21 asking you to support us. In addition, we need
22 affordable healthcare and the raising of wages.
23 Security officers at the shelters managed my private
24 operators under contract with the city are currently
25 excluded from prevailing wages and are not covered by

2 the same training requirements. Without these
3 standards, there is nothing to ensure that privately
4 run shelters are providing decent wages, benefits, or
5 training opportunities. And, without these
6 standards, I don't see a way for our shelters to be
7 safe or for me to get out of the shelter. As private
8 security officers, we cannot afford to live in New
9 York City. Many of us work overtime and we still
10 remain homeless or at risk of losing you know her
11 home. We are the working poor of the city because
12 our jobs don't provide our families sustainable
13 wages, healthcare, or training that we need. I asked
14 the Council to pass bills without delay. With the
15 safety and our shelters, can finally afford a place
16 to call home which is just a tiny home, by the way.
17 Thank you for your time, guys.

18 ANTHONY KENNA: Hello. My name is
19 Anthony Kenna and I am a shelter security guard at
20 Cliff Hotel. It's the family shelter. I strongly
21 support Intros 1995 and 2006 because raising the
22 standards for workers like me is long overdue. I
23 have been working as a shelter security guard now for
24 13 years. I went to work through the pandemic on the
25 front lines commuting for an hour and a half each way

2 on public transit to do my job to help keep shelter
3 client safe. I asked the Council to take action to
4 pass these bills. We need this. We need this. The
5 safety of our shelter acts will make a difference in
6 my life currently. I am behind on my rent. If I pay
7 my rent, then I can't buy groceries. Sometimes I
8 have to make sacrifices. When I am sacrificing on
9 groceries, I am undernourished, but if I don't pay my
10 rent, all be further into debt. I have no health
11 coverage. I have no health coverage and I can't
12 afford regular visits to maintain my health and take
13 care of my medical conditions. We deserve to be
14 basically respected. We deserve the basic respect of
15 the job that doesn't keep us in poverty. We need the
16 basic respect of a job that really won't keep us in
17 poverty and give access to affordable healthcare and
18 real training. Sometimes I feel like they speak to
19 us like we are slaves. We deserve to be included
20 under the prevailing wage law. As New York City
21 works to make sure that everyone has access to a safe
22 shelter, the security guards who work to secure the
23 shelters should not be left out of the picture. Our
24 work should have the same training requirements as
25 the guards working in the city-- that the guards

2 working at the city run shelters do. We work with
3 people suffering from PTSD and other mental health
4 issues. Please help us to receive the training we
5 need to better de-escalate situations and provide a
6 safe environment for our clients.

7 FRANCISCO BATISTA: My name is
8 Francisco Batista. Thank you for the opportunity to
9 testify today in support of these two important bills
10 for shelter and security guards I have worked at
11 shelter security for 10 years. I currently work for
12 Acacia at a [inaudible 01:21:33] Women's Shelter in
13 Long Island City. I also live in Queens with my wife
14 and nine-year-old daughter. Micro shelters serve the
15 mentally ill and chemically addicted. Working with
16 this client population can be demanding on security
17 staff. We often deal with the difficult and high
18 right situations like intervening to settle clients
19 with arguments and protect clients when fights break.
20 Fortunately, I haven't been injured but sometimes it
21 feels unsafe and we don't get enough training from
22 the employers on how to deal with these incidents.
23 I'm a professional in the security industry and I
24 know that other jobs aren't like this. I currently
25 work a second security job in a commercial office

2 building in Manhattan. There, we get all the
3 training we need for what we are likely to encounter
4 on site. We understand the protocols and use
5 logbooks to keep track of incidents and issues when
6 we do our inspections. This doesn't happen at the
7 shelter. Prior to working at this shelter site, I
8 worked at an apartment building used as a temporary
9 homeless shelter. The contractor there paid the
10 industry-- paid the wages and benefits. In my
11 opinion, the security standards were much better. I
12 took a pay cut when that site was closed down and I
13 started working and now over \$18 with benefits to
14 \$16.50 with no benefits. I'm just lucky that I have
15 health insurance from my other job at the office
16 building where we have a union. My shelter is always
17 understaffed. It's no wonder they find it hard to
18 recruit and retain guards when they don't treat us
19 like professionals. I've completed qualifications to
20 be [inaudible 01:23:34] safety director. There needs
21 to be someone with this credential on the site 24
22 hours a day, but I don't get paid any extra for it.
23 In the security industry, the FSLE position is well
24 respected and considered a good career progression,
25 but when shelter operators are trying to make savings

2 on the backs of workers, this respect is forgotten.
3 We need the city to ensure that the shelter security
4 contractors are privately managed sites and pay the
5 same prevailing wages and benefits that guards and
6 FLSE earn at city managed sites. We are the
7 professionals working to protect vulnerable New
8 Yorkers. There shouldn't be any difference in our
9 pay or our abilities to support our families. I urge
10 your support for Safely in our Shelter Acts. Thank
11 you.

12 SHAQUILLE SHEPHERD: Hello. My name is
13 Shaquille Shepherd and I am a shelter security guard
14 at Quality Inn Long Island City. I have been
15 working as a shelter security guard for almost three
16 years. I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which
17 will raise up standards for workers like me. I,
18 myself, and formerly homeless and live with my mother
19 in a shelter. The pandemic has devastated our
20 communities but we kept working as essential workers
21 on the front line. We deserve to be paid a fair
22 wage. Often, clients would refuse to wear masks and
23 when I reported the issue, no action was taken, even
24 though this puts both clients and workers at greater
25 risk and makes me feel unsafe. As I make my way home

2 on the buss, it takes two hours to get home at night
3 and I have to wonder if I am bringing Covid back home
4 to my mother. She is unable to work. She is
5 disabled. She has a long list of heart problems and
6 high blood pressure. We got lucky and very fortunate
7 that we have a section 8 apartment. We split the
8 rent and sometimes I try to make her comfortable and
9 help her with food and give her a little extra so
10 that she has some money left in her pocket. With a
11 little bit more in wages, I could have more financial
12 security and I could also pay off my student loans.
13 We also need access to affordable healthcare and
14 access to real training. Right now, we are not
15 excluded from the same training requirements as
16 guards working at other shelters. We need this, not
17 just for guards and our families, but also to make
18 sure we raise standards for shelter security and
19 safety. Proper protocols will be followed to report
20 problems when they happen, but a training would help
21 us prevent fights from happening so that guards would
22 act faster. Without these standards, there's nothing
23 to ensure that privately run shelters are providing
24 decent wages, benefits, and training opportunities to
25 security workers. I have no health insurance and,

2 under the new legislation, I would be able to get
3 coverage. The Safety in our Shelter Acts is needed.
4 Thank you.

5 BERNICE CARTER: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Bernice Carter. I work as a guard for over three
7 years. I work in the Bronx. We provide services for
8 men and women, some disabled, some struggling with
9 drugs or addiction. I am asking you today to support
10 the Safety in our Shelter Acts. Improving the
11 shelter system and jobs of security jobs is personal
12 to me. I've also been homeless myself only two years
13 ago. It was the hardest years of my life. I've done
14 everything as far as continue working and [inaudible
15 01:27:48]. I also volunteered and took training to
16 improve such as getting my mental health certificate
17 just to work better with clients that have mental
18 health issues. It's important to me that the company
19 reimburse me for some of my skills that I've learned
20 to help the shelter. Through my training experience,
21 I was able to build relationships with clients and
22 diffuse situations. This helps the shelter run
23 smoothly and get me home safely at the end of my
24 shift. Okay. Earning a prevailing wage would make a
25 massive difference in my life. It will mean a pay

2 increase that will help me pay my bills that
3 [inaudible 01:28:40] work. I recently have been
4 positive for Covid in February. My company made me
5 use my sick time, but I ended up losing income and
6 falling behind on my rent. It was only because of
7 the Covid stimulus check that I was able to make it
8 up. Shelter guards like me are dedicated to
9 improving our jobs and building good lives for our
10 families and ourselves. I urge you to give us this
11 bill and your support so that we have the training,
12 paid benefits--

13 TRACEY HOLMES: Good afternoon. My name
14 is Tracey Holmes and I am a shelter security guard at
15 the Confidence Sunset Men's Shelter. I have been
16 working as a shelter security guard for almost a
17 year. I strongly support Intros 1995 and 2006 which
18 will raise the standards for workers like me.
19 Through 202, the Covid 19 pandemic has devastated the
20 city I call home. With so many New Yorkers losing
21 their lives and many others losing their jobs. It
22 has also pushed our city to a breaking point. We
23 have been working on the frontlines through this
24 entire pandemic raising our lives-- risking our
25 lives and risking spreading Covid to our families.

2 For much of the pandemic, we came to work day in, day
3 out without even being given proper PPE. It is time
4 we were paid a fair wage. It's access for better
5 training is important to me so that I can handle
6 different situation that may arise in our day to day
7 duties. Deescalating training would be helpful
8 because it teaches you how to respond to issues.
9 More training makes you a better and more confident
10 at your job. The clients really just want to know
11 that you are listening and we want to be able to help
12 them feel safe and get the help they need. I ask the
13 Council to pass these bills without delay. The
14 Safety of our Shelters Acts will make a real
15 difference in my mind. I don't have health insurance
16 and I have to pay for my medication out of pocket
17 because I have to ration the medication I take for my
18 high blood pressure because I am unable to afford it.
19 I have not been back to the doctor in a while because
20 it is so expensive. I really need to be seen. This
21 bill would help me and my family and lift up our
22 communities. Thank you.

23 NEFERTITI ELWOODS: Good afternoon,
24 Chairperson Kallos and committee members. My name is
25 Nefertiti Elwoods. I have worked in shelter security

2 for four years and currently work in Acacia's network
3 shelter in Long Island City. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to testify before the committee in
5 support of the Safety in our Shelters Acts. Passing
6 these bills [inaudible 01:32:23] will be lifechanging
7 for me. I support my mother which stretches me
8 financially. I've currently racked up on my rent
9 when I am not looking after [inaudible 01:32:34]. I
10 also have a number of health conditions: asthma,
11 bronchitis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and
12 migraine headaches. I've also been referred to a
13 cardiologist. Getting paid the prevailing wage and
14 having access to all the health insurance will make
15 an enormous difference. I've overcome struggles
16 before. I've been homeless myself due to domestic
17 violence. Surviving in the city on low wages is
18 another struggle. I'm asking committee members and
19 the Council to do your part and make the struggle a
20 little bit easier. Please give these bills your
21 support and, when they come up for a vote, do
22 everything in your power to pass them into law.
23 Thank you for listening.

24 JUAN REYES: Good afternoon, everybody.

25 My name is Juan Reyes. I'm a security officer at the

2 Acacia shelter in the South Bronx. I'm here today to
3 testify in support of the Safety in our Shelter Acts.
4 I have worked at the shelter security for over 10
5 years. It's clear to me that we cannot improve the
6 security standards in our shelters if we don't
7 improve the training and employment standards of
8 security guards. Shelters are challenging places to
9 work. Clients accessing shelter are often unstable
10 and experiencing mental health conditions. There is,
11 unfortunately, the risk of confrontation and
12 violence. I have personally been pushed and
13 threatened. I have also seen colleagues pushed and
14 shelters vandalized. I often feel unsafe on the job.
15 We are understaffed and lack equipment like metal
16 scanners. Guards should have more specialized
17 training, particularly how to diffuse and de-escalate
18 situations. Having better trained guards who feel
19 safe around the jobs could help reduce turnover and
20 solve the chronic guard shortage we experience.
21 Better wages and benefits would also help to recruit
22 and retain guards. It's not right that we work in
23 the same high risk environment as guards at city
24 manage sites, but are guaranteed the same wages and
25 benefits. Receiving the prevailing wage would make a

2 huge difference to my family's life. We have been
3 through a lot of instabilities. My wife has recently
4 at a homeless shelter herself. We are renting an
5 apartment now in the South Bronx, but are living
6 paycheck to paycheck. I worked two jobs. I would
7 love to be able to buy things for my three kids then
8 moved to a better apartment. I have health
9 insurance, the Metro Plus, that I pay out-of-pocket.
10 Under the prevailing wage standards, my employer
11 would have to pay my benefit supplements that would
12 cover quality full family healthcare insurance. This
13 could be life changing for my family. My wife
14 recently had Covid. We need the confidence that our
15 medical costs are covered and we can get the care and
16 medicine we need.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 JUAN REYES: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. How
20 many more speakers do we have so we know how much
21 time to add to the clock?

22 UNIDENTIFIED: 10 minutes.

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Okay. We will add
24 10 minutes. Thank you.

2 RAPHAEL CRUZ: Good afternoon, Chairman
3 Kallos and committee members. My name is Raphael
4 Cruz and I'm here today to ask for support for Safety
5 in our Shelters Act. I have been a security guard in
6 the shelter system for a couple years and I currently
7 work for Security USA in the Harlem YMCA shelter
8 system. We need to put security guard standards in
9 our shelters. By ensuring that guards in the
10 industry standard wages and benefits and receive more
11 specialized training, this bill will make a big
12 different. Shelter systems are a dangerous place to
13 work. We are the first line of defense, but we're
14 undertrained. On a daily basis, we encounter risk,
15 clients, weapons, hazards, and different things that
16 we have to go through that normally other shelters
17 don't. Training is the key. In order to encounter--
18 excuse me. Training is the key in order for guards
19 to know what to do. I see new workers put on the job
20 without being given the proper training. When this
21 happens, everyone is less safe and new guards
22 themselves and other guards like me. I am a fire
23 safety director, coordinator at the shelter. This is
24 an important job, but I am. Last then workers who
25 get the prevailing wages. I also did not get

2 vacations or time off and our work standards are
3 different while doing the same role at the shelter
4 than in the city. I am married and I have a 13-year-
5 old daughter. Getting paid the prevailing wage on
6 benefit supplements would make a huge difference to
7 us. I currently have my wife's health insurance plan
8 through her job. Having meaningful benefits provided
9 by the employer would not only mean my family has
10 more options when it comes to our insurance coverage,
11 but it also means contributions towards our
12 retirement plans. I urge you to pass these bills.
13 Our work is crucial to keeping the shelter system
14 safe. We need to get of our jobs and our lives the
15 value they desire. Thank you.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon,
17 Chairperson and committee members. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today. My name is [inaudible
19 01:38:33]. I work as a guard in the shelter system
20 over three years and I work for [inaudible 01:38:41][
21 Security Services at the shelter in the Bronx managed
22 by Community Life. Guard working in [inaudible
23 01:38:52] need better benefits and training. That is
24 what is exactly [inaudible 01:39:06] today would give
25 us. Shelter can be a high risk location for a guard

2 to work. The most dangerous situations I have
3 encountered was when a client attempted to hit me
4 with a fire extinguisher. All guards need adequate
5 training to deal with volatile situations so they can
6 be de-escalated. Therefore, shelter can be made safe
7 for all residents and staff. We also need to be paid
8 fairly for the work we do in the risk we deal with.
9 The [inaudible 01:40:02] for equitable is a
10 [inaudible 01:40:05] in America equity and fairness.
11 Vast of Americans support equity, regardless of
12 gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic level and
13 is frequently identified as a top quality, especially
14 for those who face sharp pay disparities. [inaudible
15 01:40:45] at all levels. Voluntary action by private
16 employees should be accompanied, but they are not
17 suited office from legal petition [inaudible
18 01:41:09] enforcement all institutions at [inaudible
19 1:41:15]. To make the promise of equity for
20 equitable, it must be more than voluntary option.
21 That is why we need this bill. We need the power of
22 law to ensure that security guards working in the
23 shelter system for private providers are paid fairly
24 for their work and can [inaudible 01:41:54] their
25 rights. [Inaudible 1:42:01] in University. If I

2 earn the prevailing wages of [inaudible 01:42:11], it
3 will mean I will be able to save money to send to
4 them. Passing this law would also mean [inaudible
5 01:42:24] affordable quality health insurance. Right
6 now, I have no insurance. I cannot afford the city
7 that it costs to take up the employee's plan.
8 Please, support this law and reform that can help
9 [inaudible 01:42:52] for workers.

10 QUINTANA OMED: Hello. My name is
11 Quintana Omed and I'm a shelter security guard at
12 Crystal Place. I have been working as a shelter
13 security guard for almost 8 years. I strongly
14 support Intros 1995 and 2006 which will raise up
15 standards for workers like me. Through 2020, the
16 Covid 19 pandemic has devastated the city I call
17 home. So many people have lost their lives. We've
18 been working on the front lines through this entire
19 pandemic and our communities are in crisis. It is
20 time we are paid a fair wage. Safe shelters are
21 essential in New York City. Security guards play a
22 vital role in providing a safe haven to people in
23 need. Quality jobs for shelter security guards must
24 be part of the picture. I know how important this is
25 because I was a client in the shelter system myself.

2 In 2012, when I give birth to my son, we lost our
3 apartment because our landlord was selling the
4 building and wanted to get rid of all the tenants. I
5 had to live in a shelter for six months. My mother
6 was eligible for section 8 as a military veteran, so
7 we eventually were able to move in with her. I have
8 a second job as a medical assistant. I work more
9 than the full-time hours on the day shift at the
10 clinic in overnight at the shelter. I need a job so
11 that I can make enough money to not have to work
12 overnights so that I can stay home with my eight-
13 year-old son. My mother is planning on moving and
14 won't be able to watch them at night. Sometimes I
15 get called from his school and I have to leave work
16 because my mother, who has her own medical issues,
17 cannot watch him. He has ADHD and I wish I was able
18 to be there for him more instead of having to work
19 two jobs. We also need to have affordable healthcare
20 and access to the real training. Security guards
21 working at shelters managed by private operators
22 under contract with the city are currently excluded
23 from the prevailing wage law and are not covered by
24 the same training requirements as guards working at
25 city run shelters. Without these standards, there is

2 nothing to ensure that privately run shelters all are
3 providing decent wages, benefits, and training
4 opportunities for security workers. I asked the
5 Council to pass these bills without delay. The
6 Safety in our Shelters Act will make a real
7 difference in my life. Currently, I have no health
8 insurance from my place of employment. I rely on
9 Medicaid. I would also need having access to better
10 training to handle difficult situations that
11 constantly arrive in our day-to-day duties. Thank
12 you.

13 Hello.

14 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Hold on one moment.
15 We'll add four minutes to the clock, please. You may
16 begin.

17 TERRI BATSON: Okay. My name is Terri
18 Batson. I am 59 years old. I have been working with
19 the shelter system for two years. I strongly support
20 the Safety in our Shelter 1995 and 2006, but I fear
21 we need more like better training and better medical
22 insurance, better working conditions, and better
23 paying raises. Especially with my health issues
24 because I suffer with diabetes, arthritis, glaucoma,
25 cataracts in both eyes and I am using my own medical

2 insurance and sometimes it's very hard to go see my
3 doctor right now and sometimes it's very hard for me
4 to pay for my medication. So, that is why I want
5 to-- That is why I want the law to pass the bill in
6 order to get better support in all of that. That's
7 all it got to say.

8 KOFÉ SHUTAWAE: My name is Kofé
9 Shutawae. I am a shelter security guard at the Best
10 Western [inaudible 01:47:51] shelter. I have been
11 working as a shelter security guard for almost three
12 years. I strongly support Intro 1995 and 2006 which
13 will raise up the standards for workers like me.
14 Currently, I have no health insurance from my place
15 of employment. I rely on Metro Plus subsidized
16 healthcare I qualify for. I came here for the
17 American dream. My wife and my young children are in
18 Ghana and they rely on me to pay for their rent and
19 their schooling. I share an apartment currently with
20 roommates and I want to be able to afford to have a
21 decent home for them so that they can be here with
22 me. I work two jobs and still it is not enough. I
23 came here from Ghana in 2004. I ask the Council to
24 pass these bills without delay. It is not right
25 that, because we securely work at the shelter managed

2 by private operators, we should be excluded from the
3 prevailing wage law. We are paid less and not
4 covered by same [inaudible 01:49:47] as guards
5 working at city run shelters, even though these
6 shelters are also contracted by the city. We need
7 these standards for ourselves and our family and so
8 we can assess better--

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

10 KOFE SHUTAWAE: The work we do is
11 difficult. Almost daily I encounter clients who are
12 ready to assault me or another client. We need help
13 to keep the people and ourselves safe. We need
14 training. We protect the safety of the client in our
15 community by helping secure the shelter. We work
16 through one of the most difficult times our city has
17 faced on the front line of the pandemic. Our work is
18 [inaudible 01:50:48] for the city to make sure all
19 New Yorkers can access safe shelter in the time of
20 need. We need to be fairly compensated for our work.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. I
23 believe that that is all the speakers that we have.
24 If everyone who read testimony is able to please

2 submit it, the address for submissions-- Committee
3 counsel?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It's
5 testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Again, that is
6 testimony@Council.NYC.gov.

7 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: The record will
8 remain open for 72 hours after this hearing, so
9 please consider submitting testimony to
10 testimony@Council.NYC.gov. I want to thank everyone
11 who shared testimony, particularly the workers who
12 shared a lot of conditions that you are dealing with.
13 To the extent that you, yourself, or seeing any
14 conditions of concern or are subject to retaliation
15 following this hearing, please feel free to reach out
16 to me directly at contracts@benkallos.com. We will
17 work with you. We will work with the Department of
18 Investigations to ensure that you have safe working
19 conditions. I want to thank everyone who testified
20 today. I want to thank our nonprofit providers and
21 32 BJ and our workers at our homeless shelters. And,
22 at this point, I would like to ask if there is anyone
23 else here who wishes to testify today? Seeing none,
24 I would like to thank everybody. I thank the
25 committee staff and my staff and I hereby conclude

1 COMMITTEE ON CONTRACTS

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2 this meeting of the City Council Committee on
3 Contracts.

4 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date June 22, 2021